

7 THINGS SMART SWIMMERS NEED TO STOP DOING

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Life, like our swimming, is largely a series of habits. The way we put on our suit. How many arm swings we do before we jump in. The attitudes and thoughts we have when good and bad things happen.

The sneaky thing about habits is that once they are engrained, they require very little thought. Do you have to stop to think about how to walk? Or how to brush your teeth? Or how to swim freestyle? This “automation” is both great and lame, because our habits don’t differentiate between the good and bad.

Once you make it a habit to bounce back like a boss after a bad race, you barely need to think about doing it. Similarly, when you hardwire the habit of lifting your head into the finish over and over again in practice, you’re almost guaranteed to do it in competition. With that in mind, here are 7 things smart swimmers need to stop doing:

1. Stop being so hard on yourself. Negativity breeds negativity, and this goes especially for how we talk to ourselves. If you are constantly pounding yourself with negative criticism (“*See? Knew I couldn’t do it!*”) and wallowing in past mistakes and failures you take your eyes off the road ahead. When things don’t go according to plan, refuse to sink into an endless cycle of dwelling, and instead look for cause, a lesson, and move onwards and upwards.

2. Avoiding the work that needs to be done. The appeal of shortcuts and miracle supplements and products is that it relinquishes any need for a full-bore commitment. We can have the fruits of success and put in the bare minimum. If only. We can’t have success without the hard work that comes with it, so stop looking around for shortcuts and instead resolve to work intelligently and with unmatched vigor.

3. Staying in your comfort bubble. Change is frightening. It’s weird, new, foreign and as we stand on the precipice of growth and change we feel the tug back of familiarity and comfort. “*It’s safe back here,*” your mind will whisper. As a result we stay where we are, even when the place we are in isn’t beneficial or positive. Our bad habits stick around for as long as they do not necessarily because they give us pleasure or make us feel good, but because they are familiar, comfortable.

4. Rolling with a negative crowd. They may not be overtly negative, but the effects they have on you are. Successful swimmers hang with those that will further their process, those that are invested in their success, and who support their growth and aspirations. Life is too short to be spent with naysayers who promise to be out for your best interests but only serve to knee-cap your self-belief.

5. Avoiding accepting full responsibility for your swimming. We didn’t crush our best times at the championship meet over the summer because the lane lines were too skinny. Coach’s taper didn’t work as well as it should have. The competition has a better team to train with, better facilities, blah blah blah. At the end of the day, it is *your* swimming. Period.

6. Seeking to only avoid negative outcomes. When we focus our energy and effort into avoiding something — finishing DFL, getting DQ’d — we pry our effort away from the positive things, the stuff that we want to achieve. You should always be setting goals that are positive, that seek to help you grow and achieve.

7. Stop allowing setbacks to derail you. Every successful swimmer on the planet has had their own share of failure. These setbacks (and there were many of them), aren’t what we see when they cruise to gold or a new world record. The end product may be shiny, but there were some ugly hiccups and U-turns in the course of its creation. Taking lumps in the process of chasing your goals is part of the process, so refuse to allow temporary setbacks to make for permanent failures.