



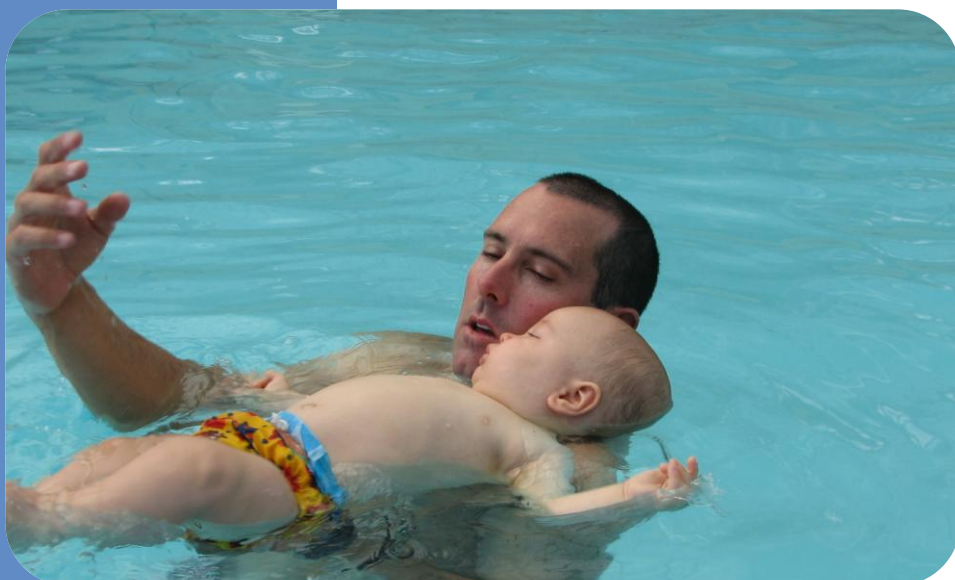
Kirby Swim Presents: **Bill Kirby's Swim Tips #4**

Parenting Dilemmas

Being a parent has got to be the most challenging but rewarding role we can take on. It is commonly accepted that self esteem/confidence is at the core to the happy and successful development of our children, no matter the age. So how do we manage our child's self esteem when every child develops at different rates? In our modern and cultural quest of keeping up with the Jones's and measuring success against others just how do we keep our child's esteem at healthy levels when they're not as good as their friends? We know that when you think you're good at something, you're likely to try that little harder, pay more attention and want to practice it more. Unfortunately the reverse is also true, we tend to avoid

things we perceive we are not that good at, pay less attention and disengage. Within school and community programs, skills-sets dictate what skills are taught and in what order. This makes it tricky for every teacher, parent and coach, as we know every child develops at different rates, has different strengths and may have different physical and learning capacities. Should we be aiming to influence everything to ensure our children are all at the top of every class, enforce extra work in areas of weakness with hope of speeding up progress? Or should we be accepting that the development of our children is varied and that they will learn and master skills at their own pace in their own time?

From my experiences so far I have already witnessed the dux of the school in year seven fail to sit his TEE in year 12 and the kids that struggled to learn how to read and write in years 1-3 who ended up in the top few students come year 12.



The little boy who didn't like getting his hair wet and even when he was 6, couldn't put his face in the water - is now the best swimmer in his year group, 6 years later.

The argument is not 'do we do the best for children?', it is: 'what is the best thing to do for our children?'. Should we focus on ensuring our children are always the top of their game? What happens when they're 20 years old and have never tasted not being the best, or fail at something? Will they have the skills to persist, be resilient and take pride in the challenge of getting better, jumping over the hurdles that face them? How do we keep their focus and their confidence up when they see their buddies succeed at things they're struggling with?

The great parents I have seen are the ones that have the skills, the chats and the energy to help with rationalising any perceived defeat. They use moments that others may perceive as failure to reflect on the positives. When their children are upset, they teach their children about goal setting and about the fact that in life we can't always expect to be the best. They talk about the importance of overcoming failure, striving harder and true admiration, spirit and sense of satisfaction attained by effort. They are usually the parents that use rewards and not bribes for sustained resilience or effort and monitor progressions and little

successful steps in the right direction well, and instantly reward them appropriately.

I have seen some great results from parents who balance the need to control the environment to ensure their developing children feel success, with the need to develop great core values of resilience and persistence in their children.

I have never met the perfect parent and as a parent myself, I often realise my flaws and what things I need to stop doing, start doing or do more of to ensure that the confidence of my children grows with them.

For a swimming school or coaching program, supervisors and coaches often agonise over balancing the needs of the child's skill development with the needs of developing the child's confidence. With parent help we can work as team to ensure progressions through the learn to swim and coaching programs are as smooth as possible. We can set very clear goals and pathways to attain these goals and join in celebrating their attainment.

Communication at every level is very important, don't leave this to chance. Speak to your coach; pool deck supervisor and your child, work together to achieve the outcomes wanted and enjoy watching more than your child's skills and confidence develop.

