

THE ONE STOP POP!

Developing Character One Lap at a Time

The Official Quarterly Newsletter of YOTA Swim Team
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Personal Excellence

Coach Jerry guides us through seven tips, from celebrating victories to learning from failures, to develop personal excellence.

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Get your pencils ready, because Coach Rachel has a lesson for you- the why, how, what, and when of journaling for athletes.

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Swimming During Summer

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Swimming Bingo

Have you done it all? Check out YOTA Bingo to see if you can cross-off five in a row! Share your Bingo board with friends and show us your completed board on social media!

Developing Personal Excellence Jerry Foley

"Excellence is not a skill. It's an attitude." – Ralph Marston

It's hard to believe that about a month ago, we suspended practices, were advised to stay at home, and practice social distancing. The effects of this crisis have been profound and extremely difficult. I find myself struggling at times and when I do, I try to think differently about my situation.

So what does this crisis and our struggles have to do with becoming the best athlete you can be... everything! What makes an athlete elite? I haven't met an athlete yet that doesn't want to be at the top of their game, to be the best they can be. So, how do you get there?

There are many components to success in sport. We are all familiar with attributes like hard work, determination, commitment, dedication and focus. But what else can help take your performance to another level? The elite athlete is always seeking new ways to learn and grow in sport and improve his/her performance.

Through my 35 years of coaching, the one behavior that separates good-to-great is "Attitude". I must note that your attitude is determined by how you think. It's crazy how much of an impact our attitude has when it comes to the way one performs in the pool and in life.

On days when we are riding high, with life seemingly bending to our will, even the toughest of workouts is met with an optimism and determined front. And yet, when we feel bummed out, or pessimistic, the tough stuff in the pool and life becomes even tougher.

Being positive-minded when you are going through those heavy bouts of training, where exams and assignments are piling up, or even at home during a pandemic, can help make the challenging stuff easier to handle. When we are optimistic we are able to better brace ourselves for the difficult chapters in our swimming career, and perhaps most importantly in life.

The opportunity to develop the habit of having a positive attitude is now; amidst all your disappointments and struggle there is one thing you can, over the next several weeks improve, and it is the most important skill – your attitude. I challenge you all to think differently about your situation and how you can find positivity in all the challenges that lie ahead.

I will be the first to admit that I need to remind myself to practice the habits of successful individuals; however, over time it becomes easier. Here are seven ways to develop your positive attitude. (Of note, this is just as important for parents as it is athletes.) (cont.)

Developing Personal Excellence (cont.)

- 1. Change your failures/disappointments into learnings.** If you look at the way you take and handle setbacks as a skill, something you can actively work on and learn from, then you are light years ahead of those swimmers that take every failure – large and small – as an indictment on their abilities. Look, setbacks are going to happen. You are not going to be perfect and no one has ever swam a perfect race, from the age grouper to the multi-Olympian, multi-gold medal winning athlete. What separates those who allow failure to define why they quit and those who choose to make failure a redirection in their journey is the outlook they have (their attitude).
- 2. Journal some gratitude.** By now there is no doubt that at least one of your friends on Facebook (perhaps even you) has taken some form of the gratitude challenge. Research has shown that this actually works, and that redirecting your thoughts to the good stuff that you have in your life increases happiness and decreases stress. You certainly don't need to post it online for the world to see, spending a few minutes at home logging it into a notebook or log book works just as well.
- 3. Celebrate the victories.** Especially the small ones. Most individuals tend to undervalue the impact of their small wins. Because they aren't the big, life-altering victories that cause massive change, we gloss them over, ignore them and bypass them. Which is too bad. Although having three really good practices in a row, or doing bilateral breathing for the full workout, or doing every lap with awesome technique isn't a world record or gold medal, it's still worth recognizing and celebrating. I would add that right now exercising most days for 60 minutes and eating well are worth celebrating.
- 4. Be solutions-oriented and think with the end in mind.** It's easy to point out the faults and shortcomings of not only ourselves, but of those around us. When things aren't going our way the quickest route is to latch on to the problem and dwell on it. Rather than piling on to yourself (or others) seek a solution, a path forward and offer constructive criticism. When we seek solutions we are moving forward, making progress. Making excuses and offering criticism without guidance keeps us stuck in place. Be responsible for your activity (or inactivity) each day and use this time to develop new positive habits.
- 5. Remember that attitude is a choice- how one thinks.** We make a ton of choices on a daily basis. What we are going to eat for breakfast – (if you are even up by then). Whether or not we are going to pay attention in class (online these days). The mental approach we take on, the attitude we carry around with us, is dictated by us as well. Simply thinking about having a better attitude can often be just the thing to have it improve. Being conscious of the fact that our chosen attitude is our prerogative is better than allowing our attitude to be influenced by others and left up to chance.
- 6. Practice the power of optimism.** By being an optimist and having hope you won't let the negativity of others infect you. This one is sneaky. We don't often notice how the people around us influence us until much later. Hang out with a complainer for the course of a day and you can't help but latch on to some of that negative energy, catching yourself complaining by the end of the day. Hang out with positive-minded people, however, and you will find their optimism to be infectious. If, according to the law of averages, we are the average of the five people we spend the majority of our time with, what does that make you?
- 7. In the words of Gandhi, "Be The Change."** When you are positive with others around you, supporting their goals, making for a more positively charged training or home environment, caring about your teammates and family, you cannot help but become more positive with yourself. Seeing the positive within yourself comes with seeing the positive in others. The effects of this may seem simple, but they are profound. Choose action that creates a positive attitude and be a role model for kindness and compassion during these challenging times.

By recognizing and accepting responsibility for your attitude, you will improve. Make decisions and take actions that reflect one of optimism and create an environment at home that supports one another during this time.

As teammates and family members lift one another up, be there to inspire and motivate each other. Create an environment that you want to be part of now and in the future. When you choose to be the catalyst for creating a positive environment at home, school, work, or practice, you find that inevitably you have a positive attitude... it becomes a habit.

We need each other to help stay motivated and stay the course, especially when things get hard – and they are right now. Life is hard, that is a fact – so the sooner we accept that and stop looking for the easy way (cont.)

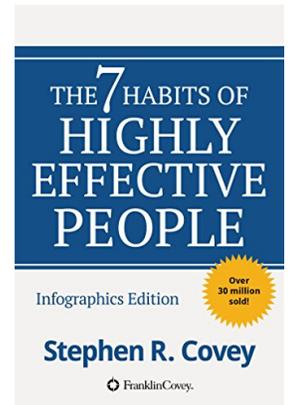
Developing Personal Excellence (cont.)

out of this, the sooner we can get down to the business of encouragement and inspiring one another with our positive attitude.

According to Plato, the beginning is the most important part of the work. Therefore I encourage each of you to start living out a positive attitude, one that will improve your ability to become more self-reliant and optimistic.

Lastly. If you are looking for a good book to read that can help you develop a positive attitude and habits for success in life I recommend reading the Seven Habits of Highly Successful People, by Steven Covey. There are even children and teen versions of this book, so the whole family can read and learn.

Stay engaged.



There is Purpose in Everything We Do Tom Hazelett

Survival

Our sport is full of “doers.” This is why many of us are not feeling good about the quarantine because in many aspects of our lives we are being told to “wait.” There are times in all of our lives where we have to cling to anything we can just to survive. Whether it is with relationships, with providing for our family, or with trying to see the light in a dark tunnel. It is imperative in times with no specific direction that we remind ourselves to look forward. You may not know how far the light is, how much time will go by before you feel safe again, or how many steps it will take to get a relationship where you want it, but always look forward because “forward” is the only place where things can get better. There is a lot of fulfillment in survival: survival of challenges in the water and survival in life.

Stress

When was the last time that you thought positively about stress? Me neither, but there are certain levels of stress that are extremely healthy for us. Stress gives us energy to do what we have to do and to do what is right. Stress gives us drive to be better than the day before. Stress is a necessary part of change. In many cases, what starts as “stress” is what we see later as “purpose” and a need to make a change in our lives. I think that many of us now realize that we actually miss some of the things that we used to think of as stressors. Upon return, that change in perspective and appreciation will be a lesson that we have never had before, but that cannot be taught better than through experience.

Time

Take a moment and think about the interesting facts about time. In our current situation, we have all learned that “time” is much more than we may have thought. In swimming, it has become essential to our goals, and in many cases, an indicator of self-worth. What sometimes starts as a driver of motivation ends up as a driver of negative self-talk or confidence. We are so used to what we do in the water revolving around time. Many swimmers place value in themselves based on the time on the scoreboard, but the truth is and has always been the complete opposite, where really what we do is what puts value in the time. We are learning this more than ever before and it is yet another thing that cannot be taught better than through experience. How are you spending your time now? I am confident that most of us are uncertain what to do and how to feel, but I am certain that we now love swimming and each other more than ever! Time is precious and we cannot get it back, but it is important to consistently look back and learn from what we’ve done. Find the value in those experiences and we’ll continue to build confidence as we move forward.

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YOTA Swim Team



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Keep your notifications turned on for team updates, giveaways, meet results, and so much more! If you have ideas for social media content, please send us a direct message on any one of our three platforms.

Journaling For Athletes

Rachel Muller

Why: The science behind it is quite simple: when we 'think' something or we 'commit' something to our memory, it often becomes lost in the diverse, endless pieces of information and events in our minds, unless we assign it significant importance. Chances are you won't be able to recover a specific memory that could impact your performance unless you assign it with significant importance.

Think back to your last practice and try to recall everything you were told. What did your coaches tell you? What did your teammates tell you? Perhaps most importantly, what did you tell yourself? How much detail can you truly recall?

What if the one piece of information that could make all the difference in your swimming was lost in your mind? Besides filling the gaps in our minds, journaling also provides the following:

1. Reduces stress and anxiety.

Writing down your feelings helps you to "brain dump" your anxieties and frustrations. Journaling also helps organize your thoughts. When you can see your stressors and anxieties it allows your brain to find the root of the problem and create a solution that in the end reduces your stress.

2. Sharpens mental skills.

We spend hours a day following a black line on the bottom of the pool to be in the best physical condition. It is just as important to train our brains. When you journal how you are feeling and what you are thinking, it shows you the areas of your mental game that are helping you be a successful swimmer, but it is also showing you the areas of your mental game that still need improvement.

3. Enhances motivation.

If you write it down, you will make it happen. Journaling every day is a good reminder of what you want to accomplish and why you want it. If you lose sight of your goal and why you are doing it, you will easily become unmotivated. Writing down what we are grateful for reminds us of the good things in our life and will boost your emotions.

4. Increases confidence and self-awareness.

Writing down all the little details of our messy, crazy, busy life allows us to see our imperfections. At the end of the day we can't fix what's not broken. Self-awareness allows us to see what is broken, which then allows us to apply grace with ourselves in that area. It's important to understand that self-awareness leads to confidence. When you journal, you begin to see all your strengths and weaknesses. Knowing our strengths boosts our confidence and understanding our weaknesses gives us a chance to set goals to make those weaknesses stronger.

5. Boosts your emotions.

Writing down what we are grateful for reminds us of all the good things in our lives. It's human nature to dwell on the negative, but each and everyone of us have many things to be grateful for. Spend time remembering the highlights of your day, week, or month because it will fill your life with a purpose.

How: Grab your favorite pen, notebook, and start writing.

What: Write about your goals, your worries and fears, your daily experiences, track your training and create plans, rejoice, rant, reflect, ponder, question, gratitude, and draw.

When: You should journal twice a day. Once in the morning to clear your emotions, set goals for the day, and start your day with clarity and appreciation. Second, at the conclusion of your day to reflect, refocus, remember, and learn from all your experiences throughout the day.

Journal every practice, recovery, race, thought process, technique, and so on because it enables you to not only build an accurate picture of how you are doing - what is and isn't working - but it enables you to pick up patterns and triggers long before they become an issue. Then evaluate your journal every two weeks. Reread the previous two weeks and highlight positive things you are doing to benefit your life to remind yourself to keep doing those things. In addition, highlight negative things you are doing and then form goals to counter those things. Taking your swimming to the next level requires you to hone in on every detail about your swimming (number of strokes taken per lap, technique, turns, starts, etc.). "Writing can help clear out negative thoughts and emotions that keep you from feeling stuck." - Serena Williams

Alumni Update: Brayden Lauffer

Keaton Williams

Training as a competitive swimmer in the Triangle area fosters an athlete like no other -- the teams are strong, the swimmers are fast, and the competition is intense. YOTA is a team that not only covers all aspects of building a competitive swimmer, but also focuses on developing the swimmer as a person. On YOTA, we're focused on not only creating top-tier athletes, but also fostering hard-working, passionate leaders for society. Brayden Lauffer '15 truly exemplifies the values of the YOTA Swim Team and continues to be a recognized leader today.

Brayden joined YOTA in 2005 and began swimming with the Finley YMCA site in the White Group. Around one year later, he moved to the Cary Family YMCA (Taylor) site and trained under Coach Brooks Ensor in the Purple Group. Through elementary and middle school, Brayden and his siblings were homeschooled. He recalls that it wasn't especially easy to form friendships since he didn't have a traditional school environment, but YOTA was his outlet to develop those true, meaningful friendships. He made several close friends on YOTA, many of whom still keep up with one another in their "squad" group chat. From his passionate, dedicated, and competitive nature, Brayden successfully progressed through the YOTA program. Once in Silver and on his way to Gold, Coach Jack Roney helped him to further advance his skill in breaststroke and IM and push him more and more towards the top. Coach Chad Onken, the Platinum coach and former Director of the YOTA Swim Team helped fine-tune Brayden's skills.

YOTA is a little bit different than your average swim team because we are a YMCA program. Therefore, the core values are taught to each athlete and expected to be upheld throughout the swimmers' tenure. Brayden can recall the YMCA Core Values of respect, responsibility, caring, and honesty that YOTA promoted. Factors such as Coach Chad's early morning practices tested his dedication and commitment to the sport. Especially once he began driving, he was now responsible for his success in swimming. Brayden continued to put his best foot forward and strive for personal excellence. The next challenge that life would throw at him came his junior and senior year of high school.

Applying for college can be a lengthy, tedious process that requires a great level of attention to detail and effort into your application. Applying for the United States Naval Academy in Annapolis, MD is an entirely different game - along with an incredibly high GPA and impressive SAT/ACT scores, Physical Fitness tests, Letters of Recommendations, and lastly a Congressional Nomination. Brayden explains, "The YMCA's core values of responsibility, respect, caring, and honesty are all closely related to the Naval Academy's values of honor, courage, and commitment. Because of this, I was well prepared for making the transition to the next stage in my life." The Naval Academy has one of the lowest acceptance rates in the country (8.4%) and only accepts those who exhibit high qualities of athleticism and academic ability. Perhaps even most important, candidates must attain the critical leadership skills needed in order to graduate as a commissioned officer in the US Navy. Simply put: the best-of-the-best.

Brayden's application was accepted and his journey in Annapolis began in the summer of 2015. He was recruited to swim for the Naval Academy, a skill that Brayden had been training for the last decade of his life. YOTA trained Brayden to exert the discipline needed to train and compete at the US Naval Academy. Brayden shares, "Swimming requires immense devotion and focus. It requires you to pour hours into it in order to hone your skill. The same thing applies to the military. Countless hours are needed to become a professional in your skill set and you are always learning. It is imperative to know you are never too old to learn something new. And coming from the YOTA program, these were all ideals which had already been instilled in me."



Brayden Lauffer with some NAVY Men's Swimming teammates at the IUPUI Natatorium.

Brayden swam all 4 years at the US Naval Academy and was incredibly successful: he was named MVP as a midshipman third class (sophomore), set team and Patriot League records in the 100 and 400 IM, and was the League's highest point-scorer across all 4 years. Additionally, Brayden competed at the 2016 USA Swimming Olympic Team Trials, 2017 World Championships Trials, and the 2018 Summer Nationals all while representing the YOTA Swim Team.

"I am currently in a phase of my training called Aviation Preflight Indoctrination (API). It is an 8 week ground school period learning and being tested on everything from weather to aerodynamics. Previous to that I completed the Introductory Flight Screening, where I solo'd (successfully flew by myself) a Cessna-172, and Water Survival School." Brayden's dedication to swimming continues to play a key role, especially during (cont.)

Alumni Update: Brayden Lauffer (cont.)

Water Survival School in which students were expected to swim one-mile in their jumpsuit. Brayden not only completed the one-mile swim in his jumpsuit, but did so in record time (20:18).

Moving forward, Brayden continues to learn, train, and strive to be the best. After API, he plans to begin Primary which requires 6-8 months of training and learning to fly the Navy's T-6B aircraft. Finally, he hopes to join his first squadron in roughly two years and work with P-8's as a US Naval Officer.

We're incredibly honored that Brayden is serving our country. He is a true embodiment of the Power of Purple and we thank him and all other current and former service members for their service to our country.



Pictured above is Brayden and his parents (Christy & Matt) at the 2019 US Naval Academy Graduation Ceremony in Annapolis, MD.

Swimming Through the Summer YOTA Coaching Staff

Summer league swimming is where it all begins. It is the best place to introduce new children to the wonderful sport of swimming. Most importantly, it's a place where families can unwind, have fun, enjoy great company in the sun, and a place where young swimmers can run free.

Summer league swimming plays a critical role in the development of youth swimmers. It serves as the starting platform for the vast majority of swimmers in the Triangle Area. Once swimmers develop the necessary skill and enthusiasm for the sport, they then continue their development with a local year-round, competitive swim team like YOTA! As we approach the summer months, we're excited to share our plans to continue developing excellence for our competitive athletes.

First, we encourage you to participate in your local summer league swim team! In summer league every kid has an opportunity to feel good about the experience, learn about swimming and enjoy competing individually at their own level and as a part of the team. It is also a time for coaches to connect with children as individuals who have something to contribute in their own way, it reaches them at their core and they learn the value of being a part of something that is wonderful. It's a special summer-atmosphere that offers some of the best laughs, friends, and racing in a swimmer's life. However, summer swimming is not only about the victories, championships, and trophies, but rather community, friendships, and becoming passionate about swimming. A summer swim season has an infinite number of teachable moments and endless room for improvement so that, ultimately, it matters not whether you win or lose, nor how you swam, but that you swam and that you developed a love for swimming enough to swim again next season or join a year-round swim team.

At YOTA, our mission is to instill character development all while preparing our athletes to compete at the highest levels within USA and YMCA Swimming. While we encourage you to participate in your local summer league team, we invite you to plan and balance your time with YOTA and your summer league team. If practice times conflict with one another, you may need to weigh the pros and cons of each- Will summer league practice provide the necessary training for my big championship meet at the end of July? Are my YOTA coaches and teammates expecting me to attend practice?

At the age group level, we encourage you to train with YOTA and enjoy the summer by growing, learning, having fun, and new swimming experiences with your local summer league team. At the senior group level, we expect training with YOTA to be your top priority because the work that you put into the summer will have a direct impact on your year round performance; however, for many of you, this is a time to give back to where it all began by coaching or assisting your summer league team. As professional coaches we recognize the importance of summer league swimming and we will support a balanced schedule. Your summer should consist of training at a competitive level that will best develop and prepare you for future competition. Additionally, as a member at any level of the YOTA Swim Team, you hold a commitment to your teammates and your coaches. They expect your attendance, engagement, and highest work ethic at each and every practice. (cont.)

Swimming Through the Summer (cont.)

With the summer league and long course season up in the air, there are many teams that are hoping that they will be able to run some type of abbreviated season this summer. With that being said, we are all in this together. It is time to get creative, ban together, and think of some amazing new ways that we will be able to practice and compete this summer. There will be challenges that we will all face together and there will be some amazing solutions that we will come up with collectively. If you have questions, please connect with your Site Director to determine the best plan of action for your swimming over the summer.

*Please note that this segment is specific to this summer and the ongoing uncertainty of COVID-19.

YOTA Bingo

See how many boxes you can mark off and win YOTA Bingo! Snap a pic and tag us!

Has been dis-qualified.	Has been to the OPC.	Participated in Big Fish, Little Fish.	Lost a pair of goggles.	Swam on a YOTA relay.
Follows @SwimYOTA on Instagram.	Has raced at YOTA's Capital Classic Meet.	Owns old-logo YOTA gear.	Has swam on a summer league team.	Knows their TeamUnify login.
Has been on a travel or training trip.	Has every YOTA cheer memorized.	Loves YOTA	Owns 10 or more YOTA t-shirts.	Competed in an open water event.
Has ripped a cap behind the blocks.	Can do a legal cross-over turn.	Has qualified for NCS Age Group Champs.	Has raced the 400 IM.	Has counted for a teammate.
Has swam for a high school team.	Has qualified for YMCA Nationals.	Has a sibling on YOTA.	Has ripped a tech suit.	Knows what 'POP' stands for.