**HOW TO BE A SUCCESSFUL**

**SWIMMING PARENT**

We have put together a collection of philosophies and practices for parents that

have proven, over the years, to foster healthy and happy swimmers. From

accepted works of sports psychologists and expert coaches, we share this

information as a guide to parents who wish to help their young athletes enjoy a

successful swimming career. To begin, we have some general parent rules that

comply with team policies for practice time. Please follow team rules

of practice behavior:

1. **Parents are not permitted on deck.** Parents are welcome to sit in the

bleacher area and observe practice. US Swimming and Diving require that only

registered coaches, athletes and officials be permitted on deck during practice or

meets. If parents need to speak with the coach, they may call at anytime. Coaches

are usually available briefly before and after practice, or by email/phone.

2. **Please, no distractions.** During swim practice, our coaching staff

incorporates structured lesson plans that will lead directly to the athletes’

development and success. Running an efficient workout is what we are paid to

do and our coaching staff will ensure that athletes stay on task. Practice will run

the entire practice time with few exceptions and, in our pursuit of success, we will

systematically avoid distractions whenever possible. We ask that parents do not

interrupt workouts, except in the case of an *emergency.*

3. **Parents are to avoid communication with swimmers during practice.** Our

coaching staff works to create an atmosphere of positive experiences through

hard work and focus. We use the tools of group dynamics to create and motivate

our team to encourage team members to push their own limits. In order to

develop team atmosphere, athletes need to be tuned in to the practice and tuned

out to communicating with their parents between swims.

4. **Please make an attempt *not* to attend *some* practices.** We greatly

appreciate the fact that parents wish to come and support their children’s

activities. It is still more impressive that parents are willing to take time out of

their days to be there for their kids. However, in any sport psychology texts, one

can find the term, “intrinsic motivation.” This concept describes a motivation that

comes from within the individual athlete and not any external source. This

promotes motivation from within. Without a parent at practice, the child may be at

first less focused, but they soon learn to stay on task out of intrinsic motivation.

5. **Please do not coach the swimmers.** We accept the role of coaching the

athletes and safely leading them through the progressions of competitive

swimming. In accepting the role of coach, we ask for support from our parents in

helping the athletes succeed. We involve our parents in running meets,

transporting athletes to practices and meets, running club activities, etc. This

shall be the parent’s role for which are coaches are very grateful and your

children will someday appreciate. However, in efforts to help, we ask that

parents do not cross that line into actually coaching the swimmers. This raises

many issues of concern and we will share some of them here. When parents

cross the line and begin coaching athletes,….The children are often put in the

unfortunate position of having to choose who to listen to, their parents, or the

coach. Our coaching staff never wishes to engage in a power struggle between

the parents and the coach, as this would go against the natural benefits of sports

in general and we wish to avoid this potential conflict.

* An imbalance of corrective feedback occurs. Athletes can only take so much

constructive criticism at a time, and coaches dish out an awful lot in the one or

two hours we see the athletes at practice. If our athletes are then told how to

improve by their parents at the pool, in the car ride home, at the dinner table, etc.

the athlete will suffer from what is known and clearly understood by coaching

circles as “over-coaching” Over-coaching produces performance digression and

athlete burn out – it dulls the athlete’s ability to respond to instruction during

practice and meet situations.

* We lose some of that vital connection between athlete and coach that is a key

ingredient to producing successful athletes. Coaches need to foster a positive

relationship of trust with athletes.

**OTHER PARENT GUIDELINES TO IMPROVE PERFORMANCE AND**

**DEVELOPMENT**

* Encourage your child without pressuring them. Interest and enthusiasm go

along way for improving performance.

* Do not criticize coaches, officials, other swimmers or other swimming parents

in front of your child. Save that for arranged meetings with the parties involved.

* Please help out with the many activities that make this team special for our

athletes.

* Do let your child know you love and support them the same if a practice or

meet does not go well, and that you love and support them the same if a practice

or meet does go well.

* Supply recognition, love, and encouragement without conditions.
* Develop a significant level of enthusiasm for the special activities and

opportunities presented in our program.

* Avoid the “but” comment. “You did well, but….”
* Don’t desire success more than the child desires it, but gently encourage their

child to develop internal goals and dreams. Our coaches’ greatest satisfaction

comes from being in the successful service of young people. If we are going to

make our world more beautiful than it is, we need to encourage our young people

to strive for greatness and redefine their limits. Our coaches expect Cardinal Aquatic

athletes to put their best effort on the line during practices, and especially meet to

reach performance goals. In expecting so much, Cardinal Aquatic coaches must make

earnest attempts to evaluate the quality of workouts and meet performances.

Because of the sincere efforts of our coaches in a sometimes thankless

profession, a simple “thank you coach” goes a long way in refueling our

coaching staff’s efforts. Please remind your swimmer to thank their coach,

occasionally, for anything that has benefited them in the program. Such simple

words aren’t spoken enough and they mean so much to our coaches