



Parental Influence



What Is Appropriate?

Appropriate

- Communicate with coaches respectfully about safety, schedules, and long-term development, not only about times, medals, or line-ups.
- Model good behavior at meets: cheer positively, avoid public criticism, and do not shout instructions from the stands.
- Use the club or school's established processes (emails, meetings, formal reports) to address concerns instead of confronting children or staff in anger.

Not appropriate

- Pressuring children to hide injuries, exhaustion, or distress so they can keep training or racing.
- Minimizing or dismissing a child's discomfort or disclosure ("Don't make a big deal," "You'll ruin the team's reputation," "We don't talk about that").
- Gossiping about minors' bodies, mental health, or family situations, or encouraging "drama" among parents around the team.



Interaction with coaches, peers, and other parents

- Healthy parent behavior supports coaches who set clear boundaries and encourages peers to be kind, inclusive, and safety-focused.
- Unhealthy behavior can pressure coaches to ignore safety concerns, and can teach swimmers that performance, reputation, or medals matter more than wellbeing.

Cultural Messages Parents Teach



- ★ Messages like “respect elders and coaches,” “do not talk back,” “keep family problems private,” or “do not cause trouble” can make it hard for children to report unsafe behavior or question adults, even when something feels wrong.
- ★ Messages like “your body is your own,” “it is okay to say no,” and “asking for help is strong” support boundary-setting, but may fail in tension with ideas about obedience, saving face, or family honor.
- ★ Many of the ideas that we live by have been shaped by our parental figures and family life!

Parental Role in Swimming

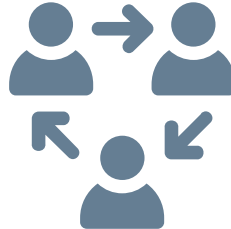
Gatekeepers

choosing clubs, asking about safety policies, and deciding when an environment is too unhealthy to stay in.



Interpreters

helping children understand coach comments, team norms, and social media through both cultural values and safety principles.



Advocates

backing children who raise concerns, documenting problems, and following through with clubs, schools, or other systems when needed.



Trauma-Informed Parenting



Possible signs at home

- - New reluctance to attend practice or meets, or sudden requests to switch groups or quit with no clear explanation.
 - Sleep problems, appetite changes, or frequent unexplained physical complaints on swim days.
 - Sudden mood shifts, increased irritability, shutting down, or intense perfectionism focused on swimming.

Getting the facts straight (without re-traumatizing)

- Stay calm, thank the child for telling you, and avoid blaming questions.
- Ask simple, concrete questions such as:
 - "What happened?"
 - "Where did it happen?"
 - "When did it happen?"
 - "Who was there?"
- Write down the child's own words, date, time, location, and any names mentioned.
- Save relevant messages by screenshotting texts, emails, group chats, or social media posts and storing them safely.
- Avoid repeated, detailed questioning; once basic facts are recorded, move toward safety planning and appropriate reporting instead of pushing for more detail.



The child chooses how much detail to share; the parent is responsible for taking action to keep them safe and to notify appropriate channels.

Creating Safe Space



Regular check-ins

- After practices or weekly, ask open questions such as:
 - “How did practice feel today?”
 - “Did anything make you uncomfortable or confused?”
 - “Is there anyone on the team or staff you’re worried about?”
- Treat both positive and negative responses as normal; praise honesty rather than only “everything is fine.”

Parent–coach communication

- Early in the season, parents can ask coaches:
 - “How are boundaries and consent taught to swimmers?”
 - “What happens if someone reports a concern?”
 - “How will parents be informed or involved if something serious occurs?”



Parents play a central role in shaping swim culture: teaching values, modeling behavior, noticing changes, and supporting reporting. When parents combine cultural pride with clear boundaries and trauma-informed habits, they help create a safer, healthier environment for all swimmers.