

Colorado She-Leads Summit Synopsis 2019

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This experience is definitely going to be one for the memory books. During this trip I experienced so many amazing opportunities, met an immense amount of amazing people, but most importantly have walked away with life skills that I know I can use in and out of the pool. On the duration of this summit I truly felt the ability to be able to break out of my shell and do things I never would have imagined myself doing. At home, I am typically a very shy person and it takes quite a while for me to be able to open and express myself with the people I am around. However, I did not feel that way for one second when I was here. All of my fellow participants greeted me with open arms and so did all of the administrators that were there. They did not make me feel as though I was just going and sitting at a lecture every day for hours on end. They made me feel as though I was there for a purpose and that purpose was to enhance myself and my team.

I feel as though the subjects that were addressed during the seminars every day were highly important and something that could be applied to every aspect of our lives. For instance, how to lead yourself before you are able to lead a team, how being a good leader doesn't mean you have to please everyone, and how being a good leader is someone who cares, understands and makes everyone work together. I was taught how to address situations head on and how to never be afraid to stand up for what you believe in and what you think is right. How to help others on the team or in your life that are struggling with their motivation and how to cancel out toxic people that are harming your success.

The administrators there made it a point that the lessons they were teaching not only related to the pool but outside of the pool which I really appreciate. They taught me techniques and skills to cope with my feelings and difficult situations that were happening in my life. Just this past weekend (April 27th and 28th) I was at a swim meet and was feeling extremely nervous and stressed out about my races, but I went back to my trip and the techniques we were taught such as performance breathing and that helped me get my nerves in check. I remembered the lesson they taught us about stress. How it should not be something to be afraid of or something to fear and run from but rather something to embrace and look at it as our body preparing us for the challenge we are about to face.

This summit gave me different perspectives on how to be a leader and how to approach my everyday training and school. One of my favorite things the Dr. Roberta Kraus said was that "a good leader listens to understand and not to be understood." To me, that spoke volumes. To me, that means that a leader is not someone who talks over everyone to make sure that they are heard, that they have to make sure everyone knows that they are in charge, to silence and others around them, and let themselves be the loudest. In fact this means quite the opposite. It means that a leader is one who encourages others to speak and tries to acknowledge how others see things and how they are feeling, someone who makes sure everyone is heard and feels like an important contribution to the team.

But, my most favorite quote that I pulled away from that weekend was that "we don't burnout because we get tired of what we are doing, we get burned out because we forget why we do it." As an athlete that has struggled with finding my place on my team and losing my love for my sport for a bit of time when I was struggling to drop times and dealing with a difficult coach, this quote brought me back to this time and resonated with me. At that point in time I was just going

through the motions and practice became a chore and the only thing that kept me going was remembering my why. Why I wake up in the morning to jump into a cold pool, why I work my butt off day in and day out, and why I love competing and why I love this sport. When it was time for the summit to come to an end, I truly was very sad knowing that I was leaving behind this beautiful place and all these amazing people I had met. But not leaving behind the lessons I had learned and the connections I had made. I walked away from this summit feeling more empowered than I ever have before, ready to make an impact on my team and in my life and that no matter what I do, to always be confident in myself and my capabilities and always remember my why.