**Positive Parent Pointers**

In this series, we will be posting tips every three times a week from Swimming World's Wayne Goldsmith's "POSITIVE PARENT POINTERS" article; which we have found to be a great resource for our parents. Check it out and be the best swim parent on deck!

**30. Relax and enjoy the ride.** I can't tell you how many ex-swimming parents -i.e. parents of kids who have retired from swimming or who have left for college, etc. - that I meet all over the world who tell me that they wish they could turn back time and go back to the days when they were driving their kids to meets, stopping for ice cream on the way home from the pool on hot days, or just getting to spend a lot of time with their children. Sometimes chasing PRs and trying to make the qualifying standard for nationals seems like the only things that matter. But in the grand scheme of things, what really matters isn't the fast times they swim at meets- it's the time you have together with them ... and those times go by all too fast. (Wednesday, March 13)

**29. Never give up on them!** Once you're a parent, you're a parent for life. There's no "off" button for parenting. Sometimes there'll be a day when it seems like you've lost them and you can't communicate with them no matter how hard you try. It's heartbreaking...but  never give up. Just be there for them. Be the one person in their life who doesn't judge them, doesn't expect anything from them, and who doesn't need them to do anything to be loved, valued, and accepted other than just being themselves. (Tuesday, March 12)

**28. Chores!** Just because your child swims a few hundred laps every day, they are sstill members of your family and should be required to contribute to the household by doing chores. Being a great freestyler doesn't mean they can't take out the trash... or breaking the school 100 fly record doesn't exclude them from washing the dishes. Chores are a valuable part of life of every young child because they teach:
     - the importance of responsibility
     - how to work as part of a family and a team
     - the importance of humility
     - selfelessness
     - the benefits of developing a work ethic
Bottom line: your kids doing chores also helps you! (Monday, March 11)

**27. Master "Car-speak."** One of the biggest challenges all parents face is trying to figure out what to say in the car to their kids on the way home from training and from meets, especially when the kids are sad, disappointed or angry. Sometimes the best "car-speak" is to say nothing! Even though every parenting instinct you have is urging you to say something and to help your child deal with the emotional pain they are feeling, often the best thing to do is not to talk, but to listen. When they're ready to talk... let them talk. And listen - really listen to them - before responding. (Thursday, March 7)

**26. Encourage them to seek and find balance.** Swimming is a wonderful sport ...and it's a skill for life. But life is so much more than swimming laps, racing at meets, and winning medals. Expose your children to opportunities to learn and enjoy music. Help them find their passion for learning at school. Allow them to play and experience other sports. Give them time off to go to the movies with their friends. Give them space just to hang out at home and do nothing every so often. Let them be kids first ...and the swimming will take care of itself. (Tuesday, March 5)

**25. Be aware of their changing needs as they grow and mature.**When they're young, your support may take the form of driving them to and from training and meets, cooking their meals, and supporting them in every aspect of their training and racing. As they get older, your swimming parent support role might change to become more about listening to them talk about their problems, teaching them to drive themselves to training and meets, and showing them how to cook. Be conscious of the importance of trying to connect with them in ways of how they want to be connected and to try and change and grow with them. (Friday, March 1)

**24. When they make mistakes -and they will- try not to overreact.** Making mistakes and learning from them is one of the most important, effective and powerful learning tools we have. When your child makes a mistake -for example, if he or she misses a marshalling call, or they false-start in an important race -try to adopt a "these-things-happen" attitude. Smile and encourage them to try again. (Thursday, Feb 28)

**23. If they say they want to "quit" ...don't panic!** First, try to understand why. Step back and give them some time and space to think through the issues. Maybe ask an older swimmer who's been through the "quitting" experience to talk with your child from the perspective of empathy -i.e., find someone who has gone through the same thing and will understand how your child feels. Above all, do not make it about you and how you feel. This is a time to listen, to learn, and to love... not to judge. (Wednesday, Feb 27)

**22.Teach your kids about healthy eating.** Teach them how to go shopping for healthy, nutritious foods. Spend time educating them how to read product labels on the sides of boxes of breakfast cereal and other items. The more they understand about the importance of maintaining a high-performance diet, the better. (Tuesday, Feb 26)

**21. Encourage your child to encourage other swimmers and to care about their team members.** Selflessness is an important quality for all athletes to possess -and it starts with teaching young kids to care about their teammates, to encourage and support their team members when they're down, and to celebrate with them when they succeed. (Thursday, Feb 21, 2019)

**20. Never, ever introduce your child as "my son, the backstroker," or "my daughter, the swimmer."** Your child is a wonderful, amazing person who -at this moment in his or her life- in addition to all the other incredible things he or she does, just happens to swim. Don't define them by their swimming success or failures. Instead, help them develop as human beings, and that will be reflected in their swimming. (Wednesday, Feb 20, 2019)

**19. Enjoy going to meets and appreciate the pleasure of watching your child doing something healthy.** Your kids are doing something that will not only improve their fitness and well-being, but something that one day may save their lives or the life of someone they care about. (Tuesday, Feb. 19, 2019)

**18. If your child misses out on something he or she was trying to achieve - like a team selection - look them in the eyes and say, "I love you, I know you're disappointed, but on this occasion, you weren't quite good enough to make the team."** Too many parents when faced with their child's disappointment will argue and fight with the coach or the selection panel rather than helping their child learn how to deal with it... and , most importantly, how to move on quickly to their next challenge. (Saturday, Feb 17, 2019)

**17. Maintain perspective.** It is only swimming. It is only something they do - it is not who they are. (Thursday, Feb 14, 2019)

**16. Be patient when your child has hit a "plateau" i.e. hasn't improved his or her PRs for six months or more.** It's frustrating for the swimmer. It's frustrating for the coach. And even though it's also frustrating for you... you job is to love, to support, and to encourage your child no matter how long it takes to break their performance plateau. (Wednesday, Feb 13, 2019)

**15. Treat winning and losing the same when it comes to how you speak to and about your child.** If they win... tell them you love them and how much you enjoy watching them race. If they lose... tell them you love them and how much you enjoy watching them race. There is no difference between winning and losing when it comes to how you feel about your kids. Show them that! (Friday Feb 8, 2019)

**14. Don't worship physical talent.** Physical talent is overrated. Ultimately, the factors that will lead to your child realizing his or her potential are more about their character, personality, values, virtues, and behaviors; than they are about size, strength, and the other physical qualities of performance. Great kids make great athletes. (Thursday, Feb 7, 2019)

**13. Reward kids for demonstrating behaviors and values you want.** Behaviors such as honesty, respect, integrity, commitment, kindness, and hard work. Use these characteristics rather than just praising them for winning medals and recording PRs. Help build great kids first and foremost - then the fast swimming and bulging trophy case is a bonus. (Wednesday, Feb 6, 2019)

**12. Encourage your children to take responsibility for their own swimming.** Teach kids responsibility by having them dry and clean their own training and racing equipment, packing their own swim bags, setting their own alarms for morning workouts, etc. Confidence comes from knowing ... and knowing comes from doing! The more they can do, the more they know, and the more confident they become. (Thursday, Jan 31, 2019)

**11. Adopt the "Thumper" Principle.** When it comes to discussing swimming, the coach, the club, or other matters with other swimming parents: "If you can't say sumthin' nice, don't say nuthin' at all." If you've got a legitimate problem with someone connected with the team, go and talk directly to them and address your concenrs calmly, respectfully, and appropriately. Gossip kills swimming clubs! (Wednesday, Jan 30, 2019)

**10. Build some strong, positive relationships with other parents from your child's swim team.** The other parents understand what you're going through and can help you with the practical things such as driving the kids to meets, doing early morning workout pick-ups, etc. Welcome new parents to the club like long lost friends, and help them to "learn the ropes" of swimming parenting. (Tuesday, Jan 29, 2019)

**9. Encourage the formation of positive friendships within your child's swim team.** Friends and friendships are critical, particularly during your child's teenage years. Be the "drop-in" center for the team. Hold parties and BBQs and movie nights at your home. Make every member of your child's swim team friendship group welcome in your home. (Monday, Jan 28, 2019)

**8. Set a great example with your own health, fitness, and sports participation.** There's been a lot of research published lately that suggests your child's attitudes toward health, fitness, and sport generally are strongly influenced by your own. Even being involved with the team in some way- maybe taking care of training equipment or driving the team bus to a meet- can make a difference to the way your child connects with his or her sport. (Thursday, Jan 24, 2019)

**7. Learn to say NO.** You love your kids. You want them to be happy. But sometimes, you have to say NO. Saying NO to things like junk food, to staying up late, to skipping sessions because they don't feel like going - these things may not make you a popular parent, but in the long run, sometimes the greatest gift you can give your child is to be the one who lovingly, caringly, but decisively says NO. (Tuesday, Jan. 22, 2019)

**6. Get excited at swim meets.** Cheer for your child and for every swimmer on your child's team. But leave it at that! No tactical advice or racing strategies, please. If you have to say something to your child before they compete, try this: "I love you. Enjoy the race." (Monday, Jan 21, 2019)

**5. Talk about and treat your child's coach with respect.** Your child's coach is an important influence in his or her life, and your relationship with the coach is vital in the success of your child's swimming career. Always remember: your child's coach wants the same things you want - to see your child succeed in swimming and in life, to help them fall in love with the sport of swimming and to ensure they enjoy the experience of being in and around water. You're on the same team! (Monday, Jan. 21, 2019)

**4. Don't coach them.**  That's their coach's job. Your job as a swimming parent is difficult, challenging, and complex enough without adding in the additional burden of trying to develop your child's swimming skills, techniques, tactics, strategies, etc. There are a lot of things you can do to help your child realize their potential - but couching isn't one of them. (Tuesday, Jan. 15, 2019)

**3. Don't give them sodas!**  Sodas are full of sugar and carbonation which have no positive effects on swimmer's health or well-being. Carbonated drinks can negatively impact performance as they introduce more carbon dioxide into the body in a sport where oxygenation is a highly important factor. (Saturday, Jan. 12, 2019)

**2. Help them manage their time - particularly their electronic time.**  Encourage children to stop using electronics and anything with a screen at least 30 minutes prior to bedtime. Don't allow them to take electronic devices to their bedroom. Research has proven that "screen time" affects the quality and quantity of sleep, which is highly important to growing kids and especially athletes. (Thursday, Jan. 10, 2019)

**1. Love your swimmer completely and unconditionally.**  It seems simple, but do not get caught up in how fast they swim or their achievments. Love them for who they are and because they are. (Tuesday, Jan. 8, 2019)