

THROUGH DIVING YOUR CHILD CAN ACQUIRE...

1. Improved athletic and motor skills
2. A positive self-image
3. Improved social skills from interacting with teammates and coach
4. An ability to deal with success and disappointments
5. Sportsmanship and leadership skills
6. A chance to travel, visit new places and make new friends

DIVING SAFETY

Many parents express concerns about the safety of diving. However, for an athlete who is properly trained by a safety certified coach, diving is an extremely safe sport. "Diving Safety, A Position Paper" published by United States Diving reports on a study conducted by the Consumer Product Safety Commission which found that there were fewer accidents related to diving and diving boards than to golf, bowling or bleachers. A second study conducted by the National Spinal Cord Injury Data Research Center found that half of all diving injuries occurred in rivers, lakes and oceans and that most diving injuries "result from horseplay and injudicious behavior."

As Olympic Coach Ron O'Brien has explained: The sport of diving has suffered a poor image through association with accidents involving a dive into water, but having no connection to the sport of diving itself. These accidents occur in the shallow end of the pool, not the deep end, and they usually involve people who are not divers, have received little instruction and whose activities are not properly supervised.

COMMUNICATING WITH THE COACH

A diving coach can have a positive and long-lasting relationship with your child. He or she can help a diver to perform well and make diving a pleasant experience for your child.

As a parent, you may find it difficult to approach a coach with a question or a concern. Remember, you and the coach are working together in the best interest of your child, and you should feel comfortable discussing with the coach any issue that affects your child.

The best time to approach a coach is before or after a practice or a meet, not during the event. It is helpful to remember that a coach is most likely concerned with long-term goals and may have a different perspective than the parent. Also, remember that a coach is concerned with the best interests of the team, as well as those of your individual child.

A misunderstanding or miscommunication should be addressed early on before it turns into a more serious problem. Approach the coach with your concern and listen to the coach's explanation. Some misunderstandings may be a miscommunication on the part of the child. Occasionally a

parent may want to remove a child from the sport due to an unpleasant experience. Before making any abrupt moves, a parent should talk to the coach to see if a less drastic step may improve the situation.

Working together, parents and coaches can create a positive atmosphere for a diver. Please remember, it is the parents' job to support the diver and the program, and the coach's job to coach.

DIVING PARENTS' RESPONSIBILITIES

Make sure the diver is at practice on time and ready to dive. Siblings and career obligations often make this difficult. Car pools with teammates are often the best solution.

Encourage your child without pressuring them. Always show interest and enthusiasm.

DO NOT coach your child. During practices and meets, allow the coaches to do their job. Some coaches find that divers perform better and more effectively when parents are not present or are seated further away.

If your child misbehaves, a coach has some responsibility to discipline them, but the ultimate responsibility for discipline remains with the parent.

Criticizing coaches, officials or other divers in front of your child will not be tolerated.

Let your child know that you will be there for them, even if a practice or competition does not go as well as hoped or anticipated.

When asked, help out with team or meet activities. When at a meet hosted by another team, remember to thank coaches, officials and other meet volunteers. Putting on a meet is a tough job; expressions of appreciation are always welcome.

HOW TO PREPARE YOUR CHILD FOR A COMPETITION

Most divers do not need a pep talk from their parents before a meet. Divers usually get excited about competing, and do not need to get "fired up." Let the coach set the mood and the tone.

If your child seems nervous, help him or her to focus on their goals. Always be positive with your encouragement and comments.

Diving is a sport that is better performed when the athlete is relaxed. To reduce stress, it is important that the diver's self-esteem (or the parents') does not depend on the outcome of a meet or the performance of a particular dive. It is important to remember that a poor performance at a competition is not a negative reflection on the diver or the parent. Win or lose, a diver must know that he or she has his or her parents' support and approval. We win or we learn.

WHICH AGE GROUP?

A diver's age as determined by World Aquatics (FINA) (the International Governing Body for Aquatic Sports) is their age on December 31st of the current year. For example, if your diver's birthday is 9/24/03, this diver is considered 12 years old for the full calendar year. Since USA Diving uses a diver's FINA age, this diver would dive in competitions against other 12 and 13 year-olds.

PROPER EATING

For good practices and meets, it is important that the diver eat well. Many divers have trouble eating before the meet, but they should eat something. If a diver runs out of fuel in the middle of a meet, it is too late to do anything about it. Complex carbohydrates such as apples, yogurt, pancakes, pasta and whole grain breads are ideal pre-meet foods. Before practices and competitions, divers should avoid foods high in fat such as hamburgers, French fries and sausage.

WHAT TO TAKE TO THE MEET

Bathing suits – one for warm-up and one for competition.

A sammy or chamois towel, so that the diver may dry off in between dives.

Towels -your diver will be there for a while, so pack at least two.

Team outfit.

Sweat suit or terry cloth bath robe.

Playing cards, music, games – diver may have some free time between events.

Food – don't count on the snack bar at the meet to provide nutritious foods. A cooler with healthy food such as fruit, yogurt, granola bars and juice is usually a better choice.

For you – a book or some work from home. You'll have some free time in between warm-ups and events.

Remember, pools are usually very warm and humid. Therefore, you need to make sure you dress appropriately – layers are recommended.

DIVING MEETS – Everything You Need To Know

The following suggestions are geared to help you through your first few diving meets. These are general rules. You should always check with your coach to find out specifically what he or she expects of divers and their parents.

Before the Meet Starts...

Make sure your child gets a good night's sleep and a healthy meal prior to the competition.

Be sure that you know what time the coach expects you at the pool. Give yourself plenty of traveling time so that your child will arrive at the pool before the scheduled warm-up begins. It's better to be safe than sorry.

If the meet is an "away" meet, make sure the coach knows where you are staying so that he or she may get in touch with you if needed.

Check with the coach before leaving for the meet to learn if your child should sit in the bleachers with you or report to the deck. Some teams sit together on the deck, so look for familiar faces.

USA Diving insurance regulations do not allow parents on deck unless they are serving in an official capacity (i.e., working the scoring table).

Have your child contact his/her coach so that they know you have arrived. Follow the coach's instructions on what to do next. It is important to remember that coaches are generally very busy at meets, but will spend time with each child when it counts the most – during their warm-up and during their event.

Find the registration table. If your child is registered, check in and pick up a diving sheet(s). If your child is not registered, you should pay the registration fee, fill out all appropriate entry forms and releases, and pick up a diving sheet(s).

Diving sheets describe what dives your child will be doing and in what order. They are used by the announcer and the scoring table to record scores. If your child has never before filled out a diving sheet, and does not know how to do it, check with the coach. Sometimes, a more experienced diver from your team will be available to help your child. Some coaches recommend filling out a practice sheet the week before the meet and reviewing it together.

Once diving sheets are filled out, turn them in at the appropriate place (usually the registration table or look for large envelopes hanging on the wall).

The Competition...

It is important for every diver to know when their event begins, and at what time the coach expects them to be ready to compete.

Once the event has begun, the diver should know their order in the event, and always be prepared to dive when their name is called. Usually, the announcer will call the current diver and the "on-deck" diver (the next diver in the order).

All questions concerning a judge's call, the conduct of a meet, or the meet results should be directed to the coach. The coach will pursue the matter through the proper channels.

If you are looking for something to do, check with the parents' organization running the meet. You may be able to help in some way, such as working at the scoring table, or you may want to bring a good book or some work from home.

After the Event...

Make sure the child is available for any award ceremonies if applicable.

Tell your child what a great job they did and how proud of them you are.

Help them to relax if they are preparing to dive in a second event.

Make sure they are eating and/or drinking the proper foods.

Once the diver has finished competing, check with the coach before leaving (to find out about the next practice or warm-up times for any upcoming events).

HOW TO HANDLE A POOR PERFORMANCE

It is impossible for an athlete to give a top performance at every meet. Dealing with disappointment can be much more difficult than dealing with success. A parent should focus on some aspect of the competition that went well. Examples include performing a new dive for the first time in competition, or visible improvements such as a better legs extension, toe point or higher jump or better air position. Allow your diver to be disappointed before trying to cheer them up. A diver needs to know that they can fail and still be supported. Then focus on up-coming events.

Avoid the following:

Oh, it's not that important.

If only you had...

Why did you balk?

We pay a lot for you to train, and this is all we get?

It wasn't your fault, it was the judging.

If only the coach let you do another dive.

In closing, being a diving parent has many rewards, but it is not always easy. This article was designed to help make your role as a diving parent a little more straightforward. This is only a starting point. We hope it is useful.