

# the POOL'S EDGE

MOTIVATION ■ TECHNIQUE ■ TRAINING IDEAS ■ EQUIPMENT USAGE

## LIFE SKILLS LEARNED AT THE POOL

BY KARLYN PIPES-NEILSEN

*The next time you head to the pool to work on your swimming skills, consider the life skills you are learning as well.*

**HELP WANTED:** *Disciplined, organized, hard-working, goal-oriented person with good time-management skills. Must pay attention to detail, like to be challenged, make sacrifices, take direction and work well in a group setting. All applicants please apply at the nearest swim team.*

We all know that swimming offers many benefits: it's a great form of exercise, you meet like-minded people of all ages and from all walks of life, and competitive swimming is a great way to challenge yourself.

However, there is a *lot* more going on—both in and out of the pool—than meets the eye.

Bottom line: lessons learned at the pool teach us valuable skills we use in everyday life. Better yet, the skill-set developed through swimming is what colleges and corporations look for in a desirable applicant. That's pretty cool stuff!

Following is only a small sample of the many characteristics it takes to be a swimmer. While reading, ask yourself this question—would you hire this person?

**Discipline:** Swimming is a demanding sport and it takes discipline and commitment to show up day in and day out, especially during hard training.

**Organizational skills:** Forget your suit, cap and goggles, and you are

probably not going to swim. Fail to pack the clothes you are going to wear after practice, the food you plan to eat and the report that's due today, and you are in big trouble. Boy Scouts have nothing on swimmers when it comes to the motto, "Be Prepared."

**Hard work:** The sport of swimming requires strength, stamina and the willingness to work hard—all the time. In swimming, there are no short cuts to the top.

**Goal-oriented:** Swimmers are some of the most goal-oriented athletes on earth. On a regular basis, they set both short- and long-term goals and learn to re-establish goals once they have been met.

**Time management:** Swimmers are busy people juggling swim practices, meets, jobs, school, family and a whole host of other activities. Whether it's getting to the blocks on time or getting dinner on the table, swimmers are great at meeting "deadlines."

**Attention to detail:** Swimming, like life, is *all* about the details.

Swimmers know

that even a small change in technique, training habits or attitude can add up to big time drops at the next meet.

**Accept challenges:** Swimmers face new challenges every race, every training session and throughout the season. How a swimmer deals with challenging situations helps to define them as an athlete...and as a person.

**Sacrifice:** Early morning swim practices, turning down social engagements due to swim-related commitments and delaying gratification are just a few of the many sacrifices swimmers make to be able to achieve in the sport.

**Take direction:** Swimmers must have the ability to listen well, process information, take direction and be led even when the destination is not clear. A relationship based on trust and respect between swimmer and coach is a crucial ingredient to swimming success.

**Teamwork:** Swimming is considered an individual sport, but when you are sharing a lane with seven people or trying to win a dual meet, you are working together as a team to achieve a common goal.

So, the next time you head to the pool to work on your swimming skills, consider the life skills you are learning as well. Swimming truly does teach us to "suit up for life." ♦

2008 World Masters Swimmer of the Year Karlyn Pipes-Neilsen of Aquatic Edge offers motivational talks and swim technique clinics worldwide. If you are interested in having Karlyn speak or work with your USA or Masters team, please e-mail [aquaticedge@hawaii.rr.com](mailto:aquaticedge@hawaii.rr.com) or visit [www.aquaticedge.org](http://www.aquaticedge.org).

[PHOTO BY DAVE GONZALES]

LEFT » Swimmers are some of the most goal-oriented athletes on earth. On a regular basis, they set both short- and long-term goals and learn to re-establish goals once they have been met. (Pictured: Laura Val)