



TECHNIQUE TALK

The Power of Competing in the Moment



By Dr. Jim Bauman//USA Swimming Special Contributor

Doing anything in the moment (one thing at a time) flies in the face of how our electronic media-rich environment pushes people to “multi-task” throughout the day. That same environment has also contributed to a social expectation to increase our electronic “personal and work connections,” while still pursuing productivity in more life and work tasks. Contrary to the initial and popular beliefs about multi-tasking being a wonderful asset to getting many things done, there is a growing body of research that says the opposite. Many things do get done, but at the expense of accuracy and quality. Our amazing brains have limits to the number of things we can efficiently focus on without some loss of quantity and/or quality output.

If accuracy and quality are important to what you do, and they are for a swimmer, you are more likely to achieve that, if you limit your attention to “**moment-tasking**” instead of multi-tasking. So, how does this work for you?

Time Zones: We can break the idea of time into three general categories...**Past, Present, and Future.** If we multi-task time when we swim, we are thinking about what has happened in the past (i.e. I didn’t start or swim well in this event before) and what could happen in the future (i.e. bad swim today could mean loss of money or not meeting expectations), while still attempting to swim at a high level right now. That’s even hard to say, much less do!

A competitive mindset will be one where you focus your attention on “this moment in time.” It will be absent of much, if any, attention given to what just happened (past) or what could happen (future) in a race. Minimizing your attentional focus (brain) to what you need to do bio-mechanically (body) in each moment, as you progress through a race, will provide you with the highest likelihood of a quality performance. When you are in the start...focus is on the start; when you are swimming your stroke...focus on each stroke; when you prepare for and hitting the wall for a turn...focus is on just that; and when you are finishing...focus only on that long and powerful drive to the wall. **Competing in the moment** (moment-tasking) is a powerful strategy to synchronize your brain with your body for maximum performance. Like the other strategies, for this to work, you will need to regularly practice it in training and when you compete. Using visual “cues” to remind you of this could be as simple as writing “swim in” on the back of one hand and “the now” on the back of the other...or create different words that will work for you. Visual cues work!

Vacation Time... When?

School breaks are just ahead and championship season is just as close - so when do I take a family vacation and help my swimmer reach his or her goals?

Planning a family vacation during the times where AGUA takes a vacation from the pool is your best option. Your swimmer doesn’t want to simply qualify for later championship meets, all competitors want to be better when we step up on the blocks.

While “just a week” out of the pool doesn’t feel like a long time, it could lead to a major step back in training during this time of the season. Your swimmer is losing valuable time to fine-tune all the skills.

Swimming is one of the few sports where you must find a pool and, more importantly, a team to swim with in order to remain in good condition while you’re on vacation.

Running laps, swimming in hotel pools, and many other options will not prepare your swimmer to compete at an elite level when the time comes. Talk to your lead coach and find a solution if your plans are to leave town before championship season!





TIPS TO STAY MOTIVATED

Dr. Linda Olszewski - specializing in Children, Adolescents & Performance Psychology and former AGUA Parent

Motivation: Tips to Help Your Child Stay Motivated (Part 2)

While parents need to be present and encouraging, getting the balance right is not only essential for an athlete's success but also for their overall well-being. Working with your child at home on developing self-motivation will help your child enjoy better mental health and performance. As a parent, here are some things you can do to support your athlete:

3. Encourage Your Student to Bond with Their Teammates, Not Compete Against Them – It's common for swimmers to have an individual on their team that they tend to race against. However, it is best to focus on creating feelings of belonging rather than pitting your child against the other teammate. Teach your child the importance of healthy competition, loving the process and cheering on this tough competitor. Winning should not be the only goal. Science tells us when avoiding loss is the goal, young athletes experience lower self-esteem, lower levels of satisfaction and self-confidence, and higher rates of burn-out and anxiety. Instead, help your child attain a sense of belonging. Studies demonstrate that a sense of belonging reduces the sense of isolation, encourages feelings of value and respect, and improves intrinsic motivation. In other words, group cohesion and group identification are like a health insurance plan for improved performance.

4. Provide Your Athlete with Emotional Support – Create a warm and positive environment at home for your child to freely express their successes, hopes and fears. Use empathic listening when your child expresses frustration or dissatisfaction with a particular race. Your child will benefit tremendously from feeling heard and viewing the event as a learning experience. Offer praise for hard work, not for wins. Not everyone can win and perform their best at every competition. What can your athlete learn from it? Be very cautious not to be judgmental or try to be the "fixer" when your athlete shares their feelings.

5. Try Not To "Should" All Over Your Child – Words matter! Avoid using binding words like 'should, must, need,' and replace them with problem solving and encouraging words such as 'can, may, and what if?' Parents who wonder with their children give them the chance to develop their own autonomy and decide for themselves, enhancing their ability to self-motivate.

Over the past half century, studies have repeatedly found that being self-motivated helps both athletic and classroom performance and encourages learning, creativity, and psychological wellness. The process of self-motivation seems to be related to the dopaminergic systems within the brain, or the "feel good" neurotransmitters. To keep it simple, what we know for sure is that being self-motivated is not only satisfying, but also helps athletes engage in deliberate practice, encourage exploration and desires for mastery, and enhance performance both in the pool and out.



COACH CONNECTION

With **COACH BRAD GREEN**
Get to know **Coach BRAD** a little
better



Q & A with Coach Brad:

1. **Winter or summer?**
Summer
2. **Burger or hot dog?**
Burger
3. **Book or movie?**
Movie
4. **Chocolate or vanilla?**
Black and white milkshake
5. **Pizza or pasta?**
Pizza
6. **Sweet or salty?**
Salty
7. **Bagel or toast?**
Bagel
8. **Fruit or vegetable?**
Cantaloupe
9. **Beach or mountains?**
Beach

