

## GETTING PARENTS ON THE TEAM

Dr. Alan Goldberg  
United States Swimming  
LSC Workshop Cadre,

A successful swimming experience depends on parents being proactively trained to play the right role on the parent-swimmer-coach team. Coaches should take the time in the beginning of the season to educate parents on their very important support position. The coach should appeal to the parent's proper involvement for the team's and their child's success. In parents meetings and in written hand-outs the coach should present and discuss the correct parents, coaches and swimmers roles. the do's and don'ts for success.

### PARENTS ROLE

- Don't coach, - Leave coaching to coaches. This includes prerace psyching, motivation, after race critiquing setting goals, enforcing 'additional cross training, etc.
- Support the coach. - Your coach is the expert. They need your support for everyone to "win".
- Support the program. - Get involved. Volunteer. Help out at meets, fundraisers, etc.
- Be your child's best fan. - Support your child unconditionally. Do not withdraw love when your child performs poorly. Your child should never have to perform to win your love.
- Support and root for all swimmers on the team. - Foster teamwork. Your child's teammates are not the enemy. When they go faster than your child, your child now has a wonderful opportunity to improve.
- Do not bribe or offer incentives. Your job is not to motivate. Leave this to the coaching staff. Bribes will distract your child not proper race concentration.
- Take your concerns and problems directly to the coach. - If you have a problem with the coach, do not go to other parents to discuss it. Go straight to the coach involved. Talking behind the coaches' back will not get you what you want.
- Understand and display appropriate meet behavior - Remember your child's self esteem and race performance is at stake. Be supportive, cheer, be appropriate.
- Monitor your child's stress level at home. - Keep an eye on your swimmer to make sure he is handling stress effectively from the various activities in their life.
- Monitor eating and sleeping habits. - Be sure your child is eating the proper foods and getting adequate enough rest.
- Help your child keep their priorities straight. - Help your child maintain a focus on schoolwork, relationships and the other important things in life besides swimming. Also, if your child has made a commitment to swimming, help them keep the priorities around this in mind.
- "Reality Test" for your child. - If a swimmer comes out of the pool with a personal best time and a last place finish, help them understand that this is a "win". Help them keep things in their proper perspective including losses, disappointments and failures.
- Keep swimming in its proper perspective. - Swimming should not be larger than life for you. If your child's performance elicit strong emotions, keep these away from them. Remember your relationship will continue with your children long after their competitive swimming days are over. Keep your goals and needs out of the pool.

- Be an appropriate liaison to the coach. - Keep the coach informed as to how your swimmer is responding to the experience (when appropriate). If your child is having trouble with something that happened in the pool, or with something the coach said. help them deal with it and if necessary, speak directly with the coach.