

## BEHAVING LIKE A CHAMPION

BY JENNY SUSSER, PhD/Sport Psychologist



Dealing with distractions is something we all must do on whatever level we compete, whether it be the Olympics or sectionals. The higher the competitive level, the higher the pressure of the distractions.

Making good decisions when under pressure is a life-long challenge. You will still make mistakes, but that's part of being human.

An important part of making mistakes is how you deal with them and then trying to learn from them.

Being a competitive athlete offers daily opportunities to “behave like a champion,” not just during a meet, but also in practice and in everyday life.

How about while you're having a bad set or workout, and you know you need to act one way when you'd much rather throw a tantrum and cry?

What about when you've been taken off the relay because someone swam faster than you? Again, is this a perfect time to get angry or feel sorry for yourself, or should you figure out how to swim faster by working harder or smarter in practice and then cheer louder than anyone else for the relay.

How about when you miss that cut by .01 of a second in the mile?! Sure, you will be disappointed. Who wouldn't? But is it “champion” behavior to throw your cap and goggles and quit swimming?

No. A champion would get upset (for a short time), dust themselves off, get back to training and try again.

Behaving like a champion shouldn't be reserved for those who are winning and only when you are competing. Sport is about many things, and winning is only one of them, no matter how important it might seem at the time.

Behaving like a champion and being mentally tough is a much greater challenge when you are NOT winning, which might mean more and make you an even greater champion...in and out of the pool.