

“TEN COMMANDMENTS FOR SWIMMING PARENTS”

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(Adapted from Ed Clendaniels's “Ten Commandments for Little League Parents”)

I. THOU SHALT NOT IMPOSE THY AMBITIONS ON THY CHILD.

Remember that swimming is your child's activity. Improvements and progress occur at different rates for each individual. Don't judge your child's progress based on the performance of other athletes and don't push them based on what you think they should be doing. The nice thing about swimming is every person can strive to do his or her personal best.

II. THOU SHALT BE SUPPORTIVE NO MATTER WHAT.

There is only one question to ask your child: “did you have fun?”. If meets and practices are not fun, your child should not be forced to participate.

III. THOU SHALT NOT COACH YOUR CHILD.

You have taken your child to a professional coach, do not undermine that coach by trying to coach your child on the side. Your job is to support, love and hug your child no matter what. The coach is responsible for the technical part of the job. You should not offer advice on technique or race strategy. That is not your area. This will only serve to confuse your child and prevent that swimmer/coach bond from forming.

IV. THOU SHALT ONLY HAVE POSITIVE THINGS TO SAY AT A SWIMMING MEET.

If you are going to show up at a swimming meet, you should cheer and applaud, but never criticize your child or the coach.

V. THOU SHALT ACKNOWLEDGE THE CHILD'S FEARS

A first swim meet, swimming a 500 free or 200 IM can be a stressful situation. It is totally appropriate for your child to be scared. Don't yell or belittle, just assure your child that the coach would not have suggested the event if your child was not ready to compete in it.

VI. THOU SHALT NOT CRITICIZE THE OFFICIALS.

If you do not have the time or the desire to volunteer as an official, don't criticize those who are doing the best they can.

VII. HONOR THY CHILD'S COACH.

The bond between coach and swimmer is a special one, and one that contributes to your child's success as well as fun. Do not criticize the coach in the presence of your child; it will only serve to hurt your child's swimming.

VIII. THOU SHALT BE LOYAL AND SUPPORTIVE OF THY TEAM.

It is not wise for parents to take swimmers and to jump from team to team. The water isn't necessarily bluer in another team's pool. Every team has its own internal problems, even teams that build champions. Children who switch from team to team find that it can be a difficult emotional experience. Often swimmers who do switch teams don't do better than they did before they sought the bluer water.

IX. THY CHILD SHALL HAVE GOALS BESIDES WINNING.

Most successful swimmers have learned to focus on the process and not the outcome. Giving an honest effort regardless of the outcome, is much more important than winning. One Olympian said, “My goal was to set a world record. Well, I did that, someone else did it too, just a little faster than I did. I achieved my goal and I lost. This does not make me a failure, in fact, I am very proud of that swim.”

X. THOU SHALT NOT EXPECT THY CHILD TO BECOME AN OLYMPIAN.

There are 225,000 athletes in USA Swimming. There are only 52 spots available for the Olympic team every four years. Your child's odds of becoming an Olympian are 1 in about 4,300. Swimming is much more than just the Olympics. Ask your coach why he coaches. Chances are, he was not an Olympian, but still got enough out of swimming that he wants to pass that love for the sport on to others. Swimming teaches self-discipline and sportsmanship; it builds self-esteem and fitness; it provides lifelong friendships and much more. Most Olympians will tell you that these intangibles far outweigh any medal they may have won. Swimming builds good people and you should be happy your child wants participate.