



ADVICE FOR PARENTS

The role of a parent is one fraught with difficulty at every turn. What follows is a guide to parents of young swimmers and those new to the sport, to help the swimmer enjoy his or her sport as much as possible and to become the best they can be.

Remember that swimming is a process. Your children are there primarily to enjoy the sport. As they swim they will learn some of the lessons of life they will learn discipline, commitment, motivation, teamwork, goal setting, how to stick to the task in hand, how to win and how to lose, in an enjoyable safe environment.

As a parent your support and interest is vital to your child's participation. Without your services as a taxi driver, organiser and lifestyle manager, cook, supporter, confidence booster and piece picker upper, not only would there be no sport for your child, there would be no sport.

However, as you take an interest and as your child improves, sometimes a mother or father can become over involved and inadvertently put pressure on the child to train harder than they want to, or to win at the expense of enjoying taking part. You may find yourself taking your child's sport more seriously than they are.

When your child has a bad result or makes a mistake, give them time to work out for themselves what went wrong. NEVER respond to poor results with punishment or criticism. Instead, always show that you still value your child when they lose. A fair reward for a good performance can be very positive but never resort to bribery.

Always encourage effort as well as result and be generous in your praise. Remember to praise not only your child but other swimmers too. Training must not be seen by the swimmer as a threat or as something that is emotionally draining or overly stressful for him or her but as an enjoyable challenge. It is important that the child knows that his/her efforts as well as his/her success will be rewarded. An over emphasis on winning by one or both parents can result in a fear of failure, with your love and respect being seen by your child as conditional upon winning.

Trust your child and their coach to make the correct decisions during training and at competitions. This will help him or her develop self-reliance and self-confidence. Most children will fake injury or illness sometimes but remember that if your child keeps being injured or ill they might be trying to tell you something else.

It is very important that you **never** coach from the side-lines, either in training or at a competition. It will certainly be contrary to the instructions of the coach and will confuse your child.

Some parents you talk to will not be helpful at all and will prefer instead to complain about the coach or put down other swimmers. These parents will eventually leave the club angry and resentful that their child has not become as good as the parents hoped they would. A strong successful club relies on a large number of helpful parents, committed to the club and who let the coaches do the coaching.

Always be patient. Often kids will sit quietly in the car on the way home from training or a competition or give one word answers to your questions. Your child will be under enough pressure without the burden of your expectations as well. Remember your child is still growing and training appropriate for older swimmers can be detrimental for younger ones. Also, children grow at different rates and will improve at different rates. At the end of the day swimmers are our children and we must not forget that.

Thank you for taking the time to read this.

BOBSC Committee