

## Things for Swim Parents to Remember

By John Leonard

**W**hen I look at our training groups every day, I see remarkable things happening. I've been "looking" for many years, and one of the things that I am most certain of, is that in our sport "things take time."

Humans all develop at different rates, on different aspects of their personal growth. It is uneven, uncomfortable, strange, unpredictable, frustrating, joyous, funny and dead serious. One child "gets it" immediately when she starts the sport, others seem to take "years" to get to the same point. But then, once those slow developers "get it," the acceleration rate is dramatic. And every variation a parent and coach can think of off that theme. Things in swimming "take time."

Our current culture is instant gratification and "now." Swimming doesn't work that way. Swimming is like the "drip, drip, drip" water on rock that eventually erodes into the Grand Canyon. You come to practice daily, learn incrementally, and (typically) "slowly begin to catch on." One day you stand still when you kick, then you move your feet one inch deeper in the water and lo and behold, you're moving forward! (Another inch deeper and you're moving fast on your kickboard!) One day your toes won't "turn out" on breaststroke and then magically one day, they do. Then they don't. Then the next week, they turn out a couple of times. Then they don't. The next week, suddenly you can turn them out most of the time when you concentrate. Swimming is COUNTER-CULTURE. Things take time.

In my 45 years of coaching, this strikes me so strongly as an exact replication of "real life." Take the digital world out of things, and there is no "instant gratification." EVERYTHING develops slowly,

intermittently, with fits and starts, and growth spurts. Only with Television, iPads, iPhones, and all our digital toys are things actually "instant." This does NOT teach us or inform us about real life. The important things in life: Love, Family, and Education, ALL TAKE TIME to develop.

Swimming is mostly about practice for real life for our athletes. Come to practice, work hard every day, and good, meaningful and lasting things happen in your life.

Remind your athletes of the Three Immutable Rules of Improvement (and in life):

- » SHOW UP.
- » HONOR YOUR TEAMMATES WITH YOUR EFFORT.
- » DO THINGS CORRECTLY.