

Legacy Diving Club

How to Be a Successful Diving Parent.

We have put together a collection of philosophies and practices for parents that have proven, over the years, to foster healthy and happy divers. From accepted works of sports psychologists and expert diving coaches, we share this information as a guide to parents who wish to help their young athletes enjoy a successful career in diving.

We begin with some general parent rules that comply with EMU policies and our own team policies for practice time:

I. Please Follow Team Rules of Practice Behavior:

Practice Rule #1: “Parents Are Not Permitted on Deck.” During diving practices, parents may sit in the bleacher area and watch the lesson. US Diving and United States Swimming require that only registered coaches, athletes, and officials are permitted on deck during practices. Please enter through the second floor dryland gym, and remain in the bleacher area during practices. Should parents need to use the restrooms, they can use the restrooms in the first or second floor common areas. If parents need to speak to a coach, they may call to make an appointment with the coach at an arranged time.

Practice Rule #2: “Please, No Distractions.” During diving practices, our coaching staff incorporates structured lesson plans that will lead directly to the athletes’ development and success. Running an effective and efficient workout is what we are paid to do and our coaching staff will ensure that the athletes stay on task. Lessons shall run the entire practice time with few exceptions and, in our pursuit of success, we will systematically avoid distractions whenever possible. We ask that parents do not interrupt workouts, except in the case of an *emergency*.

Practice Rule #3: “Parents Are to Avoid Communication with the Divers During Practice.” Our coaching staff works to create an atmosphere of positive experiences through hard work and focus. We use the tools of group dynamics to create and motivate our team and to encourage our team members to push their own limits. In order to develop a “team” atmosphere, athletes need to be tuned in to the workout in progress and tuned out to communicating with their parents between dives or exercises.

Practice Rule #4: “Please make it a point to *not* attend *some* practices.” We greatly appreciate the fact that parents wish to come in and support their children’s activities. It is still more impressive that parents are willing to take time out of their days to “be there” for their kids. However, in any sport psychology texts, one can find the important term, “intrinsic motivation.” This concept describes a motivation that comes from within the individual athlete, not from any external source. Intrinsic motivation is the thing inside most successful athletes that gets them to an acceptable level of performance arousal on their own – *from within*. The ability to motivate from within is an essential element that must be developed in our athletes at a young age. Without the parent at practice, students may at first be less focused, but they soon learn to stay on task out of intrinsic motivation.

Practice Rule #5:

“PLEASE DO NOT COACH THE DIVERS”

We accept the role of coaching the athletes and safely bringing them through the progressions that shall lead to competitive diving. In accepting the role of coach, we ask for support from our parents in helping the athletes succeed. We involve our parents in parent boosters, running diving meets, transporting athletes to practices and meets, running club activities, etc. This shall be the parent’s role for which our coaches are very grateful and your children will someday appreciate. **However, in efforts to help, we ask that parents do not cross that line into actually coaching the divers.** This raises many issues of concern and we will share some of them here. When parents cross the line and begin coaching the athletes,

- A) ...the children are often put in the unfortunate position of having to choose who to listen to, their parents or the coach. Because our coaching staff never wishes to engage in a power struggle between the parents and the coaches, as this would go against the natural benefits of sports in general, we wish to avoid this potential conflict.
- B) ...an imbalance in the corrective feedback system occurs. Athletes can only take so much constructive criticism at a time, and coaches dish out an awful lot of this in the one or two hours we see the athletes each practice. If our athletes are then told how to improve their dives by their parents at the pool, in the car on the ride home, at the dinner table, at the breakfast table, etc., the athlete will suffer from what is known and clearly understood in professional coaching circles as “over-coaching.” Over-coaching produces performance digression and athlete burnout – it dulls the athlete’s ability to respond to instruction during practice and meet situations.
- C) ...athletes may become injured. Our coaching staff is composed of safety-certified professionals in the science of coaching diving. Through our study of the physical principles of the sport, we have gained a keen insight into what motions may potentially lead to injury and what motions are safe. Parent coaching tips may put the athletes in danger of coming in contact with the board or water incorrectly, causing injury.
- D) ...we lose some of that vital connection between the athlete and coach that is a key ingredient to producing successful athletes. In a sport so often associated with the conquering of fear, we rely on a strong relationship of trust between the athlete and the coach. The best diving coaches in the world form a very trusting relationship with their athletes. Likewise, some of the best divers in the world would attempt to run through a brick wall if their coach told them they should do it. In earning an effective level of trust, the coach cannot be undermined by the coaching influences of diving parents.

Any attempts to directly or indirectly coach a Legacy diver by the parent in *any* setting is in direct violation of one of our most clear-cut and important club rules. Coaches that witness parents coaching their children or other children on the team are required to immediately ask the parent to stop doing so. This may involve the coach stopping the diving practice to let the parent know that such behavior is unacceptable. If the parent were to then continue coaching at this time or at a later date, the parent responsible will be asked by the coach to leave the premises during diving practice for a period of time as determined by that coach’s discretion. **This club rule is not negotiable. If you have any concerns about this or our other parent pool rules, please contact Buck Smith to arrange an appointment, (734) 751-8178. Thank you.**

II. Other Parent Guidelines – These are some other guidelines that you can follow to greatly improve your child’s performance and development:

- Try to make sure your diver is at practice on time and ready to dive. Car pools are usually the best solution to transportation woes. However, try not to have your diver arrive more than ten minutes prior to the start of practice without your direct supervision.
- Encourage your child without pressuring them. Interest and enthusiasm go a long way in improving performance.
- Do not criticize coaches, officials, other divers, or other diving parents in front of your child. Save that for arranged meetings with the parties involved.
- Please help out with the many activities that make this team special for our athletes.
- Do not fall prey to the “comparing game:” when, in an effort to motivate, a parent constantly compares the improvements of their child to the improvements of another. This is a Coaching 101 “no, no.” Children are naturally very driven by group dynamics and peer support; however, no person can control how well or poorly another person is doing in lessons. Comparison like this can only produce anxiety without solution. Divers can control how well they *are* doing compared to how well they *can* do, and the coach is generally a pretty sharp judge on how well the athlete *can* do from day to day. As in life, divers need to find our own rate of improvement that works most efficiently for them.
- Do let your child know that you love and support them if a practice or meet goes well, and that you love and support them the same if a practice or meet does not go well at all.
- Please try to avoid negative gossip about the coach or club, which does not place the club representatives or athletes in a positive light. With so many working to better the performances of the athletes, we require that concerns and issues be addressed professionally at scheduled appointments with our staff as needed.
- Please avoid voicing any club service concerns to your child. Your words will greatly influence your child’s attitude and thoughts. If a child feels they are being treated unfairly by the coach, this will reduce their initiative and the belief that they are in control of their development within the training environment. If such a condition has been reinforced by the parent, this may become a problem that the coach is powerless to undo. Instead, arrange a meeting with the coach to discuss grievances so that some positive results may follow.

III. 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 for the event.
- If your child seems nervous, help him or her focus on his or her goals or just relax. Always be positive with your comments.
- Don’t expect the coach to get the athletes bouncing off the wall before competition. Diving is a sport of relaxed focus and confident grace. Furthermore, motivation is an everyday job, not something reserved for ten minutes before a meet. Our coaches will encourage our athletes to inspire and motivate themselves regularly, for long run success in diving and potentially other areas of their lives.
- Tell your child to have fun. Diving is fun.
- Diving is a sport unlike many. It is a sport that is better performed when the athlete is relaxed. To reduce stress, it is important that the diver’s (or the parents’) self esteem is not dependent upon the outcome of the meet or the performance of a particular dive. A poor performance at a meet is not a negative reflection on the diver, the parent, or the coach. Win or lose, a diver should know *ahead of time* that he or she has his parents’ support and approval. This is a tough one for parents who choose to live vicariously through their children.
- Make sure your child gets a good night’s sleep and a healthy meal before a competition.

- Be sure you know what time the coach expects you at the pool and BE THERE at that time. A season of work can be sabotaged by a late arrival to warm-ups.
- At away meets, make sure you leave the hotel phone # and room # with the coach. All too often, warm-ups are changed at last minute and the team members may need to be contacted.
- Upon arrival, have your child go directly to the coach so they know you have arrived and tell your child to follow the coach's directions. Coaches are very busy at meets. Remember that your child will receive individual attention when it matters most – during their warm-ups and during their event.
- Find the registration table. If your child is registered, see that his or her diving sheet is on file.

IV How to Handle a Poor Performance:

It is impossible for an athlete to give a top performance at every meet. Athletes often seem to plateau for a time when their performances seem to remain stagnant. Please consider that most of our team training plans allow the athletes to perform at their best only once or twice a year. Some of our national champion divers have been on *two-year* training plans that resulted in *one* peak performance – a national championship. However, with several competitions per season, dealing with a disappointing performance can be difficult:

- Parents should keep focus on some aspect of the competition that was positive or went well. Examples may be performing a new dive in competition for the first time or attaining better jumps from the board or spinning faster on dives.
- **Allow your child to be disappointed**, they will need to learn to deal with this emotion in diving and in life, but offer them opportunity to cheer up when they are ready.
- Help your child see the long-term picture and how they are gaining valuable experience.
- Ask your child what they have learned from the experience and how they can better their situation next time.
- Let your child know it is ok to make mistakes, to fail. Failing is a result of taking action in life. Athletes must develop a sense of self-acceptance when they fail so that they can learn from the experience. After all, nothing ventured, nothing gained. With positive support, our athletes will learn mental strategies to get up and attack the next opportunity to succeed without being bothered by failure for very long.
- Please accept your child UNCONDITIONALLY. Only one diver gets to finish in first place, but this does not mean all the other divers have lost. Every athlete who has showed up, put themselves to the test, and put in an honest effort *has* won, regardless of their place of finish. Ironically, sometimes the first place diver has not successfully put in wholehearted effort. Relatively, the first place diver may have less to celebrate than some others considering this factor. Coaches and divers sometimes concentrate their goals and efforts on actions that couldn't possibly result in a first place or a point total, and it can really deflate a child to hear criticism about not scoring so well when scoring well may not have been the challenge of the day. Talk to your child and learn about his/her goals so you can better evaluate a win or a loss, but provide loving support either way.

V After a poor performance, please avoid saying things like:

- Oh well, it's not important.
- If only you had...
- Why did you screw that one up?
- What's the matter with you?
- You just choked.
- We pay a lot for this and that's all you had to show us?
- It wasn't your fault it was the judging/coaching.
- If only the coach would have let you do another dive.

- You just don't listen.
- You don't want it bad enough.
- Ha! Ha! No financial reward for you, and I'm calling Santa!!!

The common factor in these comments is that they focus on the negative, missing the positive learning experiences of making mistakes. Also many of these comments are directed towards things the athlete has no control over. If an athlete feels that he or she cannot control how they do, they will likely learn to give up on themselves and others. Successful athletes *always* concern themselves with what they *are* in control of and pay little attention to the rest. A parent's positive comments can greatly help develop this perspective.

VI Proper Eating:

For good practices and meets, divers need to eat well. Many divers have trouble eating before meets, but they should. An athlete who runs out of energy during the meet is usually going to suffer a poor performance and an overall lower level of enjoyment in the sport. At this point, it would be too late to do anything about the fatigued diver other than supply a quick fix sugary treat. Divers should snack on food items often at meets.

Complex carbohydrates such as apples, yogurt, pancakes, pasta and whole grain cereal bars or breads are good pre-meet foods. Before practices and competitions, divers should avoid foods high in fat such as hamburgers, French fries and sausage. The ideal ratio of carbohydrate to protein in the diet should be about 1 to 1. Extra protein on meet days is helpful to maintain alertness and mental focus. Extra Carbohydrates at night help ensure a better night's sleep.

VII Communication with the Coach:

As a parent you may find it difficult to approach a coach with a question. Practices are busy and, if they are doing their job, our coaches are usually not available for conversation. However, we believe you should freely discuss any issue with the coach when the circumstances allow.

- Call the coach to ask a question or you may set up an appointment with the coach. The phone is an expedient link to addressing an issue you wish to discuss. All of our coaches are available via e-mail as well.
- Please avoid striking up a conversation with the coach during practice hours or during a diving event. These are the least likely times that the coach can give you your due attention.
- If you have a problem with something within our club operations, please take the initiative to share your concerns with the coach. The coach is concerned with the best interests of the team, and shares a perspective for the long-term interests of the program.
- There will be misunderstandings and problems occasionally. Our parents and coaches need to work together and be problem solvers. After all, this is what we expect of our young athletes – to be problem solvers every day.
- Any misunderstanding or problem should be addressed early on before it turns into a more serious problem.
- Please communicate with the coach before making any abrupt moves with respect to your athlete's training.

VIII Something to Do at Meets:

- If you like to be involved with the operations of the meet or just need something to do, check with the parents group that is running the meet. They may need help. Mention that you are from Legacy Diving and you would like to extend a useful helping hand.
- Bring a good book or lap top computer. There may be a considerable amount of time before you child's warm-ups if the meet is running slow. Also in big events, there may be plenty of time between dives to read or work.
- Ask the coach if he or she needs anything, perhaps even a trip to a local fast food restaurant may be greatly appreciated.

IX After the Event:

- Make sure your child is available for any award ceremony that may be pending.
- Tell your child what a great thing it is to dive in competition and that you are proud of them.
- Help them to relax if they need to prepare for another event.
- Make sure they are eating/drinking proper foods.
- Have your child check with the coach before leaving the pool.
- Double check to see whether they have all of their gear collected.

X General Overview – A successful diving parent will...

- Supply recognition, love, and encouragement, without conditions.
- Not coach a Legacy diver under any circumstances unless they are a paid coaching member of the Legacy staff.
- Not be at every practice, understanding that athletes need to develop intrinsic reasons for participating in athletics.
- Keep distant during practices and meets. The coach needs to have the minds and bodies of the athletes fully engaged in what he or she has designed for them to work on.
- Understand that many children will be inconsistent and erratic. Patience and time is usually the only thing needed to correct many young divers' problems.
- Take responsibility for their child's development, character, and support. Athletes need much support as they meet daily challenges.
- Develop a significant level of enthusiasm for the special activities and opportunities presented within our program.
- Not ride the emotional roller coaster, telling the athlete how great they are after one performance and how horrible they are after another.
- Be low key at the meet.
- Not give orders or strong comments.
- Avoid the "but" comment. "You did well, but..."
- Not desire success more than their child desires it, but gently encourage their child to develop internal goals and dreams.

XI The Golden Rule:

Our coaches' greatest satisfaction comes from being in the successful service of young people. If we are going to make our world more beautiful than it is, we need to encourage our young people to strive for greatness and redefine their limits. Our coaches expect Legacy athletes to put their best effort on the line during practices and especially during meets to reach their performance goals. In expecting so much, Legacy coaches must make earnest attempts to elevate the quality of workouts and meet performances. Because of the sincere efforts of our coaches in a sometimes thankless and underpaid profession, a simple "thank you, coach" goes a long way in refueling our coaching staff's spirit. Please remind your diver to thank the coach, occasionally, for anything that has benefited them in the program. Such simple words aren't spoken enough and they mean so much to our coaches.

We wish to also thank our parents for accepting the difficult task of being a diving parent. We hope that our coaches and parents continue to depend on each other in making our children's experiences in diving rewarding beyond measure. **However, it is the parent/guardian's job to support the diver and the program – it is the coach's job to coach.**

Please sign and return this page along with the any other Legacy registration forms. Keep the rest of this pamphlet for your reference.

I have read and understand the guidelines set forth for me as a diving parent for the Legacy Diving and I accept the rules and responsibilities for parents as they have been explained in this pamphlet:

Athlete(s) Represented: _____

Parent/Guardian Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

Printed Name: _____

Parent/Guardian Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

Printed Name: _____