

## Columbia Swim Club

### ***Ten Principles For Parents of Athletic Children***

Reprinted, with some editorial revisions, from *The Young Athlete* by Bill Burgess<sup>1</sup>  
[included in "The Swim Parents Newsletter"]

#### I

Make sure your child knows that - win or lose, scared or heroic – you love her, appreciate her effort, and are not disappointed in her. This will allow her to do her best without a fear of failure. Be the person in her life to whom she can look for constant positive reinforcement.

#### II

Try your best to be completely honest about your child's athletic ability, his competitive attitude, his sportsmanship, and his actual skill level.

#### III

Be helpful, but don't coach her on the way to the pool or on the way back, or at breakfast, and so on. It's tough not to, but it's a lot tougher for her to be inundated with advice, pep talks and often critical instruction.

#### IV

Teach him to enjoy the thrill of competition, to be "out there trying," to be working to improve his swimming skills and attitudes. Help him to develop the feel for competing, for trying hard, and for having fun.

#### V

Try not to re-live your athletic life through your child in a way that creates pressure; you lost as well as won. You were frightened, you backed off at times, and you were not always heroic. Don't pressure her because of your pride. Athletic children need their parents so you must not withdraw. Just remember there is a thinking, feeling, sensitive free spirit out there in that uniform who needs a lot of understanding, especially when her world turns bad. If she is comfortable with you – win or lose – she is on her way to maximum achievement and enjoyment.

#### VI

Don't compete with the coach. If the coach becomes an authority figure, it will run from enchantment to disenchantment, etc., with your athlete.

#### VII

Don't compare the skill, courage, or attitudes of your child with other members of the team, at least within her hearing.

#### VIII

Get to know the coach so that you can be assured that the coach's philosophy, attitudes, ethics, and knowledge are such that you are happy to have your child under the coach's leadership.

#### IX

Always remember that children tend to exaggerate, both when praised and when criticized. Temper your reaction and investigate before over-reacting.

#### X

Make a point of understanding courage, and the fact that it is relative. Some of us can climb mountains, and are afraid to fight. Some of us will fight, but turn to jelly if a bee approaches. Everyone is frightened in certain areas. Explain that courage is not the absence of fear, but a means of doing something in spite of fear of discomfort.

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<sup>1</sup>The original has been edited in some respects. It was originally titled "The Ten Commandments for Parents of Athletic Children."