



# 5 Reasons to Make Your Mindset a Top Priority

A better mindset will help you unleash havoc on those pesky PB's of yours. Here are some signs that your mindset is due for an upgrade.

Swimmers have no problem putting in the meters and yards, slaying all the weights in the gym, and even taking [care of their body between workouts](#). And yet...

They still struggle on race day...

- They struggle to stay consistent in training...
- Or they have a hard time understanding why one day they swim like a beast one day, and the next like a potato.

Throwing some time and attention at your mindset doesn't take a whole lot of time (despite what you may think), and it doesn't have to involve diving into a slew of sport psych textbooks to tease out solutions. Just a little knowledge and some consistency.

At the end I'll share some resources and guides that you can use ASAP to give your mindset boost.

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**Your mindset is a parking  
brake. All the training in the  
world won't move you an inch  
without the right attitude .**

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But first, here are some signs that you need to TLC that water-logged brain of yours:

## **Practice You vs. Competitive You.**

This is the bane of just about every swimmer's existence at some point—they work their tail off diligently for months on end, perform well at in-season meets, [nail their taper](#), and then fall flat on their chlorinated face on race day.

Competitive swimmers log a hysterical amount of hours and laps in the pool with the expectation that within the frame of a minute or so on a very exact day, at a specific time, they will unleash all that hard work all over their personal best times.

Your mindset and approach to racing needs some attention when your training doesn't align with competition. I know how infuriating this can be—it's the mental and emotional equivalent of jamming your fingers into the lane rope at full speed.

## **The mindset you have changes between training and competition.**

Swimmers are generally confident when walking out onto the pool deck at [swim practice](#). They reasonably know what to expect, have a good estimation what they are capable of, and understand that even if they fail or bomb the workout or main set it's just one practice. Not the end of the world.

In the days leading up to competition, our mindset shifts. No longer are we so confident in ourselves. We start worrying intimately about failing ourselves, the team, our coaches, our friends and family.

The end result is a swimmer who is tense, worried, and who has lost a lot of that “care-free” mindset that fueled high-grade performances in training.

## **You have a muddy understanding of perfectionism.**

It's interesting to hear the perspectives different swimmers have on what perfectionism means.

For some, it's an ideal that gives them endless motivation and purpose, fueling them to chase their best performance possible.

For other swimmers, it means comparing ourselves relentlessly to others (and feeling down about it), not taking any pride in the journey because it's only about the end result, we have trouble moving past mistakes and failures, and are generally fairly miserable when it comes to training and competition.

Care to take a guess which type of perfectionist is the healthy kind? (Or that there *even was* a good kind of perfectionist?)

## **You get super worried about people watching you.**

Even the most confident athlete feels self-aware when they walk out under the bright lights for the first time. Particularly when there are lots of people you really care about that are watching. You don't want to swim poorly for risk of feeling embarrassed or even how your performance may reflect on the people you love and respect.

The fear of negative evaluation is something we all struggle with in varying amounts. The successful swimmer has learned to compartmentalize what is going on around them and stay focused on what's happening directly in front of them and nothing else.

Some people pick this up faster than others, but it is something you can work on and improve.

## **That whole “too much anxiety” thing.**

Anxiety is a funny thing. Certainly not funny when you are experiencing it and it is making you feel like you are losing control, but in the way that we interpret it.

Anxiety, like anger, is immediately labeled as a negative emotion. But the way that we experience anxiety, and the resulting performance that follows, lies in *how we choose to frame that anxiety*.

If we view anxiety as something bad, performance has a funny way of going off the rails. But if [we simply reframe it as, “I’m excited”, performance almost immediately improves](#). (Seriously. That simple.)

We all experience anxiety before our races. Suppressing the symptoms of anxiety is almost impossible, and [trying to suppress anxiety usually just causes us to feel \*more\* anxious](#).

Anxiety, believe it or not, is your pal. Or at least, it wants to be! It is your body telling you that something new and awesome is on the horizon. And isn't that something worth being excited about?

## **Not recognizing anything on this list?**

I could go on and on about the mental hang-ups swimmers experience. So here's a few more!

- How about pulling your punches in races because you are too worried about dying?
- Not staying on top of your race strategy?
- Getting distracted by what the swimmer in the next lane is doing?
- How about using your competition as a way to inflict doubt on yourself instead of using them to motivate you?

Yup—all mindset thingies that you can deal with.

## The Next Step

What are some simple things you can do to give your mindset a dolphin kick in the right direction?

Here are some places to start:

[\*\*This One Trick Can Make Anxiety Work for You in the Pool for a Change.\*\*](#) Despite our best efforts, anxiety is an unavoidable part of competition. Here's how you can avoid choking by judo-chopping your anxiety into excitement.

[\*\*Are You Mentally Ready to Go on Race Day?\*\*](#) Don't leave your mental prep to chance the next time you are gearing up for competition. Here's a starter pack of things to start working on now.

[\*\*How to Prepare for the Moments in the Pool When Things \\*Really\\* Hurt.\*\*](#) One of the lesser-talked about things in the water is dealing with the crushing pain and mental collapse that happens when we “die.” Here's two strategies to survive and thrive in that moment.

[\*\*How to Build a Killer Pre-Race Routine to Dominate Race Day.\*\*](#) Elite swimmers have a simple, well-practiced and planned routine to give them confidence and a rising sense of imminent victory on race day. Here's how to craft yours.