

HELICOPTER PARENTING



(Athlete Development Advice for Parents of Swimmers Aged 7 years+)

Imagine 2 different scenarios:

Scenario #1	Scenario #2
<p>A swim parent knows all of child's PBs and knows if they have raced faster or not even when the swimmer barely knows their own PBs.</p> <p>Resulting conversation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <u>Parent</u>: "Great sweetie, you swam 44.5 seconds, that's a 2.5 second PB. That's much better than last week." ○ <u>Swimmer</u>: "Thanks Mum." 	<p>A parent spends the same amount of time teaching the swimmer how to remember their own PBs, but forgets them themselves.</p> <p>Resulting conversation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <u>Parent</u>: "That looked great, how did you go?" ○ <u>Swimmer</u>: "I swam 44.5 seconds!" ○ <u>Parent</u>: "Is that good?" ○ <u>Swimmer</u>: "That's a 2.5 second PB"

There is a very subtle but important difference in the mental process of the swimmer and parent in these two scenarios.

If a swimmer does not know their time after a race, then the parent should encourage the swimmer to either talk with the coach (this should always happen after every race) or to check the results board themselves and remember the time or write it down in a PB notebook themselves.

Why put the responsibility on the young swimmer to remember their PB's and race times?

Why should parents avoid helping with putting on caps or adjusting goggles?

Why should all swimmers aged 7 years and older carry their own kit bag?

Because it develops their self-esteem. And the quicker they develop their self-esteem in these small tasks the quicker they become self motivated to improve. The quicker the swimmer shifts their motivation from "to make Mum and Dad happy", or "to make the coach happy" to wanting to improve for their *own* enjoyment, then the quicker they will progress and the higher they will achieve. Which means ultimately they gain more satisfaction from their sport.

I'm not here to tell you how to parent, but I can offer you advice based on the 1, 000's of kids I have seen develop in this sport and the articles written by sports psychologists and famous coaches alike. Your child will have more likelihood in achieving long-term success in this sport if their parents do not sit and watch every training session, if they learn how to tighten their own goggles even if it takes longer, if they are able to go home and not be reminded of the bad training session or race they just had, if they are encouraged to learn their own PB and qualifying times.

“Interested-Detachment” is the term best suited to describe a great model for the parent-swimmer relationship. Show an interest, show you care, show you love them no matter what the race outcome, but from as early as possible, make swimming *their* thing. This increases their self-esteem, gives them more self-satisfaction and ensures a bright, long-term future in the sport.



Further Reading

Helicopter Parenting:

“Today, psychologists and coaches agree that many parents have become more passionate – obsessed, in some cases – about their children’s athletic pursuits than mothers and fathers of the past. Micromanaging a child’s sports career and agonizing over his or her success on the playing field may be the most public expression of the so-called “helicopter parent” phenomenon; that is, the tendency of today’s moms and dads to “hover” over their children.

Parents who belong to this new breed are easy to spot. They shout more on the sidelines, barking directions at their children, and often struggling to control their emotions. They pester coaches about their kids’ playing time. They complain more loudly if a child isn’t chosen for an all-star team.”

Related Links:

- <http://www.rediff.com/cms/print.jsp?docpath=//getahead/2007/feb/23parent.htm>
- http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Helicopter_parent
- http://dadtalk.typepad.com/dadtalk/2005/05/helicopter_pare.html
- http://seattlepi.nwsourc.com/lifestyle/209473_copterparents.html
- <http://www.cnn.com/2008/LIVING/personal/08/13/helicopter.parents/index.html>