

Sixteen Values that Swimmers Learn from the Sport

By John Leonard

We all want our children to learn values from the activities they participate in. Here are 16 values that they gain from swimming, and how they gain them.

1. **Fitness** – every study ever done by scientists say that swimming is the best overall sport to achieve total fitness and health. Inculcating this value at an early age makes it a value for all the life of the individual.
2. **Self-Confidence** – each child learns that they can learn, that they can achieve and that they can struggle and overcome adversity daily in good swimming practice.
3. **Discipline** – No good stroke technique exists without discipline. No good practice session exists without structure and discipline to do what is required when it is required, on a consistent basis. A daily result of good training sessions by the athlete. Best of all, its self-discipline!
4. **Teamwork** – Swimming is impossible to do as an “individual sport,” its way, way too hard! Teammates encourage, lead, follow, and both contribute and receive daily in practice sessions with their friends.
5. **Sportsmanship** – One of the key lessons learned is that everyone has their “moment in the sun” to shine... in practice and in meets. Good coaches teach the lesson that we compete “with” people, not “against” people.
6. **Work Ethic** – No sport requires more physical effort than swimming. Lesser “talents” can outwork (over the long haul) the more talented athlete. Over time, athletes learn that their own efforts produce their own results.
7. **Delayed Gratification** – Very hard in today’s youth society! But critical! Swimmers learn that the season (the year, the career) is long, and no one short-term result can be called success or failure. What you do in practice today will show up in a week, a month, six months, a year, in a swim meet. Swimmers learn to accept that “things take time” to develop.
8. **Time Management** – Swimmers get better grades “in season.” Why? Because with a small amount of time, they are forced to use it well to study. When they are not in practice, they have “plenty of time” and things don’t get done. A senior swimmer trains 5 plus hours a day. With school, sleep, eating, studying, there is not much left over. It’s forced learning to be effective and efficient.
9. **Dedication** – Swimmers learn as they grow older that one cannot be “all things all the time” and that some sacrifices have to be made to achieve in other areas. This is also called “focus” and “concentration.” Invaluable life skills.

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10. **Skill Improvement** – because of the medium of water that we operate in, successful swimmers pay extreme attention to technique and skills, and more and more so as they improve and swim faster. It's all in the details. Another major life lesson.
11. **Friendship and Respect** – You may not “love” your teammates all the time, but you know how hard they work and you learn to respect that work. You also form friendships based on the solid values on this list. The best kind of friends... ones you share values with, not dope, secrets and aggressions.
12. **Goal Setting** – Swimmers learn at an early age to measure success objectively and how to set new goals to motivate themselves as they climb the ladder of swimming success.
13. **Gender Equity** – Any boy swimming with any girl in practice will tell you that females can practice better (practice tougher) than males. Any female competing with any male will tell you that males can get up and race when they need to.
14. **Appreciation of your support team** – Mom and Dad keep you swimming. Coach teaches and inspires you. Swimmers learn they stand on other people's shoulders to achieve. Great life lessons.
15. **Courage** – Each swimmer gets to be a “hero” in their lane, in their world every day. Every day they get a chance to test their courage (and succeed and fail in that regard) in practice. Courage is a “developed trait.” Swimming develops it well.
16. **Compassion** – Each swimmer succeeds. Each swimmer “fails” from time to time. Swimmers know how it feels. They can learn to support those who are struggling, applaud those who are succeeding, and be inspired by the work of others.