

April 28, 2020

Positive Thoughts

The Athlete's Creed

By: Sarah Madey

I am not here to look good or smell nice. I am not here to chit-chat, small talk, or catch up. I am not here because I should be, because you asked me to be, or because they are. I am here for me, because of me. I am here to answer that thing inside me—that desire to be better today than I was yesterday, and better tomorrow than I am today. I don't need a crowd to compete—I have myself to beat every single day. And NO ONE competes harder than I do. I don't do this because someone is watching, I do it because I'll always know how hard I worked, regardless of what others may see or not see.

You know who I am, you've seen me before. I'm the one in the weight room after a big loss...and after a big win. I'm the one on the treadmill at max speed at 5:30am before going to work, willing myself to beat my best time...Just because. I'm the one testing my max reps long after my days of competing are over. And I'm the one who did three more push-ups than I'd planned to, just to remind myself that I CAN GO HARDER. That I can always be a little bit better, And tomorrow, I will do five more.

You think I'm crazy? You think I care too much? Work too hard? And all for what? This isn't about you, and it's not about him, or her, or them. It's about me. I don't need or expect you to understand. It's about working my ass off each and every single time I'm out there. It's about pushing my mind as hard as my body because I understand that success is not defined by mere physical domination. It's about NEVER GIVING UP, it's about passion and pride, it's about challenging myself to do more than I thought possible, and it's about wanting something so badly that is so hard to achieve—that may seem impossibly hard—and then achieving it, and knowing that IT WAS EARNED.

This thing, I can't shake it. It's who I am, it's the way I'm built, it's how I got to be where I am today—and I'm damn proud of it. And when my chance comes, I will be ready. And if I fail in the pursuit, I will be inspired. And if I prevail in the pursuit, I will be inspired. You see, you can't stop it, this thing inside—this will, this love, this drive. There are many who claim to be an athlete, but I am an athlete at heart, in my mind, at my core, in my DNA. I am, and will forever be, an athlete. No matter what it takes, I find a way to get the job done, to compete, and to improve. No excuses, just work. I am an athlete, an athlete at heart. I am FOREVER ATHLETE.

Task Focus

Each day I will give you things you CAN do while training and racing are on hold. Below are activities and tasks for *Tuesday, April 28, 2020*.

- ✚ Remember, no excuses—what can you do today to help yourself, your family, our world?
- ✚ Thanks to the swimmers that have responded to the survey about the dryland program.
- ✚ Please complete the survey if you have not done so already.
- ✚ Click the Survey Monkey link: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/Y9NZY8Z>
- ✚ The survey is Anonymous, so please share your honest thoughts.

Mental Focus

Pressure? What pressure? No One is Watching—right?

July/August, 2014 Splash Magazine

By Dr. Alan Goldberg

Kenny hadn't had a fast swim since freshman year in college, and that was over two years ago. It was confusing to him because the pace he was able to hold consistently in practice should have led to much faster times in meets. Then there were those Championships when he was jacked up, tapered and ready to drop a ton of time, and yet he never did.

So why in that insignificant mile that he swam in the middle of the season this year, when he was tired and his body was broken down, was he finally able to have that elusive great race?

Did it have anything to do with what his coach had told him right before the event? "Kenny, you are much too preoccupied with your time and the splits you need to get. For this race, forget your time completely. I seriously don't care how fast you swim, and I don't want you to care either! Instead, what I want you to do is concentrate on giving me 66 perfect turns. *Nothing else!* That's where I want your focus for this entire race."

For some strange reason, Kenny was much calmer and looser than usual before the race. He felt better in the water than he had in years and did exactly what the coach had instructed him to do. He took the pressure off of himself to go fast and instead focused on executing one perfect turn after another for the entire event. He was totally shocked at the end of the race when he saw how much time he had dropped.

Swimmers struggle going fast under pressure because they make the very common mistake that Kenny made: They over-focus on and over-think about their times/goals both before and during their event. Concentrating on your goals at race time will get you nervous, tighten your muscles, distract your focus from the task at hand and sabotage your race performance.

The most important mental skill you need for peak performance under pressure, to swim your best when it counts the most, is to control your focus of concentration.

What you focus on before and during your race can make or break your training. The right focus will keep you calm and confident before your event and help you go fast during it. The right focus is always on what you are *doing*.

- Behind the blocks—focus on doing the steps to your pre-race ritual as you do them—the stretching, jumping up and down, talking with a teammate, listening to music, etc.
- During the race—focus on the feel of what you are doing as you move through the water, how much water you're pulling, staying long each stroke, your rhythm, breathing pattern, kick, hand placement, etc.

The wrong focus is always on ***what you are thinking about in relation to your swim***, either before or during the race, (i.e. your goal times, who you're racing against and whether you'll beat them, that you might not "feel" fast in the water today, whether your taper was right for you or what people might think of you if so-and-so beats you.).

What Kenny's coach had done was to give him something very specific to focus on during the race which was "feel" and "doing" related—having clean turns, which distracted him from the over-focusing on and thinking about his goal times. If Kenny's coach had simply said to him, "Stop thinking about your times," then the swimmer wouldn't have been able to solve this problem because he wouldn't have known what to do instead of thinking. Telling yourself "not to think" about anything means that you'll think about it even more!

To swim fast under pressure, you must have very specific feeling/doing-related things that you can consistently lock your concentration on before and especially during your races that will help distract you from the performance-disrupting, thinking distractions that most swimmers get hung up on.

Jack Canfield

Jack Canfield was rejected 144 times before he found a publisher for his book, *Chicken Soup for the Soul*. When Jack told the publisher, he wanted to sell 1.5 million books in the first 18 months, the publisher laughed and said he would be lucky to sell 20,000.

The first book sold more than 8 million copies in America and 10 million copies worldwide. Canfield's book brand is now considered a one-billion-dollar brand!

Physical Challenge

Working on developing mental strength and increasing our knowledge on various components of our swimming. We will be ready for the physical challenges when we return! Let's look at "Perfecting our Freestyle"! This information comes from an issue of SPLASH magazine in the article by Emily Sampl.

Freestyle is easily the most practiced stroke by Olympic swimmers, age groupers and recreational swimmers alike. Over time, swimmers of all abilities may develop flaws in their freestyle techniques that may contribute to slower times or injuries, two things no swimmer wants.

Below are four common flaws in freestyle technique and drills to correct each problem, provided by members of the SwimMAC Carolina Coaching staff (Pam Swander, Tim Anderson, Sarah Holman, Kregg Anderson and Julia Warnken), and 2013 USA Swimming Coach of the Year, Bruce Gemmell, head coach at Nation's Capital Swim Club's Georgetown Prep facility.

Technique Flaw #1: Looking Forward (Head Position)

Potential Causes: "This may be caused by the fear of collision, circle swimming in the same direction every day, or looking for the wall or other swimmers," said Swander.

Correct Technique: The head should be in a neutral position on freestyle. A forward head position usually causes the hips and legs to sink, may hinder rotation and might put additional strain on the lower back.

DRILLS TO CORRECT THE PROBLEM:

- **Lane switch sets:** Create "one-way" lanes, allowing swimmers to focus on technique and not worry about running into each other or the wall. Swimmers can swim down in lane one, back in lane two, down in lane three, etc.
- **Head-lead kicking:** Have swimmers kick on their stomachs with their arms at their sides, focusing on head position. "It's harder for them to lift their head with their arms at their sides," said Swander.
- **Side-by-side swimming:** Instead of having swimmers go one right after the other, have swimmers swim side-by-side on 25s.

Technique Flaw #2: Dropping Elbows

Potential Causes: According to the staff at SwimMAC, some swimmers may not understand how to elevate their scapulae, causing their elbows to drop on the catch.

Correct Technique: The elbow should be higher than/above the fingertips on the freestyle catch, with the arm rotated such that the elbow is on top (not under the arm) for a more efficient catch and pull.

DRILLS TO CORRECT THE PROBLEM:

- **Barrel reach:** As a dryland exercise, swimmers can practice “reaching over a barrel,” keeping the elbow above the fingertips. The SwimMAC coaches also have swimmers reach over a lane line reel to achieve the same effect.
- **Fist drill:** Have swimmers swim freestyle, but with a closed fist; this emphasizes the importance of high elbows when the surface area of the hand is taken away.
- **Dog paddle:** Can be done with the head out of the water, or with a snorkel; the arms recover underwater; with the head up, swimmers can see what their elbows are doing underwater.

Technique Flaw #3: Inconsistent or Lack of Flutter Kick:

Potential causes: May be caused by a lack of kicking endurance or ankle flexibility.

Correct technique: There isn’t necessarily a “correct” amount of kick for freestyle. It depends on the distance a swimmer is swimming and his speed. However, a continuous kick will usually lead to faster times and put less stress on the shoulders.

DRILLS TO CORRECT THE PROBLEM:

- **Multi-plane kicking:** Have swimmers practice kicking on their fronts, sides, backs and vertically. They will get used to kicking in different body positions. “Practice changing the depth of the kick as well,” said Swander. “Not just pitter-patter, but also the size of the kick.”
- **Fast feet, slow arms:** Have swimmers focus on a fast kick while maintaining long, smooth freestyle arm strokes.
- **Gemmell recommends** teaching a two-beat kick (two kicks per stroke) early on, then migrating to four-beat and six-beat kick as swimmers get older to develop a consistent kicking pattern.

Technique Flaw #4: Crossover

Potential causes: Crossover (the arms cross the body’s midline either at the entry or underwater, during the pull) is commonly caused by too narrow an entry or overreaching with one or both arms.

Correct Technique: The arms should never cross the midline of the swimmer’s body; pulling across the body will cause the swimmer to “fishtail” or “snake” down the pool, causing excess drag.

DRILL TO CORRECT THE PROBLEM:

- **Tarzan drill:** Swim freestyle with the head out of the water, looking forward to see where the arms/hands enter the water. “We find “Tarzan drill,” “water polo” drill or “ugga- bugga” drill (all variations of the same drill – head-up freestyle), along with consistent three-stroke, bi-lateral breathing really helps prevent this common mistake,” said Gemmell.

Fun Facts about Sports

The state sport of Alabama is figure skating.

Annie Kopchovsky, (also known as Annie Londonderry) the first woman to cycle around the world in 1894, had only learned how to cycle a few days before she set off. She covered the entire distance in 15 months and received a reward of \$10,000.

The world record for most consecutive push-ups was set in 1980 by Minoru Yoshida from Japan who managed to do 10,507 in an hour.

Motivational Moments---Enjoy!

World Within Motivation Video

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F_Wr6cWHhVQ