

**SWIMMING AND PARENTING – POTENTIAL, PERFORMANCE AND PARENTING**

**Wayne Goldsmith  
SWIMMING NZ  
HAWKES BAY  
APRIL 11<sup>TH</sup> 2026**

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## THREE BIG MESSAGES!



IF THEY LOVE WHAT THEY DO, THEY WILL DO WHAT THEY LOVE.



THE ONLY SWIMMER WHO CAN NOT IMPROVE IS THE ONE WHO IS NOT THERE.



THEY HAVE TO KNOW THEY ARE LOVED UNCONDITIONALLY – WIN OR LOSE, FIRST OR LAST – MAKES NO DIFFERENCE.

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SWIMMING PARENTS — HAWKES BAY | APRIL 2026

## 12 Things Every Swimming Parent Needs to Know

- 1 There Is No Such Thing as a Champion 10-Year-Old
- 2 Talent Is a Myth — Character Is Everything
- 3 The 5 Ps — What Actually Predicts Success
- 4 The Car Ride Home Matters Most
- 5 The Partnership Triangle — Coaches, Swimmers and Parents
- 6 Don't Specialise Too Soon
- 7 Manage Your Expectations — Not Their Dreams
- 8 Love the Swimmer, Not Just the Swimming
- 9 Trust the Coach and the Process
- 10 Championship Choices — Every Day Decides
- 11 Be the Safe Place They Come Home To
- 12 Relax and Enjoy the Ride

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## 1. There Is No Such Thing as a Champion 10-Year-Old

### KEY MESSAGES

Fast young swimmers are often just early developers — bigger and stronger, not more talented

A child's best stroke changes as they grow — this year's freestyler is next year's butterflyer

Early success predicts early retirement, not elite performance

Your job is to protect the long game — not celebrate the short one

**PARENTING ACTION** This week — celebrate one thing your swimmer LEARNED, not how fast they went



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## 2. Talent Is a Myth — Character Is Everything

### KEY MESSAGES

The swimmers who make it are rarely the most gifted at 10 — they are the most determined at 20

Character beats genetics every single time at the elite level

Selflessness, resilience, coachability and work ethic — these are the real predictors of success

You can't give your child talent. You CAN give them character

**PARENTING ACTION** Name one character quality you want to build in your swimmer this season — then support it



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## 3. The 5 Ps — What Actually Predicts Success

### KEY MESSAGES

**PERSEVERANCE** — the ability to try, fail and try again without giving up

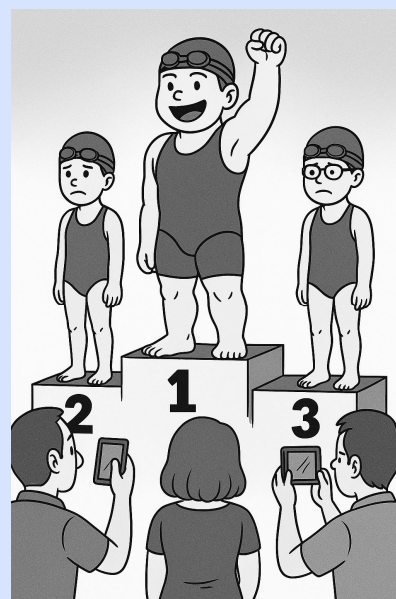
**PATIENCE** — great swimmers take 8–12 years of consistent work to develop

**PASSION** — you cannot manufacture love for the sport.

**PERSONALITY** — character, values, attitude

**PHYSICAL PREPARATION** — there are no short cuts — can't fight without fit!

**PARENTING ACTION** Score your swimmer honestly 1–10 on each of the 5 Ps. That's your real development roadmap



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## 4. The Car Ride Home Matters Most

### KEY MESSAGES

What you say in the 10 minutes after a race shapes their relationship with swimming for life

'I loved watching you swim today' is almost always the best and only thing to say

Silence is a superpower — let them speak first, every single time

One critical comment after a race can undo months of a coach's work

**PARENTING ACTION** This weekend — try just listening. Let them lead. See what happens.



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## 5. The Partnership Triangle — Coaches, Swimmers and Parents

### KEY MESSAGES

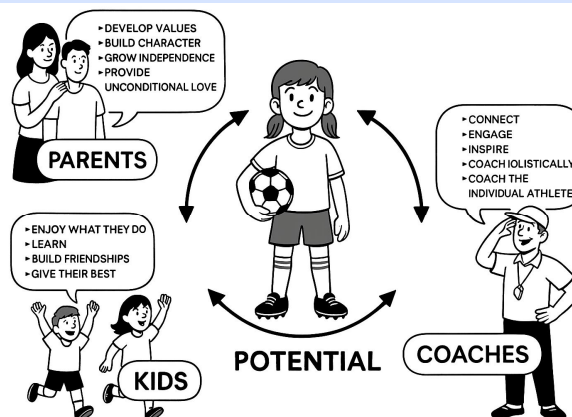
Elite swimming has three partners: coach, swimmer and parent — all with different roles

The coach's role: develop the swimmer. The parent's role: support the person

When parents coach and coaches parent — everyone loses, especially the swimmer

Trust the triangle. Stay in your lane. The partnership only works when all three do their job

**PARENTING ACTION** Write down your role in the triangle. Then ask your swimmer to write down theirs



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## 6. Don't Specialise Too Soon

### KEY MESSAGES

There are no 8-year-old backstrokers — just kids who currently swim backstroke a little faster

Swimmers who specialise early peak early — and quit early

All strokes, all events, all skills — balanced development is the foundation of elite performance

The best stroke will reveal itself naturally as they grow. You don't need to force it

**PARENTING ACTION** Encourage your swimmer to try one new stroke or event at the next training opportunity



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## 7. Manage Your Expectations — Not Their Dreams

### KEY MESSAGES

Your swimmer's journey is theirs — not a second chance at yours

Unmanaged parent expectations are the number one reason talented swimmers quit the sport

Ask yourself honestly before every meet: 'Am I here for them — or for me?'

The best thing you can give your swimmer is perspective, not pressure

**PARENTING ACTION** Before the next meet — write down one thing you will do to make the experience enjoyable for THEM



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## 8. Love the Swimmer, Not Just the Swimming

### KEY MESSAGES

Your child is a person first and a swimmer second — always, without exception

School, friendships, rest, play and family all matter just as much as training and times

A swimmer who feels loved unconditionally is more resilient, more coachable and more likely to stay

Your love must never depend on the scoreboard, the selection list or the time on the clock

**PARENTING ACTION** Tonight — tell your swimmer one thing you love about them that has nothing to do with swimming



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## 9. Trust the Coach and the Process

### KEY MESSAGES

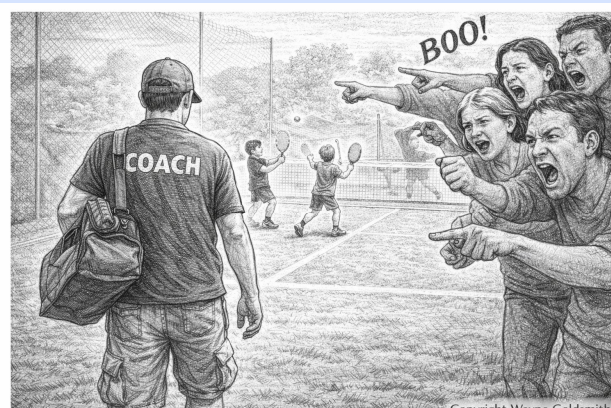
Training sets, squad selection and race strategy are coaching decisions — not parenting decisions

Undermining the coach in front of your child destroys their ability to be coached — by anyone

Support publicly. Question privately. At the right time, in the right way

Ten years is a long process — resist the urge to judge it after one poor race or week

**PARENTING ACTION** Next time you disagree with a coaching decision — wait 24 hours. Ask yourself if it still matters



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## 10. Championship Choices — Every Day Decides

### KEY MESSAGES

Elite swimmers don't have elite talent — they make elite choices every single day

Sleep, nutrition, attitude, effort in training — these are the choices that build champions

Your role is to make it easier for them to make great choices at home

One great choice a day, every day, for ten years — that's the real formula

**PARENTING ACTION** Identify one Championship Choice your family can support better starting this week

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## 11. Be the Safe Place They Come Home To

### KEY MESSAGES

The pool is where they perform. Home is where they recover — make sure it feels that way

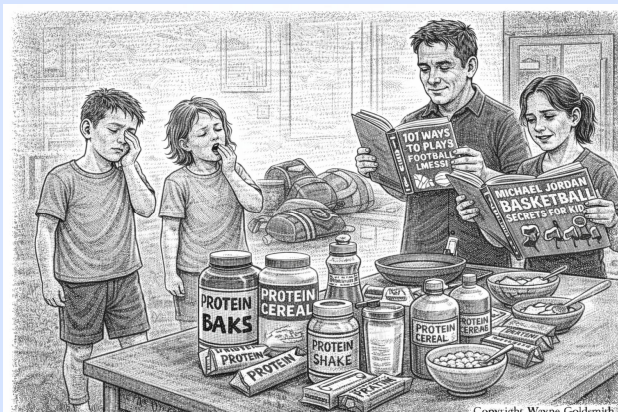
After a bad race, a missed qualifying time or a hard training week — they need safety, not analysis

The most powerful question in swimming parenting is: 'Are you okay?' — not 'What went wrong?'

They need to feel loved, accepted — that's it.

**PARENTING ACTION** After the next tough race — hug first, ask 'are you okay?' second. Nothing else for 24 hours

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## 12. Relax and Enjoy the Ride

### KEY MESSAGES

Every parent of a retired swimmer says the same thing: 'I wish I'd enjoyed it more at the time'

The cold mornings, the long drives, the early meets — one day you will miss every single one

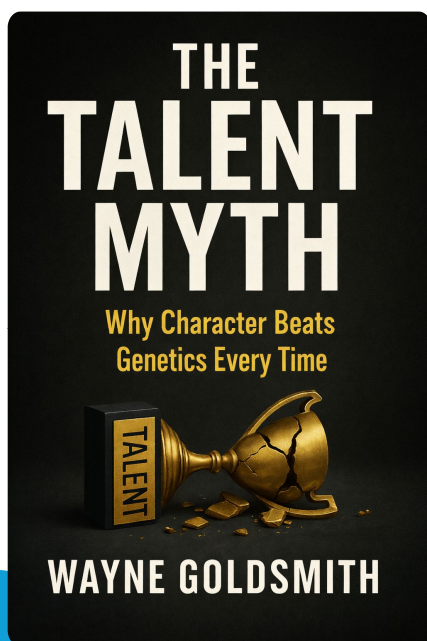
Your goal is not to make them great this season. It is to keep the flame alive for 40 years

**PARENTING ACTION** At the next meet — pick one moment to put your phone down, look up and just watch

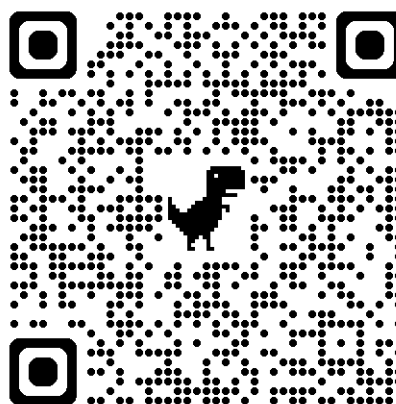


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**KEEP THE CONVERSATION GOING**

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