

## Parent Meet Tips

*Courtesy of Elizabeth Wickham*

A coach once told me that his favorite swim parents are the ones who jump in and help—wherever they are needed—and don't expect anything in return. Keep that in mind, especially at swim meets. Here are two small things that can make a big difference:

### TIP ONE:

When your team is hosting a meet—sign up early and often! If you're not on a mega-sized team that has parents waiting in line to volunteer, filling volunteer positions can be a major undertaking. Our team has a parent volunteer who fills all the jobs, signs up every family on the team and tracks their hours. Don't create extra work for her. Volunteer right away.

Many teams require a minimum number of hours per family, per meet. Some families work every hour of the meet—from preparation months ahead—through tear down. Then, a few parents work a two-hour slot like it's a major inconvenience and they're too important to be bothered.

If you have the time, do more than the minimum. You'd be surprised how a few extra hours will improve the morale of your fellow parent volunteers and help the meet run smoothly.

### TIP TWO:

When you are at an away meet—say thank you! At meets, things can and will go wrong. The coffee may be cold at 7:30 a.m., the check-in line may be too long or the weather may not cooperate. Please, don't take these things out on the hosts. If there are rules for parents not to go behind the blocks with their swimmers, don't insist to a volunteer parent wearing an orange vest that you have to get behind the blocks. Accept that every meet won't run perfectly and realize volunteers are parents, too.

At the end of the meet, take a moment to say thank you to someone on the host team, an official, or administrator. The people running meets are usually former swim parents who love swimming and choose to stay involved. A few kind words at the end of a meet can have a positive impact and brighten someone's day.

Remember—this is all about the kids. By volunteering and doing a bit more than asked, you're setting an example for your children. Look around your pool deck. You'll notice that swimmers who stick with this great sport through their high school years and beyond have parents who jump in and help wherever they can.

## Help Your Child THRIVE, Not Just Survive

*By David Benzel, Growing Champions for Life, January 22, 2015*

Up until 1997, 87% of all studies in the field of psychology were focused on how to relieve the suffering of those stricken with depression, anxiety, and other emotional disorders. Beginning in the late 90's researchers began studying the flip side of that condition - happiness! Why are some people happier than others? What creates a sense of well-being and happiness in people? Suddenly the question became, "what can people do to help themselves THRIVE, not just survive?"

This is an important topic for parents who want to teach their children how to choose happiness during their youth sport experience. Yes, happiness is a choice. The sad fact is that many athletes have the attitude that they will become happy after they reach success. Happiness is seen as a destination found on the other side of success. "Work hard so you can become happy." Of course it never works out that way because success is a moving target that keeps advancing ahead of us with each new goal we set.

The researchers in the field of positive psychology discovered something interesting: athletes who choose happiness perform better than those who labor and wait for it to arrive. In fact, according to author Shawn Achor, all of us are 31% more productive when we're happy.

So what are the steps to thriving and experiencing a sense of happiness or well-being? Martin Seligman lists many strategies in his book "Flourish". Here are four activities that will actually increase the serotonin levels in your child:

1. End each day by listing three good things that happened.
2. Keep the focus on the positive things that you (your child) are grateful for in sports
3. Eliminate negative thought/talk, and turn challenges into opportunities both emotionally and physically
4. Take responsibility for all aspects of your athletic career
5. Set aside a quiet time every day for prayer or quiet reflection.

Each of these activities has been proven to lead to higher levels of happiness and well-being because of the accumulative effect of focusing on the positive elements of life. Giving our attention to positive thoughts and language just works better in life than the alternative. Nothing good comes from negativity! Teach your children to make a happier choice and watch them thrive.

Parenting is, without a doubt, a sacrificial act of love and compassion; including the moments of stern, tough love when a child's behavior must be redirected and unpleasant consequences are dished out for the purpose of a life lesson. For us to succeed in our assignment - to serve our highest purpose - we must first find within ourselves the ability to respond empathically to our children's emotional needs with grace and support. Regardless of life's circumstances, our children gain the grit they need for life when they experience the security of a personal emotional bond with one or both parents. Let's be sure we've aimed our hearts at what makes the biggest difference in a child's life. Family matters!