



Pacific Swimming

2020 Athlete Leaderships Summit

Examining Culture & Leadership



Stay ahead of the culture by creating the culture. unknown



Don Heidary
Orinda Aquatics



1



In the chat. Will address generally or specific issues if possible, or at the end.

Feel free to reach independently as well.




2

Don Heidary bio

- 40 years of competitive coaching experience
 - All culture-driven and successful (rec, high school, USA Swimming)
- ASCA Past President (11,000 coaches worldwide)
- ASCA Level 5 Coach
- Have spoken nationally and internationally on character, culture, and team development
- Authored Character First Coursebook for ASCA
- Written extensively on culture
- Positive Coaching Alliance recipient Double-Goal Award
- Life's work/daily pursuit

Talk – primarily my opinion. Has been well-received by the coaching community.

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Presentation Material

- American Swimming Coaches Association Manual on “Putting Character First” (385 pages)
- World Clinic presentation - The Cultural Headwind (and reprint)
- Article, “Ethical Coaching” written for ASCA Newsletter
- 40 years of observations and dedication to culture-building. Putting this all into practice (rec, high school, USA Swimming)
- Deep care and concern for the growth of children and young adults as leaders in society

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Thank you all

- For your commitment to lead and to be a positive force on your team and in your community. **There is no greater or more important pursuit.**
- Thank you to Veronica Hernandez for her selfless service to Pacific Swimming and to areas of the greatest need in our sport. You are an inspiration to all, and the greatest example of a **servant-leader.**
- And a sincere thank you to the staff and volunteers of Pacific Swimming for the tireless work you do for the athletes of this LSC.

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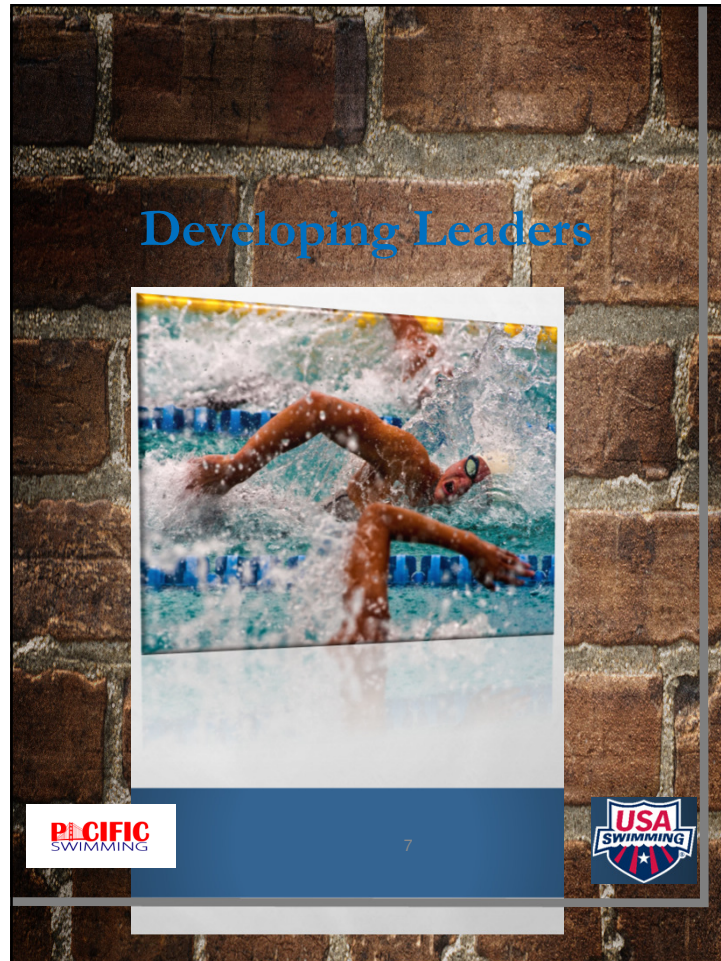
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Intro

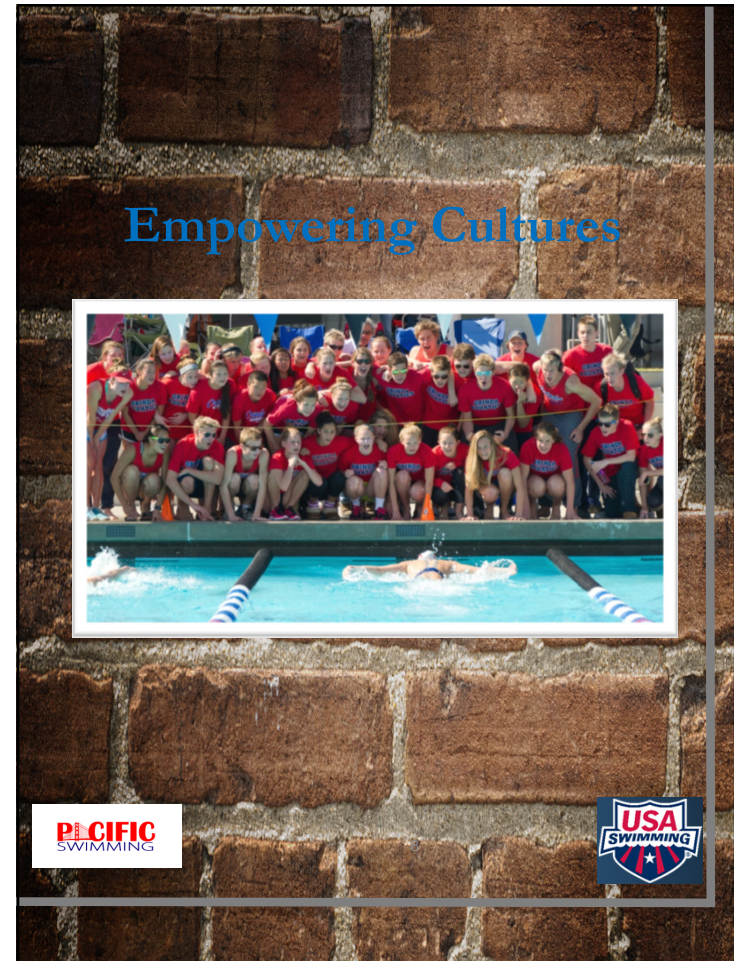
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“Integrity has no need of rules.” Albert Camus

“Wise men, though all the laws were abolished, would live the same lives.” Aristophanes

THIS is where implicit trust comes from.

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Why do the VAST majority of teams and athletes underachieve?



Could it be culture? How about leadership?

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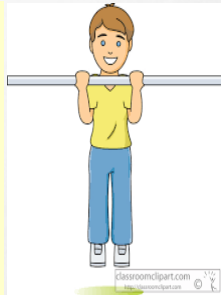


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The bar has been
raised for academics,
for athletics, ...

but what about for
integrity, character,
morality, compassion,
attitude, effort,
humility, selflessness?

The pillars of (good) culture



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Team Culture

- What actually *IS* team culture?
 - Is it in a Mission Statement or an athletic way of life?
- Why does it matter?
- How would you define or characterize your team culture?
- How has it evolved?
- Who is in charge of culture anyway?
- How does relate to swimming?
- How does it relate to life?

See survey responses

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WHAT IS A CULTURE?

Dictionary.com

“The sum total of ways of living built up by a group of human beings and transmitted from one generation to another.”



Culture is the way
you think, act, and
interact.

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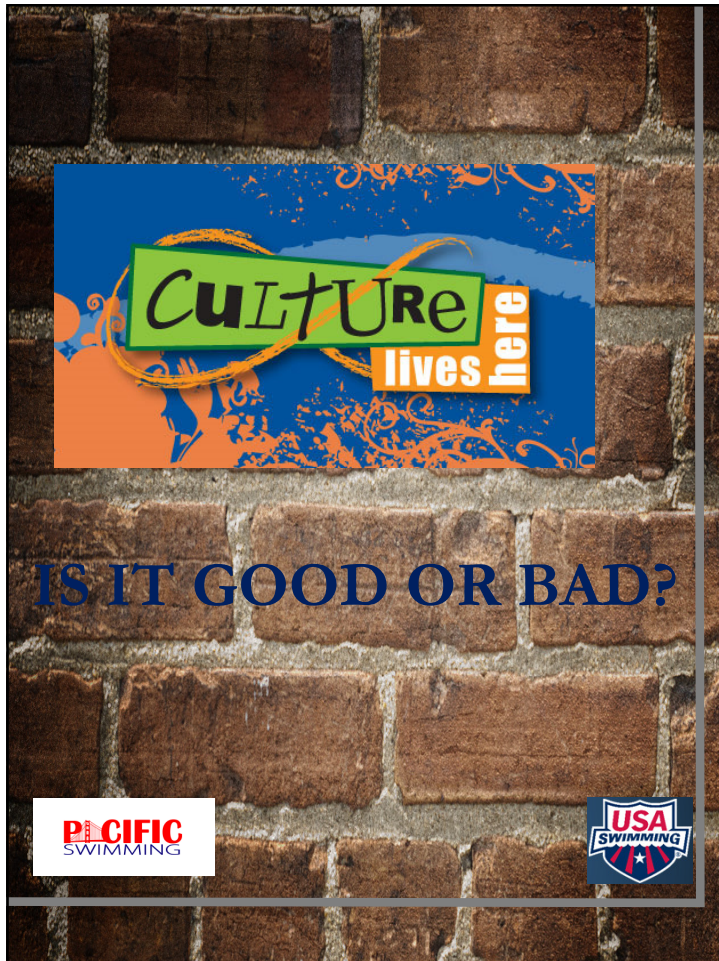
You are very
much a part it.



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CULTURE lives here

IS IT GOOD OR BAD?

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**When and How Does it
Know if **it** is Right?**



A swimmer said to me a while back: “you don’t understand **our** culture.”
I replied with: “what if **you** don’t understand your culture? Where is the greater risk?”

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“What the Heck is Water”?

“Two young fish swam by an older fish. As the older fish passed, he said, “Hey boys, how’s the water?” One of the younger fish looked at the other and said, “*what the heck is water?*” David Foster Wallace, This is Water



Do most kids even know what their culture is and what it represents? Or when they're hooked?

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Team Leadership

- Definition
- Who leads?
- Who monitors?
- Is your (team's) leadership “good” or “bad”?
- How does leadership create or become culture?
- Aren't we all leaders?



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How Important is this?

Experts agree that environment is
the single greatest determinant of
success AND happiness



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Headwind or Tailwind

*Imagine the two scenarios
as an athlete; as a person*



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A Change in Culture/Life

(from a 17-year-old girl who changed teams and cultures)

"I think about where I would be had I not **changed** teams, and honestly its **scary**. I was becoming a person I did not want to be. **I have learned what is truly important in life**, and I am not sure when, or if, I would have figured it out. I never realized what it was like to be around negative people because that type of person was always me. Additionally, I dreaded swimming and now I love it again and it has been a **rebirth**."



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The team culture sways a social lifestyle

Dear Orinda Aquatics,

I can only imagine where I would be today, right now, if I had never joined this team back in seventh grade. I see myself spending this Saturday night in my parentless house with a dozen members of my high school's top partiers, already a few drinks deep in my parent's liquor, behaving like a sloppy mess. I see myself dancing with boys I don't even like, breaking my mom's glass top coffee table, and getting into a car with a girl who swears she's safe to drive but clearly isn't. And I wouldn't even care. It would just be another typical Saturday night. Instead, I'm here sitting on my couch writing a letter to **the team that changed the entire course of my life, the team that I owe everything to**.

In middle school, I found myself, like so many others do, at a crossroads of sorts. The girls I considered my best friends were making choices that made me uncomfortable on all kinds of levels, but **I could still feel myself slipping down with them**. Looking back, I can see just how far I was about to fall.



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Why do cultures perpetuate?

- If you got your drivers license and got onto the freeway, knowing the speed limit, and the risk, and the promise to your parents, and the cost of insurance...
- And most of the traffic was going 70-90mph, and you see all your friends (thinking they are cool and "in")
- What would you do?



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Example with Alcohol

- Not safe
- Health risk
- Legal risk
- Parent ask not to
- Coaches ask not to
- Risk to athletics
- Risk to academics
- Embarrassment to family
- Illegal



Yet, it is prevalent and at epidemic proportions

AAAAAAND, we have accepted it

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“MOST KIDS ARE GOOD”

Yes, And while most cultural influences are a light (head)wind, in too many cases, they can be destructive forces wrecking havoc on a program and dismantling its very foundation.



- When cancer exists in the body, most cells are healthy, and too often, we don't even know.
- A few reckless drivers on a highway create risk for everyone.
- One stitch

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How do you get from this, to...



Culture creators?

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- “Mob Scene at High School – 500 students participated in what was a mob scene with rampant alcohol abuse and hazing and bullying.
- Two bus loads of students on a ski trip detained for massive drug and alcohol use/possession (parents defended).
- Giant youth party, fueled by alcohol and the internet, turns violent and abusive.



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Olympic “Toxic Environment”

Their London Olympics swimming team was beset by “culturally toxic incidents” including misuse of prescription drugs and bullying that highlighted a failure of culture and leadership, a report said. A culture existed within the team which “did not appear to assist or support high-level performance for most people. There were enough culturally toxic incidents across enough team members that breached agreements (such as getting drunk, misuse of prescription drugs, breaching curfews, deceit, bullying)” to warrant a strong, collective leadership response that included coaches, staff and the swimmers,” the report said. “No such collective action was taken.”

This is not an “Olympic” issue. It is a club issue, an age-group issue, a high school issue, and a societal issue.

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Hi Coach,

Something I want to run by you if you get a chance:
The "National" group here has had a plague of discipline problems and it has come to a head. In general, the problems with the group are:

- lack of leadership
- general lack of respect
- attendance issues
- very little team concept
- Immaturity

What should we do now?

The most moral guy on a Division 1 collegiate team (and the fastest) is not selected as a captain because he is the (character) outcast.

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From a young man I corresponded with...

New to National group

Older guys skipping run

He followed

Why?

**Wanted to fit in (WITH GUYS HE
PHILOSOPHICALLY DISAGREED WITH!)**



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The Destructive Model in Today's Teen World

We talk to kids about this model and how socially aggressive kids can dominate and destroy a culture. One concept that has to change is that 95% of the kids (who do the right thing) will protect the few who care nothing about the well being of the group or team. They do not want to be a snitch and lose their friendship or respect! (see quotes next page)

- **Social Elite** (leaders/bullies)
 - It is their identity
 - Live by reputation alone
 - Must push the envelope to perpetuate
- Those who aspire to be, will follow the social elite
- Draws in the vulnerable
- Intimidate/threaten the weak
- Again, the destructive few are protected by the majority, who know it is wrong and watch programs and people unravel.



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“Old” Masters (are out) (not a religious statement)

- Dalai Lama – insight
- Confucius – truth
- Jesus – forgiveness
- Gandhi – tolerance
- Lao Tzu – leadership
- Buddha – suffering
- Mohammed – service
- Mother Teresa - compassion
- Aristotle – wisdom
- Helen Keller - perseverance

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Coincidentally...

All of the attributes and virtues of an extraordinary person, athlete, and teammate

- Insight
- Truth
- Forgiveness
- Tolerance
- Leadership
- Suffering embraced
- Service
- Compassion
- Wisdom
- Perseverance

And an impeccable culture

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New Masters (are in)

- Apple
- Facebook
- Instagram
- Twitter
- Reality TV
- MTV
- Kim Kardashian/Miley Cyrus
- Abercrombie and Fitch
- Kanye West (although he did refer to himself as Jesus)

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Un-Coincidentally...

all of the attributes that detach children from their true human potential and personal growth possibilities, and I would add, their athletic potential

- Vanity
- Insecurity
- Need
- Selfishness
- Aggression
- Entitlement
- Dependence
- Anxiety
- Materialism
- “Social” pursuit

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Who *Does* Decide the Cultural Route?



- Madison Avenue (fashion/image/need for things)
- Silicon Valley - (technology/social media)
- Reality TV (repulsive content – language, nudity, sex, alcohol, conflict, etc.)
- Wall Street - (status/materialism – money buys happiness)
- Corporate marketing (rotating the same 25 people on magazine covers) telling us what to buy, wear, think, look like, and value


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The Real Challenge...

Developing athletes against a societal backdrop that challenges the very core of our sport...



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and the essence of human development



Train children in
THE RIGHT WAY,
and when old, they
WILL NOT STRAY.

Proverbs 22:6, NRSV

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Can you name three
positive cultural trends in
youth today?



Can you name one?

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What do they (kids) value?
What motivates/drives them?
What drives integrity?

Influences

- Self DNA
- Family
- Friends/peers
- School culture
- Team culture
- Community
- Culture
- National Culture
- Western Culture

➔

- Bullying
- Ego
- Insecurity
- Apathy
- Lack of Integrity
- Disrespect
- Individuality
- Self promotion
- Drug/alcohol use


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What are the influence drivers of...?


- Values
- Virtues
- Priorities
- Sacrifices
- Social choices
- Appearance
- Integrity
- Service
- Compassion





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The Societal Headwind



From the article; *Why is it so Hard to Become a better Person,*

“The sad irony is that while goodness is the thing that we most want from everyone else, **few want it most for themselves.**”

See this with new swimmers

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Does it really look this this?



A shredded concept.

Where in society is ironclad integrity a foregone conclusion? or cultural?

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False Idols

- “Idolatry happens when you worship or praise anything excessively to the point of causing you to believe it reigns supreme.”
- Be careful that you do not create idols to worship.” [Amaka Imani Nkosazana](#), *Sweet Destiny*
- “Constantly exposing yourself to popular culture and the mass media will ultimately shape your reality in ways that are not necessarily conducive to achieving your Soul Purpose and Life Calling.”
- Modern society has generally ‘lost the plot’. Slavishly following its false gods and idols makes no sense in a spiritually aware life.” [Anthon St. Maarten](#)

Girls WP team – looked just like...

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False idols

- Push the (integrity) envelope
- They must remain relevant
- Financially motivated
- Prey on the masses
- Prey on the vulnerable
- Prey on children



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"I just want to sing" and be idolized




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The Teen Gap

FROM THIS (0 - 12 YEARS OLD)



To this...



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Drink and be social/accepted Not drink and be lonely







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Bullying vs. Compassion



Compassion,
Learn it
Teach it
Share it


Animal Liberation Worldwide

Bullying on a broad scale should not exist and doesn't have to.






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Cheating vs. Integrity




**HIGH-TECH
CHEATING**

♥
**ITS NOT
CHEATING
UNLESS
YOU GET
CAUGHT :L**

50





**“One lie is enough
to question all
truths”**

Anonymous
it's just a lie to get your
point across

PICTURE QUOTES - a quote


A recent article revealed that 98% of teenagers lie to their parents.

And someone commented that the 2% who said they didn't were probably lying.





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Social Media



Dehumanizing human interaction?

Illusive sense of identity



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- Technology is sucking the “process” and journey of discovery out of youth
- It has reduced problem solving to an App
- It has completely derailed the true meaning of “friend” or the sentimental value of a picture
- And, in my opinion, it is analogous to a miracle drug that has no long-term history of potential side affects. And realize that the average age of the “experts” is probably between 14 and 18.



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From the Movie Birdman

(epitomizes the state of social media – relevance)

- **Birdman** - Listen to me. I'm trying to do something important.
- **SAM** - This is not important...It's because you want to feel relevant again. Well, there's a whole world out there where people fight to be relevant every day. And you act like it doesn't even exist! Things are happening in a place that you willfully ignore, a place that has already forgotten you. I mean, who are you? You hate bloggers. You make fun of Twitter. You don't even have a Facebook page. You're the one who doesn't exist. You're doing this because you're scared to death, like the rest of us, that you don't matter. And you know what? You're right. You don't. You're not important. Get used to it.

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“The world is a dangerous place, not because of those who do evil, but because of those who look on and do nothing.” Albert Einstein



Strong character is not derived from not doing wrong but rather from actually doing right. The Urantia Book

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“There are too many people who think that the only thing that's right is to get by, and the only thing that's wrong is to get caught.” ~J.C. Watts

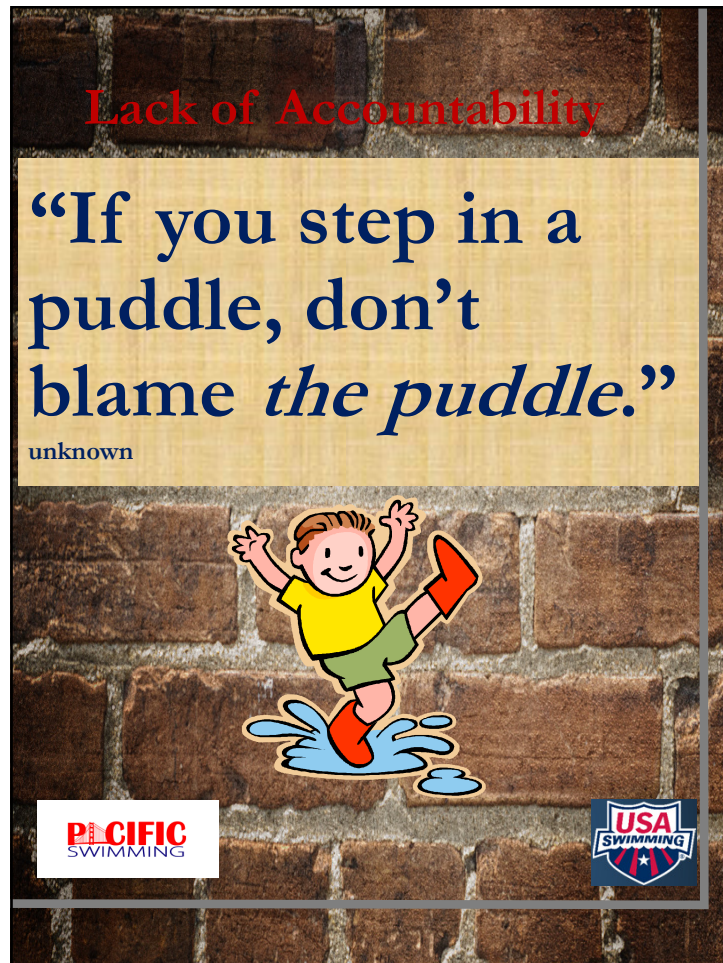


“Don't try to be different. Just be good. To be good is different enough.”
Arthur Freed

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Would you rather?

Academic integrity

4.0 GPA and cheat or a 3.0 GPA with integrity

Athletic Integrity

A Junior National qualifier who is not respected by anyone on the team or staff, or a novice who is an inspiration to the team and a captain

Social integrity

Popular and active (and drink and do drugs), or stay at home Friday and Saturday and don't.

Hence, the problem with integrity, and society.

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Peer Pressure

It should exist!

What is Positive Peer Pressure?

THE PRESSURE TO:

- ACT WITH INTEGRITY
- BE RESPECTFUL
- LOOK OUT FOR OTHERS
- FOLLOW ALL RULES
- BE GRATEFUL
- BE HUMBLE



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Healthy Pressure - How About a New Dialogue?

- Dude, you're a joke. You didn't help *anyone* today?
- Hey, you *really* don't get a long with your parents? That's lame! I owe my parents everything.
- You don't like to work hard?! Well that's not going to fly *here*! We love it. Better get on board man.
- You really drink. I can't believe you fell for **THAT** teen trap!

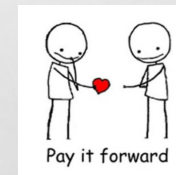
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What About New Mindsets?

- Instead of a “**looking out for number one**” mentality; what about a “**look out for one another**” mindset?
- Instead of “**followers**”, how about how many would “follow” you in time of **crisis**.
- Instead of **likes**, how about how many people **truly love** you.



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Challenge the (societal) Status Quo

Where in our culture do we celebrate character and humility? We would argue that society is anything but character based.

How does one become humble, self confident, positive, and selfless when marketing tells us that we are not good enough and society tells us success is the only measure of achievement? It is either self doubt (marketing) or EGO (winning to be fulfilled), and neither support a healthy athlete or team

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Quintessential Questions

- Why can't the most successful people be the most humble, and appreciative?
- Why can't athletes instinctively put the team first and look to ensure the success of others even ahead of their own?
- Why can't kids welcome and embrace every challenge?
- Why can't kids' best friends be their parents?
- And, why can't a child dream of being a leader as well as an *Olympian*?



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Again, change the paradigm

- See culture for what it really is
- Seek to understand its origin and evolution (how it came about)
- Evaluate its impact on human growth and value (and on the athlete and team)
- **Redefine and demand a culture based core values and virtues (imagine the “old” masters as team captains)**
- Wouldn't Gerald Jampolsky's, Love is the Answer” be a better mantra than Miley Cyrus', “I Smoke Pot and I Don't Give a F-”

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Calvin and Hobbes by Bill Watterson April 10, 2015

Kids are not born –

- Lazy
- Negative
- Self-absorbed
- Angry
- Entitled
- Feeling inferior

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Real Hero Worship

Where has it gone and who decided they were not hero's or worthy of worship?

- An inspirational special education teacher
- A volunteer for the homeless and destitute
- A banker who leaves a lucrative position to work in an orphanage
- A foster parent to many
- Not to mention, a soldier

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Culture Creation

- Integrity (trust)
- Team (first) Commitment
- Positive (only)
- Work Ethic
- Compassion (caring)
- Leadership
- Humility

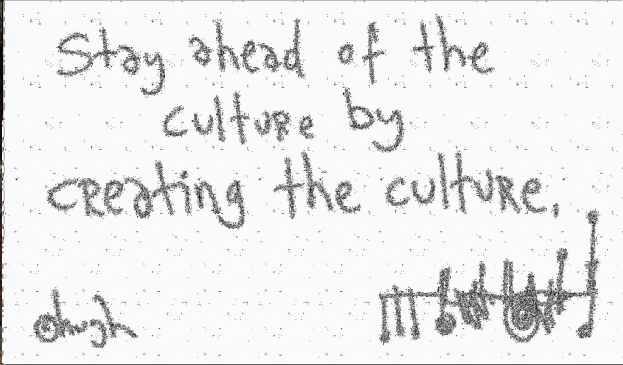


Not a concept, but a way of athletic life.

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Stay ahead of the
culture by
creating the culture.

chh

If you could wipe your culture slate clean
and rebuild it, what would it look like?

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There must be an **overriding anchor** to your philosophy and it must link life and happiness to sports and performance.




It must be an organizational mandate (a “we” concept), **a blanket wrapped around your team.** (not by “stars” or “the social elite”)

There must be a vision
It must be sold.




We (OA) made a proclamation many years ago that “we will be a team driven by character.”




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Culture Shift - Create a Tailwind *Simply a matter of perspective*

- Challenge equates to growth opportunity
- Success equates to gratitude/humility
- Status equates to mentor
- Teammate equates to commitment to the whole
- Gain equates to reciprocity
- Coach equates to servant
- Team equates to family
- Humanity equates to compassion



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The Life Classroom

The mental and physical nature of sports magnifies these concepts.

- Work ethic
- Sacrifice
- Humility
- Resilience
- Teamwork
- Focus
- Repetition
- Attitude
- Adversity



Swimming/sports may very well be a young adults
best and only learning ground.

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Mitigating/Eliminate “Burnout”

From *Swimming Science* -

[Why Do Young Swimmers Burnout?](#)

Posted: 27 May 2013 12:30 AM PDT

Why Do Young Swimmers Burnout?

Swimming thrives on a “survivalist” culture. Those who survive to senior age group, college, or professional swimming have emerged via survival-of-the-fittest. But many swimmers voluntarily drop out years before they're cut from a higher level. I don't have any statistics comparing swim dropout rates to other sports, but there's no doubt that early dropouts can be problematic for all levels.

Unfortunately, many promising young swimmers leave the sport on negative terms and have been soured by their experience. Dropouts usually are not seen as a failure of the system, but rather as validation to coaches that the swimmer dropping out lacked the mental fortitude to continue in the sport. There's undoubtedly some merit in that conclusion as not everyone is meant for the elite levels. But it would be delusional to think the swimming institution is not at least partially responsible for driving away young talent.

CONCLUSION

Unlike many football players or basketball players who won't retire “until they rip the uniform off my back”, a more common refrain in swimming is swimmers never wanting to see a pool again. It's not an easy problem to solve. And if you have the answer, I'm sure USA Swimming would pay handsomely for it. This simplest approach is to admit we can all do a little better, which starts with an honest look at why many swimmers leave the sport long before reaching their potential.

By Allan Phillips. Allan and his wife Katherine are heavily involved in the strength and conditioning community, for more information refer to [Pike Athletics](#).

The easiest way to reduce or eliminate burnout is through a positive culture and team environment. Yes, consistent improvement will keep kids in the sport, but it does not always keep them happy, and improvement is not linear. Young athletes need to connect with something bigger and something meaningful, and have strong relationships based on respect.

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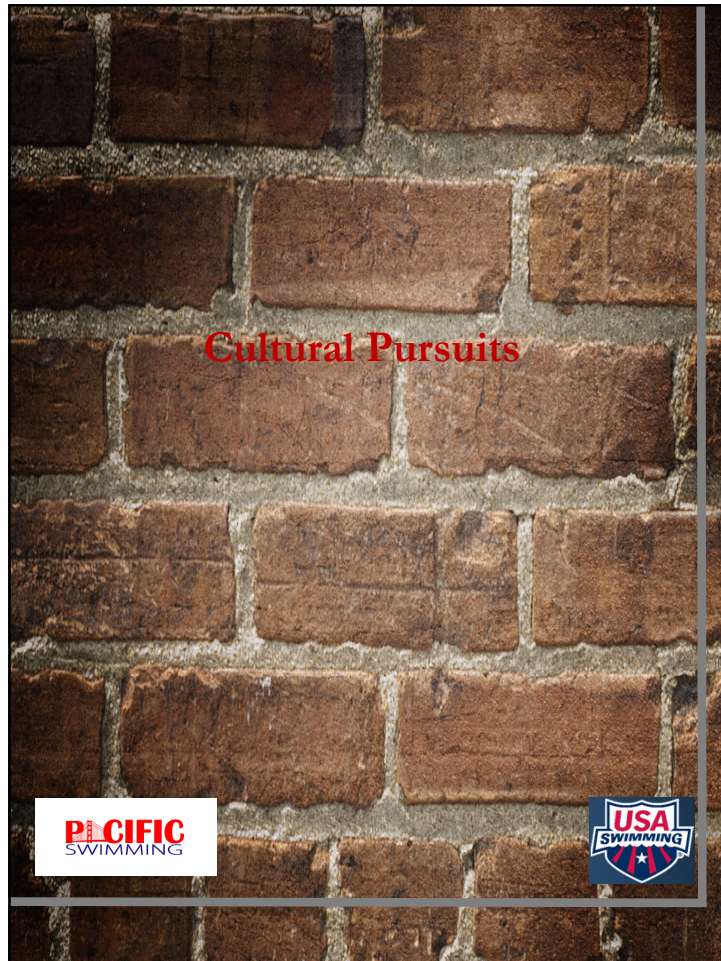


Why? Kids Crave...

- Respect
- Empowerment
- The opportunity to make a difference
- Being challenged
- Leadership

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1) A True Team Concept

- The team concept is a life concept and there is no better place to learn it than in an athletic setting.
- Team is life - your very existence is a display of teamwork, of family, friends, neighbors, classmates, those you like, don't like, community, co-workers, etc. It is co-existing and co-producing. Learn it!
- It requires empathy, sacrifice, and an unconditional commitment to a greater cause.
- It requires an unyielding view that team always comes first.

This ability and understanding will serve athletes long after their careers have ended.



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Are you the type of person/teammate that others would want to cheer for, support, or care about?



“No man can become rich without himself enriching others.” Dale Carnegie

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2) A Positive Culture

“No pessimist ever discovered the secrets of the stars, or sailed to an uncharted land, or opened a heaven to the human spirit.” Helen Keller

With No complaining – EVER
No negativity - EVER



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3) A Culture of Embraced Work & Challenge

- If challenge creates growth and opportunity, **why** ever resist it?
- Take the path of **"most resistance"** is a theme we ask the kids to embrace.
- They should **welcome** the most challenging aspects of swimming and their life, and reposition them as a positive, growth process. (visualize – cold, hungry, crowded pool, bad swim)



Visualization/Triggers

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4) Compassion – A Culture of Caring

...true ambition is not what you thought it was.

Bill, the man who co-founded Alcoholics Anonymous, said that, and he was right. **"True ambition,"** he said, **"is the profound desire to live usefully and walk humbly under the grace of God."**

What is your ambition for today?

"The object is not to see through one another but to see one another through." P. DeVries

"There is more hunger for love and appreciation in this world than for bread." Mother Teresa

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How can you help? Who can you help?

"In the final analysis, there is no solution to man's progress but the day's honest work, the day's honest decisions, the day's generous utterances and the day's good deed." Clare Booth Luce



"I don't know what your destiny will be, but one thing I know; the ones among you who will truly be happy are those who have sought and found how to serve." A. Schweitzer

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"When he took the time to help the man up the mountain, lo, he scaled it himself." Tibetan Proverb



Your greatest success may very well be in creating success for others. DR

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5) A Culture of Perpetual Leadership

- Every team and athlete must know that the younger members are future leaders and role models.
- They should be nurtured from day one. Young swimmers are made aware of the standards and responsibilities and what is expected of them now and in the future. *"If I don't see a leader in you..."*
- Through swimmers (captains, seniors, and anyone of influence) and coaches, young athletes must not only see role models and leaders, but they must aggressively look to move in this direction.

The first great gift we can bestow on others is a good example. Thomas Morell

We reform others unconsciously when we walk uprightly. Anne S. Swetchine

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6) A Culture of Humility

- An environment based on ego is toxic. We let kids know that if they have an ego, they have a problem (need attention) and that their need for attention will not be satisfied or tolerated.
- The clear example of this is the immature response to success. We ask kids to become **MORE** humble as they become **MORE** successful. We monitor this daily – at all ages.

"Humility finds those who credit themselves, and credit finds those who humble themselves." unknown

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7) A Travel Culture

- Implicit trust
- Impeccable integrity
- Positive
- Sacrifices
- Leadership
- Maturity
- Accountability

If you need a chaperone, you need....



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8) Culture Protection

- The greater good squeezes out that which does not support the culture
- 90% take a stand against 10%
- Group think/group mentality from an ethical perspective
- Not snitching but self policing



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Create Sub-Cultures

- Technique – every stroke
- Training – max effort
- Travel - impeccable
- Spirit – for team
- Team Attire - pride
- Parent Support – on board
- Academics – path to college
- Mentorship – a privilege
- Meet set up - service

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So what can you do?



1. Understand the societal drivers of teens (macro)
2. Understand your team culture and its drivers
3. Help to determine the “right” culture for your team
4. Talk to your coaches
5. Build a “coalition” of like-minded people
6. Lead by example
7. Continue to “sell” others on the virtues AND benefits (AND vision)
8. Create a critical mass
9. Create an “outcast” culture for those who do not buy in (NOT acceptable)
10. Build a perpetual leadership model

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All teams should inherently:



1. Be positive (always)
2. Embrace the work (including AM workout)
3. Be committed technically
4. Foster leadership at all levels
5. Travel with integrity
6. Help staff and parents with everything
7. Support ALL athletes in all capacities
8. Be meet mature
9. Promote college swimming
10. Put life values and lessons first

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You must define value system – *your life's foundation*



1. Integrity
2. Humility
3. Effort
4. Selflessness
5. Compassion
6. Sacrifice
7. Vision
8. Determination




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You can be the ones to
redefine youth culture.



It begins with sports and it
ends with life.

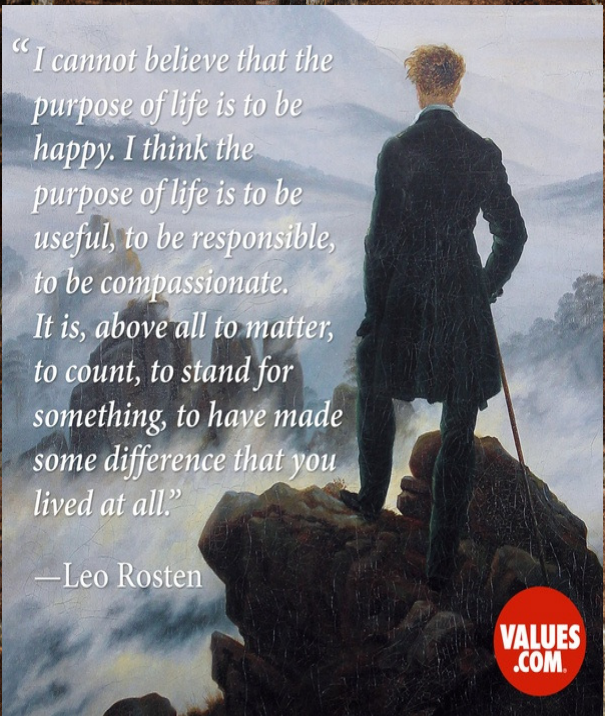
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*"I cannot believe that the
purpose of life is to be
happy. I think the
purpose of life is to be
useful, to be responsible,
to be compassionate.
It is, above all to matter,
to count, to stand for
something, to have made
some difference that you
lived at all."*

—Leo Rosten



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