



**When is it okay
to speak up?**



Speaking Up vs. Staying Silent

- Speaking up is always appropriate when **safety, dignity**, or basic **fairness** are at risk (unsafe drills, boundary violations, discrimination, repeated humiliation).
- Speaking up also matters for practical **needs**: unclear expectations, unfair lane or event assignments, pain or exhaustion that could lead to injury.
- Silence can be a valid choice to **protect privacy** or to think things through, but it **should not be used to hide ongoing harm or abuse**.
- If silence is driven mainly by **fear** (retaliation, shame, “making trouble”), that is a **signal that support** and possible action are needed.

How to Speak Directly to Someone Who Causes Discomfort

- Direct communication is often appropriate for **lower-level problems** (awkward jokes, minor boundary crossings) when there is no immediate safety risk.
- Clear, simple statements work best: focus on the **behavior and impact**, not attacking the person.
- If there is fear of retaliation, a pattern of being ignored, or **serious misconduct**, it is safer to go to a trusted adult or formal reporting channel instead of confronting someone alone.

Examples:

- "I feel uncomfortable when you make those comments; please stop."
- "It is not okay to message me about that, especially late at night."
- "I need you to ask before touching me to correct my stroke."

Speaking Up About Powerful People



- 
- A stylized illustration of a person's head in profile, facing right. The person has dark hair and is wearing a blue shirt. They are holding a red megaphone to their mouth, and a red wave is coming out of the megaphone. The background is white with blue and teal abstract shapes.
- ★ **Fear of losing opportunities.**
Athletes may stay silent to protect recruiting, selection, or recommendations.
 - ★ **Adults have influence, not ownership.**
Coaches affect opportunities—not an athlete's talent or worth.
 - ★ **Safety over reputation.**
Protecting someone's image isn't worth harming your well-being.
 - ★ **Letting go is an option.**
Changing teams or mentors can still support your growth.
 - ★ **Your success is yours.**
Skill, effort, and character belong to the athlete—not the coach.



Communication and Advocacy Skills

- **Advocacy** in sport means **clearly expressing needs and boundaries and using existing processes** (meetings, emails, reports) when needed.
- Effective advocacy usually includes:
 - Calm, specific description of the situation.
 - A clear ask or request.
 - Reference to team rules or values (safety, respect, fairness).
 - A focus on solutions and next steps, not revenge.

Templates:

- **Situation:** “During [practice/meet/travel], [briefly describe what happened].”
- **Impact:** “This made me feel / led to [effect on safety, performance, or wellbeing].”
- **Request:** “I am asking for [specific change, support, or next step].”
- **Safety/values:** “I want this handled in a way that keeps athletes safe and respects everyone involved.”



Speaking up is an act of self-respect and of care for the team's culture. Silence can protect privacy, but it should never be used to protect harm; no dream, scholarship, or coach is more important than a swimmer's safety and dignity.