



12 Things You Learn Becoming a Swim Parent

The swimmer and swim parent lifestyle is no joke.

Week-long competitions, full days at the pool, and a season that never truly ends.

From fashion to lingo being a swim parent is just as much about adopting the world of swimming as your kid.

Here are 12 of the things you learn on your way to becoming a swim parent:

1. The world is more than 2/3's covered with water. Otherwise how to explain the never ending pile of damp towels? The wet suits hanging off every door in the house? The soggy butt marks on the car seat, the couch, and even on the dog? Your whole world is wet. All. The. Time.

2. If you close your eyes for just a few moments you miss your kid's race. Only swim parents can understand the frustration of going to a day-long swim meet and missing the only :30 seconds your swimmer actually competed.

3. You learn a whole new language. “Heat sheets” aren’t a term for blankets. “DFL” isn’t a runaway football league. And you know that touching with two hands and not picking your head up at the finish is very important.

4. Your grocery bills explode. It’s shocking how much food kids can rabidly throw back. Which makes sense—they are growing and need the food things to help sustain growth. But throw in two-a-day distance workouts, plus the hyper-activity that comes with being a kid, and you find that Costco visits are becoming appallingly frequent.

5. The smell of Chlorine No. 5 is mostly dead to you. Everyone has a signature scent that they wear or develop that they barely notice it themselves. For swimmers and their parents it's Chlorine No. 5. Fashionable in all seasons, it's the scent that never goes out of style.

6. Getting up super early in the AM never gets easier. Some things you learn to accept in adulthood. Things like responsibility. Capitalizing letters. Eating your vegetables. But getting up at 4:45am to pull car-pool duty? Never gets easier.

7. Swimming is more complicated than it looks. The assumption is that swimming is a simple sport. Put on a bathing suit, swim to the other side of the pool as fast as you can. Boom. Done. But there is a ton of stuff going on behind the scenes, from the legions of officials, to the very technical aspects of technique and form.

8. There will always be that one parent who rules the timing booth. The timing systems at local pools can be fickle. Every once in a while along comes a parent who can "whisper" the glitch timing system. When you find this parent never let them go. Ever.

9. You get into the "swimming is a real sport!" argument with non-swimmer parents. When The Joneses kids don't swim, and they give you a raised eyebrow and ask if "swimming is even a real sport," it ignites a deep, incensed reaction. If only they saw the daily struggle.

10. You'll wear many hats. From cheerleader, to pump-up artist, to shoulder to cry on, to everything in between, your little athlete will lean on you for support between races and practices. All they ask from you is that you are there for them on the days where they swim great, and the days where they swim not-so-great.

11. You know where to buy white pants after Labor Day. During meets where you strap on your official cap you know that this means getting decked out head to toe in white clothing. It's a good thing you know the only store in town that still sells white pants during the winter. And you know which ones will dry fastest from all the flip-turn splash you are going to get on them.

12. The sport wouldn't exist without you. Medals aren't handed out for putting on a swim meet. Or volunteering for the whole meet when your own kid only swam one day. But there should be. Swimming, and the joys and fun and pains and dampness that comes along with it wouldn't be possible without you.

So thank you.