

## **Better Together**

As we have all been adjusting to a “new normal” over the past several weeks, I have been especially grateful for 757 Swim's mission: *“Working together to make everyone better.”* In times of uncertainty, a sense of community and belonging is often the antidote for stress and loneliness. Because I am a National Board Certified Counselor, Coach Morgan has asked that I share some insight into the mental health challenges families are currently facing.

Put simply, human beings are wired for community. In the midst of this unprecedented time of isolation and social distancing, it is more important than ever that we stay connected. Numerous studies have shown that the healthiest, happiest people tend to be more involved in their communities. You are a vital part of the 757 Swim community. Our coaches have done an exceptional job of keeping swimmers and their families connected, even while we are unable to be together face-to-face.

Live workouts on Saturday mornings with Coach Drew not only help with physical strength, but with mental and emotional fitness as well. Daily emails and at-home workouts help us feel connected and remind us that we are all in this together. Fun games like the mascot challenge, 757 Bingo, and the newly released “Buzek Challenge” help lighten the mood and keep us engaged in our swim community.

In my opinion, the best way 757 Swim is keeping swimmers involved in their community is through the weekly Zoom meetings designated for each practice group. For one hour per week, the swimmers are able to log onto their computers (or phones) and see their teammates live as they engage in conversation with their peers and coaches. If you have not yet joined in one of these Zoom sessions, I highly encourage you to make it a top priority this week. Enjoy the time with your teammates. Laugh together, give thanks together, and encourage one another. We can all benefit from this time of connection.

Do you remember learning about Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs in school? Love and Belonging is the third need on his pyramid—inferior only to physiological needs (air, water, food) and safety needs (personal security and health). Belonging is described as friendship, family, and a sense of connection or community. Without it, we are prone to loneliness or depression and are robbed of a full life. Know that you belong at 757 Swim, and that you have a family of teammates cheering you on as we look forward to the day when we can all jump back in the pool together and celebrate as one big swim community.

Stay safe, stay healthy, and stay connected! *We are better together.*

If you believe you or someone in your family may be struggling with anxiety or depression, feel free to reach out to me at [acory@k12.com](mailto:acory@k12.com) for a confidential referral to a mental health professional. Included below are some symptoms of depression as well as strategies for relieving stress.

## **Symptoms of Depression**

### Behavioral

- Feelings of hopelessness or worthlessness
- Apathic or “empty” mood
- Increase in irritability
- Frequent crying
- Inability to have fun
- Wanting to be alone most of the time
- General sadness

### Physical

- Change in appetite
- Fatigue
- Having trouble relaxing or sleeping
- Stomachaches
- Headaches

### Cognitive

- Having trouble concentrating
- Difficulty making decisions
- Thoughts of suicide

## **Stress Relief Strategies**

### Take Care of Your MIND

- Limit time watching or reading the news
- Focus on things that are going well and that you can control
- List the many things you are thankful for

### Take Care of Your BODY

- Eat healthy food and drink water
- Get enough sleep and rest
- Get physical exercise daily
- Maintain a regular routine with consistent sleep and wake times

### Practical Ways to RELAX

- Deep breaths
- Stretching
- Prayer or meditation
- Engage in hobbies that you enjoy
- Listen to music
- Take a bath
- Help others in need

## **Ways to Stay Connected**

- Call or Facetime with extended family members (cousins, grandparents, etc.)

- Set up a zoom meeting with a small group of friends from school
- Build something with your family members
- Bake/cook something with a sibling
- Encourage others (letters or phone calls)
- Play card games or board games with your family. Have FUN together!