

# The Weekly Splash

May 5, 2011

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## ***News For SWIM PARENTS***

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# The Praise Gap

## **Bringing Praising Strategies Used by Coaches and Parents Closer Together**

*From Guy Edson, ASCA*

From the point of view of many parents, coaches tend to under-praise their swimmers. One parent complained to me that their child would never rise above the level of “adequate” under my standards. This is the same parent I earlier saw heaping loads of praise on the child (a 12 year old) for having giving it a “great effort” when in fact the child had just completed a swim that was technically lacking, far off of a best time, and showed no interest in racing. Clearly there is a difference here.

Many articles cite studies that in the ideal learning environment there is a “magic ratio” of 5 praises to 1 criticism. Anecdotally I can tell you that most coaches are the complete opposite: 5 criticisms to one praise.

In good coaching those 5 “criticisms” are better labeled “critical feedback.” The role of the coach is to give critical technical feedback to the athlete – specific and objective information that helps the athlete perform better the next time. Praise is often given in levels from a simple OK (adequate) to “nice job.” Coaches are careful NOT to use words that leave little room for improvement like “awesome,” “excellent,” and “perfect.” A coach wants the athlete to feel that there is always work to do, always room for improvement. As long as feedback and praise are consistent, coaches can use the 1:5 ratio very effectively.

One of the difficulties for coaches is that we feel we are fighting against a larger cultural push of standardless self-esteem building. This is the mentality that “All efforts are good.” An article in the New York Magazine by Po Bronson cites research that says that self-esteem building by over praising can actually create underachievers. (How Not to Talk to Your Kids -- The inverse power of praise. By Po Bronson in the New York Magazine, February 2007.)

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Since the 1969 publication of *The Psychology of Self-Esteem*, in which Nathaniel Branden opined that self-esteem was the single most important facet of a person, the belief that one must do whatever he can to achieve positive self-esteem has become a movement with broad societal effects. Anything potentially damaging to kids' self-esteem was axed. Competitions were frowned upon. Soccer coaches stopped counting goals and handed out trophies to everyone. Teachers threw out their red pencils. Criticism was replaced with ubiquitous, even undeserved, praise.

Dweck and Blackwell's work is part of a larger academic challenge to one of the self-esteem movement's key tenets: that praise, self-esteem, and performance rise and fall together. From 1970 to 2000, there were over 15,000 scholarly articles written on self-esteem and its relationship to everything—from sex to career advancement. But results were often contradictory or inconclusive. So in 2003 the Association for Psychological Science asked Dr. Roy Baumeister, then a leading proponent of self-esteem, to review this literature. His team concluded that self-esteem was polluted with flawed science. Only 200 of those 15,000 studies met their rigorous standards.

After reviewing those 200 studies, Baumeister concluded that having high self-esteem didn't improve grades or career achievement. It didn't even reduce alcohol usage. And it especially did not lower violence of any sort. (Highly aggressive, violent people happen to think very highly of themselves, debunking the theory that people are aggressive to make up for low self-esteem.) At the time, Baumeister was quoted as saying that his findings were "the biggest disappointment of my career."

So, what might be good advice for parents seeking to praise and build up their children? From Bronson's article we read:

To be effective, researchers have found, praise needs to be specific.  
Sincerity of praise is also crucial.

New York University professor of psychiatry Judith Brook explains that the issue for parents is one of credibility. "Praise is important, but not vacuous praise," she says. "It has to be based on a real thing—some skill or talent they have." Once children hear praise they interpret as meritless, they discount not just the insincere praise, but sincere praise as well.

With so much overflowing love for our children (I am a parent also) why not praise all efforts, even not-so-good efforts, as a way of boosting spirits? Why must the coach bluntly say that the performance did not match up with expectations – in short, tell the swimmer it was a failure? In the article, Bronson refers to a study that helps explain the importance of recognizing failures.

But it turns out that the ability to repeatedly respond to failure by exerting more effort—instead of simply giving up—is a trait well studied in psychology. People with this trait, persistence, rebound well and can sustain their motivation through long periods of delayed gratification. Delving into this research, I learned that persistence turns out to be more than a conscious act of will; it's also an unconscious response, governed by a circuit in the brain.

*"The key is intermittent reinforcement," says [researcher Dr. Robert] Cloninger [of Washington University in St. Louis.] The brain has to learn that frustrating spells can be worked through. "A person who grows up getting too frequent rewards will not have persistence, because they'll quit when the rewards disappear."*

Bronson concludes: Jumping in with praise is like jumping in too soon with the answer to a homework problem—it robs him of the chance to make the deduction himself.

I think it is appropriate to simply ask the child how they think they did, listen to their analysis, then add a ton of love and a big hug, and let it go at that.

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## ***CRAA Team Pool Party with the Annual Meeting & Team Pictures***

CRAA will have team pool party on Monday, May 23. CRAA will be providing hotdogs, hamburgers, plates and drinks. CRAA ask each family attending this party to bring a side dish or dessert to share. The picnic will start at 6:15 PM and conclude at 8:00 PM. Included with this event, CRAA will also hold its annual meeting and take a team picture. The annual meeting will begin at 7:00 PM. CRAA families are encouraged to attend this meeting even if they do not attend the party or pictures.

For the pictures, team pictures and individual/group pictures will also be taken. The team picture will be taken at 6:00 PM. Individual or group pictures will also be taken starting at 5:30 PM and concluding by 6:30 to 7:00 PM. CRAA is contracting a photographer to take pictures and place all pictures on a single disc. Individuals and families will receive a copy of this disc along with permission to duplicate the photos upon request. There is no cost except CRAA is asking families to contribute a \$5.00 donation the day of the team picture to help offset the expense. More information about how to obtain a team photo disc will be available later. a More information about this event will be available soon.

## ***Cedar River Waves Swim Team***

In the summer the Cedar Rapids Recreation Department sponsors a local summer competitive swim league. Local pools in the Cedar Rapids area have teams that participate in this swim league. (Bowman Woods, Helen G. Nassif YMCA, Stoney Point YMCA, Marion YMCA, Cedar Rapids Country Club, Elmcrest Country Club, Marion outdoor pool, Kennedy High School and the Cedar Rapids outdoor pools are the teams that participate in the league.)

CRAA also has a team: The Cedar River Waves. Any swimmer who is currently practicing with CRAA and continues to practice with the club for the duration of the summer may join the Waves team.

The season for the swim league starts June 1 and offers four dual meets scheduled throughout the season on Tuesdays, June 21, 28, July 5 & 12 and concludes Saturday, July 23 with an All City Meet at Cherry Hill Aquatics Center.

All CRAA swimmers are encouraged to participate in this summer swim league, either by joining the Waves or by participating with one of the other summer league teams.

To Register for the Waves, please contact Bobby at [coachkelley@aol.com](mailto:coachkelley@aol.com) or Wendy at [coachwendycraa@gmail.com](mailto:coachwendycraa@gmail.com) with the following information for each swimmer:

Swimmers Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Birth Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Age: \_\_\_\_\_

T-Shirt Size: \_\_\_\_\_

Fee for the Waves due to CRAA: \$30.00

Cost includes:

Cedar Rapids Recreation Department participation fees

Waves T-Shirt & Cap

End of Season Party

Four dual meets and the All City Meet

Payment is not due at this time. The Waves fee will be added to your monthly CRAA bill.

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## 2011 Cedar River Waves Meet Schedule

Tuesday, June 21	Bowman Woods vs. Waves @ Bowman Woods	5:00 PM
Tuesday, June 28	Waves vs. Stoney Point Y vs. Kennedy @ Kennedy High School *****Hosted by the Waves*****	5:00 PM
Tuesday, July 5	Marion Rec. vs. the Waves @ Marion outdoor pool	5:00 PM
Tuesday, July 12	CRCC vs. Marion Y vs. Waves @ CRCC	5:00 PM
Saturday, July 23	All City Meet @ Cherry Hill Aquatics Center	9:00 AM

### ICE Spring Meltdown Invitational

The following swimmers have entered this weekend ICE Spring Meltdown Invitational Swim Meet:

Jackie Allen	Lydia Yang	Logan Barnes	Morgan Barnes
Ian Ford	Stefan Kitsos		

### IFLY Invitational Swim Meet

The following swimmers have entered the David Armbruster Open, IFLY's Invitational Swim Meet that will be held on the weekend of May 20-22. This meet is now full and IFLY is not accepting any new entries.

The following swimmers have already submitted entry request for this meet:

Gabrielle Armstrong	Paige Broghammer	Gloria Campbell	Morgan Chambers
Kelsey Drake	Amanda Fetters	Casey Gannon	Madison Gannon
Sarah Gannon	Bibanna Granadillo	Alyssa Harris	Shannon Kelley
Mackinzee Macho	Alicia Miltner	Cameron Murray	Olivia Thoma
Delaney Thoma	Andi Toledo	Rachel Velazquez	Sarah Velazquez
Kelly Wingerson	Lydia Yang		
Logan Barnes	Morgan Barnes	Eric Ford	Ethan Ford
Ian Ford	Trevarious Hayward	Josh Horth	Matt Jackson
Cameron Kelley	Stefan Kitsos	Carter Kramer	Matt Peng
Micheal Welbes			

### CRAA Spring Pentathlon

Meet information is now available for the CRAA Spring Pentathlon on the CRAA web site. This is a meet will be held at Coe College on Saturday, May 14. This meet is for all swimmers age 14 and younger.

If you still wish to enter this meet, please contact Bobby at [coachkelley@aol.com](mailto:coachkelley@aol.com).

The following swimmers have already entered this meet:

Alanna Adkins	Jackie Allen	Paige Broghammer
Kelsey Drake	Casey Gannon	Maddie Gannon
Bibanna Granadillo	Alyssa Harris	Shannon Kelley
Mackinzee Macho	Alicia Miltner	Cameron Murray
Delaney Thoma	Olivia Thoma	Sissy Wahe
Lexa Winn	Lydia Yang	
		Morgan Chambers
		Sarah Gannon
		Abby Krueger
		Olivia Squire
		Kelly Wingerson

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Casey Cerveny  
Nathan Homan  
Cameron Kelley  
Gabe Macho  
Jeremy Thronson

Eric Ford  
Ian Hoover-Grinde  
Stefan Kitsos  
Matt Peng  
Micheal Welbes

Ethan Ford  
Matt Jackson  
Carter Kramer  
Sam Peng  
Adam Wolff

Trevarious Hayward  
Ben Hulseberg  
Eric Liao  
Tristen Perreault

## CIA Beat the Heat Swim Meet

Meet information is now available for the CIA Beat the Heat Swim Meet. This is a meet will be held at Grinnel College on Saturday, July 2 & 3. This is an open swim meet for swimmers of all ages. The CRAA entry deadline is next Monday, May 9.

The following swimmers have already entered this meet:

Paige Broghammer  
Kelly Wingerson  
Logan Barnes  
Carter Kramer

Morgan Chambers  
Morgan Barnes  
Matt Peng

Kelsey Drake  
Matt Jackson  
Sam Peng

Abigail Krueger  
Stefan Kitsos

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