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PSYCH TIME

by Kevin Salisbury, Sports Psychology Writer

SLUMPS: You know one when you're in one—now see if you can get out of one.

Have you ever felt like you were never going to improve your times? Are you working really hard in practice and not swimming best times in a meet? Do you have unusual fatigue, anxiety, boredom with the sport, headaches, irritability? Well, you're may be in a slump—but you probably already figured that out.

Slumps are often times caused by unreasonably high expectations, taking on too much, focusing on very narrow goals, and worrying about other people (i.e., comparing yourself to others or worrying about others' performances). A mild slump can result in negative feelings, self doubts, low self confidence, and confusion, feelings which often lead to even worse performances. Trying harder can even deepen your slump.

Every slump is different—some can be fixed by a change in technique or practice routine, but most will involve changing your expectations and your outlook on your next performance.

If you can become more aware of and ready for the emotions surrounding your performances, then you're going a long way towards breaking out of your slump. You'll need help from your coach who can also help you reestablish goals. You should learn relaxation techniques, learn how to control your emotions, and plan for success in your next race. Coaches need to help you find situations where the outcome is more likely to be successful—going to a meet to win a race or being successful at high school swimming can go a long way towards breaking out of a slump. Sometimes taking a break from training—be it a day, a week, or a season, is the best solution.

Kevin Salisbury is the Head Coach of Men's and Women's Swimming at Clark University. He holds an advanced degree in Sports Psychology.



Blast Back from Burnout

If training is kind of a drag, and the thrill of the drill is gone, it's time to retune your attitude. Seven ways to beat the black-line blues

By Alan Goldberg, Ed.D.

Burnout isn't pretty. First your speed starts to slip. Then your enthusiasm for getting up at 5:00 AM starts to wane. Next, your body won't forget yesterday's painful practice. Finally, the worst happens—you actually think about blowing off practice to watch TV.

Time to get serious before burnout puts you out of the pool forever. Just follow this seven-step strategy to bust burnout for good.

1 Give it a rest

The primary cause of burnout is overdoing it. You can push yourself only so long before your body breaks down and says "no mas." If you don't get enough rest, you'll slow your training to a crawl, so to

speaking. Think about it this way: lifting weights two to three times a week may make you stronger, but doubling that will not double your strength. More isn't always better. Rest is an important part of your training so occasionally take a vacation from swimming.

2 Pump up the passion

Passion is the best cure for burnout. Get back in touch with everything you really love about swimming and keep that in mind as you cruise the black line. If you're having fun, you'll get much more out of your training and go faster when it counts. Savor the quiet of the early-morning hours, revel in the sensation of arm and leg muscles working hard, celebrate the exhilaration of oxygen debt, and appreciate how supple, alert, and refreshed you feel at the end of your workout.

3 Challenge yourself

Get comfortable being uncomfortable. Step outside your comfort zone on a regular basis and remarkable things will happen. You'll grow as a person and improve as an athlete. Stretching your limits helps keep you motivated and interested. You'll also build your self-esteem and confidence. Discovering that you can survive when you push your physical and mental limits is exciting and energizing.

4 Keep the faith

If your faith is flagging, reassess why you're swimming. If your reasons are compelling enough, you'll stay motivated. If your goal was fitness and you're bored because you achieved that, set a new goal. Improve your times, aim for your first meet, move into a faster lane, learn a new stroke, or train for an ocean swim.

5 Swim for yourself

You'll swim your best if you mentally swim in your own lane. Don't measure yourself against others or, if you're a Masters swimmer, against yourself when you were younger. Focus on your current goals and training.

6 Spice up your swims

Get creative. Change your workouts. Try new sets. Swim with different practice partners. Vary the mental and physical intensity of your training. Make those longer sets exciting by pretending you're racing in an upcoming meet or against a rival.

7 Train in the now

Stay focused during practice. If you're dreaming about the past or anticipating the future, you won't have a productive workout. Keep your thoughts in the pool. Think about your stroke, the pace clock, the set, and your lane mates. Take the practice one step at a time. 🐬

Burnout Takes Out Many Young Athletes

BY RICK WOLFF

It's not talked about too often, but the statistic is out there. Many parents who chauffeur their athletically oriented youngsters from one sport to another might not even know it exists. But they must confront it, because the number doesn't lie: According to the Institute for the Study of Youth Sports at Michigan State University, 70% of kids will quit playing sports by age 13.

Nearly three out of four? How? Why?

It's perfectly harmless in some cases. Some youngsters are simply going through adolescence and discovering other interests. They want to try out for the school play or devote more time to their musical pursuits. Others may want to find a job to make some money or spend time with friends who aren't athletes.

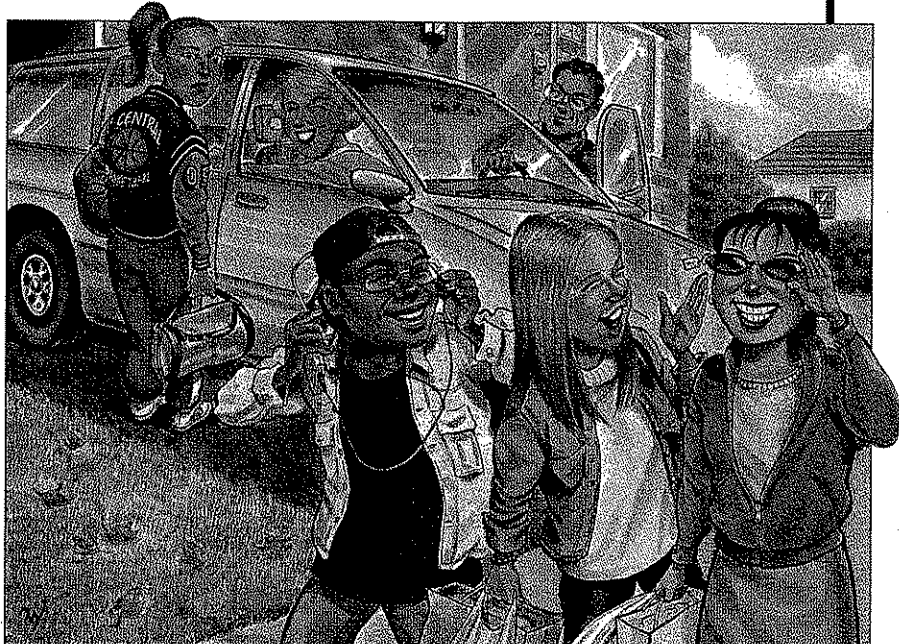
What's troubling, though, is that so many quit because they've become victims of burnout. They say, "It isn't fun anymore."

It can happen when a youngster is devoted to one sport year-round or jumps from sport to sport with many seasons overlapping. With the pressures on young athletes greater than ever, burnout is a huge concern.

It's a hard realization for parents who have spent countless hours driving to practices and a lot of money buying the best equipment. The almost daily commitment to youth sports has been part of their lives since their children were five or six years old. Now, just seven years later, the youngster no longer wants to get up early to swim or finds soccer practices tedious. Sports are more burden than pleasure.

Many well-intentioned moms and dads say, "Sure, my 12-year-old has enough energy to play for two soccer teams. She loves to play, and the extra games will give her added experience and a leg up on the competition. And it still won't be too much for her to also dabble in other sports like volleyball and softball." For many kids that may be true. But for others such devotion makes them tire of sports, and their parents often don't recognize it.

Parents are also surprised to discover that they have become part of the problem instead of the solution. They continue to put their own expectations for a child's athletic career ahead of the child's desire to have fun. They don't understand that teens want to try different things and start



Sports can be a drag for weary athletes who see a chance to be with friends instead.

to make their own decisions—an important part of the maturation process. And sadly, parents don't change their tune even when they know the child wants to slow down. Too many turn up the heat instead of trying to understand what's happening. "C'mon," they say, "you have to work harder at your game if you want to get better." That is precisely the wrong approach.

Instead parents should talk with a youngster showing fatigue, disinterest or other signs of burnout. It's always healthy for kids to get their concerns and anxieties off their chests. Ask them what parts of sports they enjoy and if they get as much out of competing as when they started playing. If they don't, fine. Maybe it's time to take a break. Let them decide what to do, and support the decision they make.

If they do want to keep playing, help them avoid burning out again. Tell them it's O.K. to scale back their athletics and develop other interests, and encourage them to do so. There's never a better time to make sure they realize youth sports are about only one thing: having fun.

Rick Wolff is chairman of the Center for Sports Parenting (www.sportsparenting.org). His latest book is 'The Sports Parenting Edge: The Winning Game Plan for Every Athlete from T-Ball to College Recruiting' (Running Press).

ILLUSTRATION BY S.B. WHITEHEAD

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PSYCH

BREAKING BARRIERS

When the going gets tough, how can you help yourself get through that next barrier, that next level cut? Here's where to start.

PREPARED WITH THE HELP OF KEVIN SALISBURY, HEAD COACH AT CLARK UNIVERSITY.

How do some swimmers do it? How do they seem to qualify so easily for the Championship meet? What makes them so good? How do they then go on and make Junior or Senior Nationals? How do these successful athletes cope with the daily routine day in and day out? How do they take the same training others have and due it to break through the barriers?

All the mental training in the world will not make up for mediocre swimming training. This short article here will not deal with what's needed physically to make a breakthrough—we'll just look at a quick analysis of the non-physical training factors that can make a difference.

In general, these are the four factors that will affect your ability to make a breakthrough:

1 Personality traits—research draws a psychological composite of elite athletes that reveals a person who is mentally healthy, mature, and committed to excellence.

2 Behavioral factors, especially before and after meets—Behavioral tendencies of successful athletes include **risk-taking**, **self-confidence**, and the ability to **regulate stress**. Your **pain threshold** is also critical to your success. Coping with pain during practice and in a race is difficult.

How you talk to yourself before an event is crucial. Any doubt in your mind as you step up to the block could be detrimental.

The **ability to focus** is also important. We all have many things going on in our lives, but the ability to focus on the moment at hand is another critical component of breaking that barrier.

3 Ability to withstand failure—Accepting the inability to make a breakthrough as a **temporary setback** as opposed to a permanent blow to self-esteem is important, as well. In swimming, as in most sports, breaking barriers is an ongoing process, involving many ups and downs.

4 Understanding your experiences. Experience with success breeds more successful situations—remember what went right before and try to duplicate those feelings.

Successful athletes have very different personalities than their non-successful counterparts. They utilize mental imagery and motivational techniques to keep them in focus at all times. They are relaxed mentally and confident which can have an extraordinary effect on their physical preparation to race.

Now Turn to Page 15 for a Barrier Breakers Starter Kit

Summer All

If you can't be with her, swim you can train like her. Here: training sets, according to California Cal

1 7X200-IM sequence plus 3X75 eas;
7X150 same
7X100 same
7X50 same

2 6X100 Fastest send -off possible plus 6X50 easy
5X100 same
4X100 same
3X100 same

3 3X500 on 6 min descend plus 8X50 easy on :40
3X400 4:40 descend plus same
3X300 on 3:25 descend plus same
3X200 on 2:10 descend plus same
3X100 on 1:05 descend plus same

4 4X(18X25) = 4 fly on :20
5 back on :20
5 breast on :25
4 free on "20

5 3X(1X400 IM
3X100 1st round fly, 2nd, back, 3rd br
1X500 free
3X100 free)
Descend 400 and 500's

Your Creati

Your opportunity to create your team's unique warmup. You pick any of these styles and any color for any part of the jacket. Pants are solid colors.