

4 Questions For Swim Parents About Goals

By Elizabeth Wickham

A former head coach of our team held meetings each season with his senior swimmers to talk about what they wanted to achieve. He had them fill out worksheets spelling out their goals.

He took it one step further—he asked parents to fill out goal sheets as well. He said it was very interesting to match up goals of parents and swimmers. Often, they were not on the same page. What do you suppose happens when a swimmer wants to have fun with friends, but the parents want a college scholarship?

Think about that for a moment. What if a child and parent have completely different expectations? It's guaranteed to be a sprint to disappointments and misunderstandings.

Here are questions swim parents can ask themselves about goals for their swimmers:

One

How do you define success?

Do you define overall fitness and a healthy lifestyle a success? Is it enough that your child is swimming, or does success mean beating the swimmer in the next lane and making a cut to the big meet? Our swimmers make daily strides that we're not aware of, like faster turns and tighter streamlines. These skills may not show up at the next meet, but will pave the way for success down the road—and keep them in the pool.

Two

What are your goals for your swimmer?

Are we pushing our kids to the next level before they're ready? Or, perhaps their goals are higher than ours. We need to step back and listen to what their goals are. If we let our swimmers create their own goals and share them with us, then we can encourage them along the way.

Three

How do you handle it If your child's goals do not match yours?

As swim parents, we get wrapped up in swim meets, revel in successes and mourn defeats. If we're imposing our goals on our kids, then we are not allowing them to take ownership. Let our swimmers' goals and enjoyment be the driving factor.

Four

Why do you want your kids to swim?

There are so many wonderful reasons to have your child swim including friendships, sportsmanship, time management, safety, competition, learning how to be a good team player, working hard, persistence and health. Swimming has introduced many of these qualities into my kids' lives. My goal as a swim parent? Two happy, healthy kids, ready to take on life's challenges.

What goals do you have for your swimmers?



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