

Hello 757swim Family,

I hope everyone is doing well. On Friday, we talked about the importance of goals and goal setting. Today, we'll be discussing the dreaded word, "failure" and how to respond when we fall short of a goal. Once again, a big THANK YOU to everyone who completed the safe sport online course. We are getting closer to the number of families needed to apply for the Safe Sport Recognition Award. Lastly, before we dive in, some things we'll touch on go with Drew's story of Katinka Hosszu. I love that article that he did. If you haven't read it or any of our articles you can still find them all on our website

here <https://www.teamunify.com/SubTabGeneric.jsp?team=va757&staid=205653>

Achieving a goal is one of the biggest highs in swimming and life, but falling short of a goal can be one of the most powerful learning moments. When I discuss a swimmer's goals with them when they turn them in, I make sure that their goals are challenging yet attainable. Meaning that if they show up to practice everyday, if they work hard whenever asked to, and if they listen well and are open to making changes, then they should be able to hit their challenging goal. Those are a lot of 'ifs' and it is very tough to do those 3 things everyday.

When a swimmer at the end of the season (or whatever their timetable was) comes back to me after their race, falling short of their goal we have some things to talk about and a tremendous opportunity to grow. Sometimes it's as simple as there was a mistake in the race. Those happen, and all we can do is learn from them and focus on that aspect a little more in practice. More often though, the race went as well as possible in that moment. When that happens we need to analyze the 3 keys to success, or the 'ifs' mentioned above: practice attendance, work ethic, and coachability (how well they listen, are open to changes, how well they make changes, and how well they keep those changes).

*Side note: There are more factors that go into swimming success than my 3 ifs. Nutrition and sleep are two big examples. However, as a coach I focus on the 3 first because they are what I see everyday in practice. We definitely encourage good nutrition and getting plenty of sleep, but we start our analysis with the 3 ifs because that is what we coaches have the most data on.

Failure is the absolute greatest teacher. After their race, that swimmer who fell short of their goal makes the long walk back to their coach. If they aren't overcome with negative emotions, they will go over the race in their mind trying to figure out where they went wrong. As mentioned above usually the race is not the issue, but thinking about it is still the natural reaction. Along the way and while they are waiting to talk to their coach, they pass and see other swimmers, teammates, friends, with huge smiles on their faces because they are experiencing that great joy of achieving their goal. The swimmer now must choose either to make excuses or finally open to the possibility of change.

Rarely is our coaching staff surprised by a meet result, and it usually isn't difficult to explain what went wrong. Over the course of the season, we see the body of work that each swimmer has put in, giving us a good idea of what to expect. What is frustrating is when swimmers expect an outcome without truly earning it. Going back to my 3 keys, we see swimmers with poor practice attendance getting upset by a meet result. We see swimmers who have been told 100 times to fix

the same mistake but choose not to, whether a stroke flaw or simply streamlining. It's no surprise when that mistake shows up in a race and costs them their goal. We also see swimmers who either don't yet know how to work hard, or worse, know how to work hard and don't do it regularly. All of these swimmers have been shown the door to success many times but refuse to walk through it until they experience failure.

I'd like to take the time to highlight some success from failure stories from this year. Will Hartig was an exceptional 10 and under swimmer. However, he had a rough start as an 11 year old. What he did to be successful a year ago would no longer be enough to achieve his new goals. He had great attendance and always worked hard, but (like many 10 year old superstars aging up) he wasn't initially willing to make changes. After falling short a couple times in meets, he realized what earned him his younger success was no longer enough. Since then he has really opened up to change, and his last couple meets were something special because of it. Keep it up, Will!

Seva Ananthram is another swimmer worth highlighting. She's a swimmer with great practice attendance and who is very coachable. What didn't come as easily for her was working hard in practice and in meets. I would often ask her how tired she was on a scale of 1 to 10 after a race or after a tough set in practice. Up until late December or early January her answers would usually be a 4 or 5 which caused her to come up short of her goals. After that she learned to truly work hard everyday and her last meets were amazing because of it. Way to go, Seva!

I could highlight so many others. Maybe I'll find ways to do that in future articles, but we'll stop with those two to keep this from turning into a book. There's also so much more I could say as well, but we'll close with one last paragraph.

Failure is the absolute greatest teacher. It's a shame that so many are conditioned to fear it and never set challenging goals. Going back to our goal setting article, we encourage challenging yet attainable goals, so from a swimming stand-point we try to prevent easy goals. For life however, I always encourage setting challenging goals in which failure is a real possibility. If you hit the goal, that's great! You've really grown if the goal was truly challenging. ...and if you happen to fall short, even better. Use that as a chance to learn from the greatest teacher.

Thanks for reading. I hope you have a wonderful week!

-Mike