



## **“Twelve Keys to Success in Competitive Swimming”**

Thousands of swimmers begin careers in competitive swimming each year, yet some end up making it and some doom themselves to failure. Why is this and how can a swimmer avoid not “making it” in the sport he or she really loves? The answer may vary from swimmer to swimmer. However, I feel it lies in the twelve keys listed below:

1. Know what you are going to do and how you will go about doing it before you begin. Make that goal specific in your mind or you might lose sight of it when the going gets tough. Brian Goodell, who was seventeen years old when he set two world records at the 1976 Olympics, put it this way – “Winners see what they want to happen and losers see what they are afraid might happen.” Without that goal, what are you working toward?
2. Be specific and predictable in your training. Use the right formula for the right result. A math problem cannot be solved with just any formula, and swimming cannot be successful unless you go about it in the proper way – using the proper formula for the predictable result – success. Your day-to-day work should relate to your goal so that it is real and your training always appropriate. If a certain stroke drill or set given to you at practice from one of the WSY Coaches will help solve your problem of low elbows, lack of endurance, weak kick, etc., then include it in your mind as part of your formula for success. Don’t fight the workouts or coaching techniques. You might be rejecting the right formula to the problem while, instead, using your own formula which hasn’t yet been tested, proven, and correctly used before.
3. Take one day at a time. It is good to think about the big picture and the overall goal, but the daily workouts and goals are just as important. In order to achieve the ultimate goal at the end of the season, you need as many successful daily goals as you can manage out of the 365 possible each year. The daily goals will support the ultimate goal and draw you closer to it if you make them relate to it and work them as if your ultimate goal depended upon them. In fact, it does.

4. Be patient. If you aren't, you may not be able to achieve any goal whether it be in swimming or in life. Mistakes, problems and setbacks will be a part of trying to really make it in competitive swimming. Be confident and be patient.
5. Don't worry about not receiving recognition for your accomplishments. Many people, swimmers included, lose sight of a goal and can lose interest because others have the spotlight. Make your own spotlight shine on your own goal even if others don't happen to be noticing it at the time. After you keep plugging away successfully, it will be hard for others not to notice the raging fire which began as a flicker of light.
6. Learn to work with other people and not always against them. Work on an attitude of holding one another up rather than trying to push one another down so that you might look better by comparison. Use put-ups not put-downs. Swim shoulder-to-shoulder not head-to-head.
7. Be a sponge and absorb anything related to your goal. Make sure you sort out the good from the bad so that you will be developing good habits, ideas, outlooks and techniques rather than harmful traits. By doing this, you will be more valuable to the team, the sport, your goals, your family, the human race, and to yourself. You cannot limit your knowledge and understanding without limiting yourself and your goal.
8. Learn to give as well as receive praise and reward yourself and others. Praise and rewards can be positive reinforcements needed in pursuit of a goal. An encouraging remark hurts no one, but negative comments, teasing, arguing, and the like, pull everyone down. So learn to encourage, praise, and influence positively yourself and those around you.
9. Learn to accept correction. Take constructive criticism and apply it and you will move toward your goal more rapidly. Accepting correction can save time, effort, and point you in the right direction.
10. Learn to accept pain. In the United States especially, the trend has been toward constant comfort with all the labor saving devices, climate controlled homes and buildings, a "never walk when you can drive/ride" attitude, and on and on. Training will make you uncomfortable but you can use this positively. The discomfort can be used as a gauge as to how hard you are working toward your goal. Nothing of any value comes cheap and the more you have to put out for something, the greater the feeling of accomplishment.
11. Train for your goal, don't just exercise toward it. Exercise can be defined as "a change in body physiology from rest to activity." When you stop exercising, the body goes back to its resting state. To train, on the other hand, means to "change from an untrained state to a trained one." Training produces a lasting result on the body which doesn't disappear when the works stops.
12. Stick your neck out for your goal and for what you want out of life in general. If you don't stick your neck out – you will never be seen above the crowd. Take a chance – go for it – try your best. Competitive swimming is not all there is to life, but it can be a valuable tool in the hands of its user in attaining more out of life than the average person is capable of attaining. The above ideas can be successfully applied to swimming or to life so that goals can become more realistic, more meaningful and hopefully more attainable.

**Total Commitment = Ultimate Success**