



Fostering a positive attitude

When we were younger, many of us looked at our parents and noticed traits we either wanted to have just like them or swore we would never do when we grew up. Whether we like to admit it or not, kids watch parents (even when they may not notice) and carry many of their traits with them as they grow up.

Tim Elmore is a leading researcher, author, and speaker regarding Generation Z (1997-2012), which most of our athletes fall under. In [this](#) short article of defining characteristics of Generation Z, "They are cynical. They tend to be more realistic not idealistic, seemingly jaded from the tough economy, terrorism and complexities of life." That could be considered stereotypical, but even so, how do you foster a positive attitude as a parent when they have all of this information and access at their fingertips or through their peers at school?

Have conversations. You don't even have to worry about what the content of the conversation is (although you can). The point is you don't have to force their opinions, but you can help them understand there is more than one and that is acceptable. Teach them it's also okay to be wrong and change opinions. And if the general attitude of Generation Z is cynicism, teach them optimism. According to scientific studies, approximately 40% of happiness is up to you. That means a huge chunk of how you feel is under your own control.

How does this relate to swimming? A swimmer who doesn't enjoy coming to practice is not going to get as much out of it as a swimmer who does. A swimmer who enjoys hard work and sees a tough set as a challenge will be more likely to do the same with school projects and eventually projects in their future jobs. Happiness breeds confidence in our ability to succeed.

There have been times coaches have given a set to their group and heard sighs, grunts, and sarcastic comments by swimmers either under their breath or to their peers regarding what they're about to do. How does this help prepare their minds for the mental challenge and their bodies for the physical one? It doesn't. In fact if an individual comment is overheard by teammates, it can start to spread to the entire group. So we need to work together to create a growth mindset. Having an attitude that sees difficulty as an obstacle that can be overcome versus one that is intolerable makes all the difference.

That same scenario of a swimmer making a negative comment before a set, flip it to a positive one. The attitude and outcome of the group is completely different going into the set. We have seen your swimmers do this as well, and the end of the set is met by high-fiving each other with smiles while being exhausted. Imagine the potential of the group if every day had that level of encouragement. Parents (and coaches) can influence this by being an example through the way we speak and use body language. Let's work together to nurture that opportunity.