THE WORLD'S FOREMOST AUTHORITY ON ADULT SWIMMING



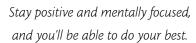
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OL'S EDGE MOTIVATION - TECHNIQUE - TRAINING IDEAS - EQUIPMENT USAGE

STAY IN THE KNOW

BY KARLYN PIPES-NEILSEN





It looks easy: step up on the blocks, adjust your goggles, dive in and swim your best time. Anyone can do it, right? Wrong.

Swimmers are some of the besttrained athletes in the world, yet many fall short of their potential during competition. Why? Performance anxiety, worry, fear and doubt take hold, causing even the best athlete to race

While everybody gets nervous before a race to some degree, it's the athlete who learns how to deal with the stress of competition who usually performs the best.

Following are five tips to help you stay mentally focused at your next competition.

STAY IN THE KNOW

Before and during a race, swimmers often experience negative thoughts such as:

- What if I don't swim well?
- What if he/she beats me?
- Is this race going to hurt?

These thoughts are fear-based and focus on the unknown. Instead, try to "stay in the know." So, what do you know?

- I have worked hard!
- I have done this a million times in practice!
- I am mentally tough!



ABOVE » While everybody gets nervous before a race to some degree, it's the athlete who learns how to deal with the stress of competition who usually performs the best.

- I will swim fast!
- I will have a great race!
- I am a good person regardless of how well I swim!

When you stay in the know, you concentrate on facts that you know and believe in instead of fearful "maybes" that make you doubt your ability, drain your confidence and deplete your energy.

SPELL IT OUT

At a meet, grab a waterproof pen and write the word, "KNOW," in big letters on your hand. When doubts or fears creep in, look down at your hand, see the word, "KNOW," and think about what it means to you. Your thoughts are very powerful, so give yourself a pep talk, and those negative thoughts will quickly disappear.

STAY IN CONTROL

You have no control over the person in the next lane or the performance of others. Stop worrying about the things you can't control and focus on what you can control such as your energy, thoughts, race strategy, technique and attitude.

BUTTERFLIES FLY STRAIGHT

The next time you feel "butterflies" in your stomach, try this really cool trick. First, close your eyes and mentally picture the butterflies frantically bouncing off the walls of your stomach. Feel their energy buzzing around and around. Now, picture those same butterflies flying straight or in a V-like formation. Really see it! Try to use the power of their wings to help you swim a fast race

OPEN THE LENS WIDE

Racing can be a lot like a zoom lens. All of your energy is narrowly focused on a single target—swimming your best. However, some swimmers spend way too much time in this tight realm creating excess stress on the mind and

If you find yourself stuck on zoom, take a deep breath, then let it all out with a hearty sigh. Now, get outside yourself by opening your lens wide and looking at the big picture. Recognize that your self-worth is not based on your performance.

Even though you may not have swum your best, the world will not come to an end...and your family and friends will love you just the same.

Have fun, and remember—you have the power to start over with a fresh new attitude at any time. .

Karlyn Pipes-Neilsen of Aquatic Edge has been a motivational speaker since 1994 and loves to share her experience, strength and hope with audiences of all ages. For more information, e-mail her at aquaticedge@hawaii.rr.com, or visit her website at www.aquaticedge.org.