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Paul Peavy: Platitudes On Plateaus (10/26/2007)

BY PAUL PEAVY, MS, LMHC

Well there your child is, stuck again. Stuck like a duck in the muck. No improvement in time. It's been four months, and no improvement. Well, now your wonderful, happy swimmer is starting to whine and complain about not seeing the improvement. What's a parent to do?

Well, you can throw out the old, "Keep your nose the grindstone," saying. But the problem with that is no one in the last 70 years has seen anyone with their nose to the grindstone. (Yes, both of you who use a grindstone in your daily work can e-mail at paul@paulpeavy.com)

Help your child return to the better, happier platitudes of swimming rather than the ghoulish sounding grindstones. Here are some of the truly better ones:

"Your friends are still there aren't they?" – This really is one of the great reasons to swim. You meet great kids and parents who are interested in a healthy lifestyle and healthy choices. Tell your kids to go to practice and meets for the fun and fellowship. Not every kid gets to have a pool party everyday (sometimes twice a day).

"It keeps you in incredibly good shape!" – The power of being in good physical shape should not go unmentioned. You can also mention to your child that exercising actually gives you energy to do other things such as homework or really important things like winning a "Dance, Dance Revolution" video game marathon.

"You can help others and be a really good role model to others." – As corny as this sounds, many young people are proud to wear the banner (or tiara) of being someone others look up to. Many times these plateaus happen to really good swimmers, so it is time to swim a 500 in another swimmer's Zoomers and still be that positive role model that others want to be like.

"This is what being a part of a team is about." – Sometimes you're the shining star, and sometimes you're the speck of dust that you can't see in a telescope, but you still are an important part of the galaxy (obviously my first, and hopefully last, foray into astronomy metaphors). Your team needs you for points, for your loud cheering voiced, for your Napoleon Dynamite impressions. Whatever your child brings to the team, you need to point out that it is more than just their fast times that make them an important part of the team.

It's a tough time for some of our kids to go through times like these, but it is such an important part of emotional and intellectual growth for them to keep persevering and keeping their nose to the grindstone. (I didn't just say that, did I?) Because at the end of the day, swimming is not just about making you a better swimmer, it's more about making you a better person.

Paul Peavy is a Licensed Psychotherapist and former stand-up comic making him, well, a very stand-up therapist. His personal competitive swimming experience entails coming out of the water near the end of his age group in triathlons. He and his wife, Sherrie, have completed one Ironman together, in which Sherrie barely nudged him out by only 2 1/2 hours. Despite her parents' inexperience and lack of talent in swimming, their 10-year-old daughter, Lauren, is a happy and even very good swimmer.

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