COACHING STRATEGIES FOR THE CHALLENGING SWIMMER

COACH JACQUELINE O’HAGAN, SOL AQUATICS
SAN DIEGO IMPERIAL SWIMMING

ABOUT ME
- COMPETITIVE SWIMMER FOR 16 YEARS
- COACHING FOR 17 YEARS
- HEAD COACH AT DALAND SWIM SCHOOL IN THOUSAND OAKS, CA
- HEAD AGE GROUP COACH FOR AQUAZOT SWIM CLUB IRVINE, CA
- PRE-COMPETITION DIRECTOR AT MISSION VIEJO NADADORES IN MISSION VIEJO, CA
- COACH AT SOL AQUATICS IN CHULA VISTA, CA
- GRADUATED FROM UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, IRVINE WITH A BA IN COGNITIVE NEUROSCIENCE
- CURRENT DOCTORAL STUDENT IN CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGY AT ALLIANT INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY
- 8 YEARS OF COGNITIVE BEHAVIORAL TRAINING (CBT) FOR CHILDREN WITH ADHD AND AUTISM AT THE CHILD DEVELOPMENT SCHOOL AT UCI

GOALS FOR THE COURSE
- RECOGNIZE SIGNS OF AUTISM AND ADHD
- CREATE AND UTILIZE BEHAVIOR PROGRAMS FOR SWIMMERS
- HOW TO TALK TO PARENTS ABOUT THE PROGRAM
- REINFORCEMENT
- REACHING THE END GOAL AND PHASING OUT

AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER (ASD)
- DSM-V OFFICIAL DIAGNOSIS:
  - CRITERION A: PERSISTENT DEFICITS IN SOCIAL COMMUNICATION AND SOCIAL INTERACTIONS ACROSS MULTIPLE contexts such as:
    - DEFICITS IN SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL RECIPROCITY AKA BACK AND FORTH CONVERSATION OR FAILURE TO INITIATE OR RESPOND TO SOCIAL INTERACTIONS
    - DEFICITS IN NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION SUCH AS POOR EYE COMMUNICATION, INABILITY TO UNDERSTAND BODY LANGUAGE, AND LACK OF FACIAL EXPRESSIONS
    - DEFICITS IN DEVELOPING, MAINTAINING, AND UNDERSTANDING RELATIONSHIPS THAT CAN RANGE FROM DIFFICULTY ADJUSTING BEHAVIOR TO SUIT VARIOUS SOCIAL CONSTRUCTS TO DIFFICULTY WITH IMAGINATIVE PLAY OR MAKING FRIENDS

AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER (ASD) CONTINUED…
- CRITERION B: RESTRICTIVE PATTERNS OF BEHAVIOR, INTERESTS, OR ACTIVITIES:
  - STEREOTYPED OR REPETITIVE MOVEMENTS, USE OF OBJECTS OR STICKS SUCH AS REPEATING PHRASES, LINING UP TOYS.
  - INSISTENCE ON SAMENESS, INFLEXIBLE ADHERENCE TO ROUTINES, OR RITUALIZED PATTERN OF VERBAL OR NONVERBAL BEHAVIOR
  - HIGHLY RESTRICTIVE, REPEATED INTERESTS THAT ARE ABNORMAL IN INTENSITY OR FOCUS
  - HYPER-OR HYPOREACTIVITY TO SENSORY INPUT OR UNUSUAL INTEREST IN SENSORY ASPECTS OF THE ENVIRONMENT (E.G. TASTE, TOUCH, SOUNDS)

DIAGNOSTIC STATISTICAL MANUAL-5TH EDITION
- FIRST PUBLISHED IN 1965
- UPDATED EVERY FEW YEARS
- OFFICIAL BOOK OF DIAGNOSTIC FOR PSYCHIATRISTS AND PSYCHOLOGISTS IN THE US
- PUT TOGETHER BY EMPirical EVIDENCE AND A PANEL OF EXPERTS IN THE FIELD
WHAT DOES ASD LOOK LIKE FOR ME AS A COACH?
• IT DOES NOT AFFECT INTELLIGENCE
• POOR EYE CONTACT
• EGOCENTRIC
• EASILY OVER STIMULATED
• NIGHT QUITE TO DISTRACTED
• CANNOT ADAPT TO CHANGE AND MIGHT HAVE A MELTDOWN
• DIFFICULTY MAKING FRIENDS, VERY SURFACE LEVEL FRIENDSHIPS

ATTENTION-DEFICIT/HYPERACTIVITY DISORDER (ADHD)
• ACCORDING TO THE DSM-5:
• NOTE THE SYMPTOMS ARE NOT SOLELY A MANIFESTATION OF OPPOSITIONAL BEHAVIOR, DEFIANCE, HOSTILITY, OR FAILURE TO UNDERSTAND TASKS OR INSTRUCTIONS.
• CRITERION A: INATTENTION:
• OFTEN FAILS TO GIVE CLOSE ATTENTION TO DETAILS AND MAKES CARELESS MISTAKES IN SCHOOLWORK OR OTHER ACTIVITIES
• OFTEN HAS DIFFICULTY SUSTAINING ATTENTION IN TASKS OR PLAY ACTIVITIES
• OFTEN DOES NOT EVIDENTLY LISTEN WHEN TALKING DIRECTLY TO
• OFTEN DOESN’T FOLLOW THROUGH ON INSTRUCTIONS AND FAILS TO FINISH SCHOOLWORK, CHORES
• CAN OFTEN START BUT HAS DIFFICULTY FINISHING
• OFTEN HAS DIFFICULTY ORGANIZING TASKS AND ACTIVITIES
• OFTEN AVOIDS, DISLIKES OR IS RELUCTANT TO ENGAGE IN TASKS THAT REQUIRE SUSTAINED MENTAL EFFORT

ADHD DIAGNOSIS CONTINUED...
• CRITERION A CONTINUED:
• OFTEN LOSES THINGS NECESSARY FOR TASKS OR ACTIVITIES
• OFTEN DISTRACTED BY EXTRANEOUS STIMULI
• IS OFTEN FORGETFUL IN DAILY ACTIVITIES
• CRITERION B HYPERACTIVITY AND IMPULSIVITY:
• OFTEN FIDGETS WITH OR TAPS HANDS OR FEET AND SQUIRMS IN SEAT
• OFTEN LEAVES SEAT IN SITUATIONS WHEN REMAINING IN SEAT IS EXPECTED
• OFTEN RUNS ABOUT OR CLIMBS IN SITUATIONS WHERE IT IS INAPPROPRIATE
• OFTEN IS IT “ON THE GO” ACTING “DRIVEN BY A MOTOR”
• OFTEN TALKS EXCESSIVELY, BLURTS OUT AN ANSWER BEFORE COMPLETED
• DIFFICULTY WAITING THEIR TURN
• OFTEN INTERRUPTS OR INTRUSIONS ON OTHERS

WHAT DOES ADHD LOOK LIKE TO ME AS A COACH?
• “DAYDREAMERS” AKA NOT ENGAGED
• BEST WAY TO ENGAGE IS TO HAVE THEM REPEAT BACK WHAT YOU ASKED
• DO NOT SAY, “DID YOU HEAR WHAT I SAID?”
• THE LOST AND FOUND CONTRIBUTOR
• LOST, 1 FIN, KICKBOARD, SOCKS, ETC. ON DECK
• CAN’T FIND GOGGLES, CAN’T PACK SUIT
• ALWAYS TALKING WHEN YOU ARE TALKING
• CONSTANTLY MOVING IN TEAM HUDDLES OR TOUCHING PEOPLE
• CONSEQUENCE OF IMPULSIVE BEHAVIOR, THEY FEEL A SENSE OF GUILT OR SHAME

STARTING A CONVERSATION
• YOU ARE NOT ABLE TO OFFICIALLY DIAGNOSE A SWIMMER! DO NOT BRING IT UP UNLESS A PARENT DOES.
• TALK TO YOUR FELLOW COACHES FIRST TO SEE IF THERE IS SOMETHING TO DO
• DIFFERENT EXPLANATION
• REWARDS
• BRING IT UP IN PRIVATE TO PARENT THEN FACE TO FACE
• “I’M NOTICING THAT SALLY IS HAVING A HARD TIME IN PRACTICE LATELY WITH LISTENING. DO YOU HAVE ANY TIPS WHAT WORKS BEST AT HOME?”
• “IT SEEMS LIKE HUNTER IS HAVING A HARD TIME KEEPING HIS HANDS TO HIMSELF. IS THIS HAPPENING AT SCHOOL TOOT?”
STARTING A CONVERSATION CONTINUED…

• Most likely this is happening at school or other areas as well
• Parents may be afraid that their swimmer will be treated differently or afraid that they will be kicked off the team
• You as a coach want what's best for your swimmer
• Be an active listener, don't jump to conclusions or solutions right away
• Be supportive and collaborate
  *“We can work through this together.”*

ESTABLISHING THE PROGRAM

• Form of Cognitive Behavioral Therapy with a Token Economy
  • Used in professional settings as well
  • It was created from a report card from a licensed MFT then adapted for swimming
  • Ideally meant for 12 and under
  • reinforcement of desired behaviors, no punishment
  • Consistency is key!
  • Requires full involvement from coach, parents and swimmers
  • Tangible for swimmers
  • Takes 20 minutes to create and change if needed
  • Average of 1-2 mins on deck of coach's attention
  • Parents supply the reinforcer at home, no need at practice
  *Have parents verbalize to you a planned menu of options that the swimmer wants*  

REPORT CARDS

• Personalize them to the swimmer
• Positive reinforcement only, no punishment
• Intended to change negative behaviors to positive
• Ideally when earning 95% and above, if there are other goals, adapt the card
  *If not, can terminate the program*
  *Not intended for lifetime use*
• Can show the coach and swimmer where the problem areas and timeline
  *For example, more talkative during dryland and warm-up but better for drills*
  *Tangible evidence*

ELEMENTS OF THE REPORT CARDS

• Make a table of goals in 15 min intervals
  • 2-3 items to work on
  • 5 that they do really well
  • 1 that they do really well
  • Chance for a “redo” every 15 min
  • If they are doing poorly, tell them
  • If they “turned it around,” tell them
  • Place a description of the goals
  *Prevents arguing*
• Score table
  *Menu options for when they get home:
  • Gold-20 extra mins of TV, special dessert, etc.
  • Silver-10 min of TV, choice between 2 types of dessert
  • Bronze-5 min of iPad, etc.*

INSTRUCTIONS

• Rate every 15 minutes for each category
  • 1-poor, 2-fair, 3-fine, 4-good, 5-excellent, 6-need to improve
• Rate according to swimmer behavior and not comparing them to another swimmer
• Must follow directions within 5 seconds of being told
• Working on task with the group including eye contact, not talking when the coach is talking, and not distracting kids that are trying to distract them

• Appropriate behavior includes not swearing, being orderly, and appropriate gestures
• Taking your best to do drills correctly, riding when told and giving the best effort
• It helps to tell him that he earned 7’s on his report card
• If he is not earning points in one category, remind him that he needs to be working on it
• Each center is a chance for him to start over

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DESCRIPTION OF BEHAVIORS/SCORING

Marble Challenge

- No paper
- Parents provide jar and marbles
- Ranked overall practice with a number 0-5
- Toy or reward at 25, 50, 75 and 100
  - Ed. In-Out for dinner every 25, video game at
  - Hold up hand during practice to tell swimmer
    how they are doing
    - Can go up and down
    - Overall performance in practice

Marble Challenge

- NO PAPER
- PARENTS PROVIDE JAR AND MARBLES
- RANKED OVERALL PRACTICE WITH A NUMBER 0-5
- TOY OR REWARD AT 25, 50, 75 AND 100
  - ED. IN-OUT FOR DINNER EVERY 25, VIDEO GAME AT
  - HOLD UP HAND DURING PRACTICE TO TELL SWIMMER
    HOW THEY ARE DOING
    - CAN GO UP AND DOWN
    - OVERALL PERFORMANCE IN PRACTICE

HOW TO TALK TO PARENTS ABOUT THE PROGRAM

- Meet with the parent and swimmer to talk about the rules of the program outside of practice
- Read off the requirements of the target behaviors
  - "Body to yourself means that we are not touching, pushing, grabbing people on deck or in the water. Do you understand what that means?"
  - Sounds ridiculous but leaves no room for interpretation, we know our swimmers love excuses
- Tell parents to stick with it even when they are having a rough day
  - Do this away from the swimmer
  - There is no punishment in this program, nothing gets taken away
  - The swimmer gets additional reward for the behaviors
  - Kids will mess up, they are not robots
FEEDBACK AND REINFORCEMENT

• After practice, add up the scores, write any feedback on the card.
• What till the swimmer picks up all of their stuff and is ready to leave the deck.
• Don’t want the same behaviors there.
• Be honest about the day.
• “You did incredible that fly was your best that I’ve seen!”
• “I can tell you had a rough day today. That’s fine. I know you are a little bummed. What can we do next time to get that ‘gold medal’?”
• Be invested in the program.
• “OK So you got gold today, what are you going to do at home in-a-out? I’m so jealous dude.”
• Every once in a while reward at practice. Have them pick a game or a relay.
• Shows your other swimmers that you notice positive behavior changes.

CHANGING IT UP

• If they are consistently in the 95% and above in behaviors for 2 weeks, pick new behaviors to work on.
• Still keep on that they do well and others to work on.
• Not seeing the same level of engagement:
  • Check in with parents to make sure the reinforcements are still working.
  • Some kids get tired of earning the same thing.
  • Will see the program start to fail at practice. Keep that carrot in front!
• If they master the report card, may switch to an easier reinforcement system like the marble challenge.

TERMINATION

• Program is not meant for long-term or senior group.
• No more target behaviors and swimmers are above 95% consistently with no issues or constant reminders.
• Hopefully by this time they are seeing other benefits to their actions that are being reinforced during practice:
  • Better friendships.
  • Faster times.
  • Generally happier.
• Problems may surface again if switching to another group; don’t be afraid to do a temporary program to help with adjustment.
• Kids like structure and what they know.

OTHER USES FOR THE PROGRAM

• Eating issues
  • Not enough food
  • Too much junk
  • Not enough water
• Effort
• Anything involving unwanted behaviors
• Sorry, hasn’t been tested on parents.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

• USA Swimming - USASWIMMING.ORG
• Children with Challenges course.

Aquatics for Children with Challenges!

Incorporated to help children with special needs. Contact us at 301-948-5640. This program is for Children with Challenges. Water and land-based training and different activities help us to our staff deliver your program goals. For more information on Children with Challenges course, on the register for our free 10-Diver VIP Challenges online course. Visit our website if you require any assistance with the course. Please email us at info@swimteam.org.

NOCC Certified coaches: receive 10 ASIA credits.

YOU NEVER KNOW WHO THE NEXT GOAT WILL BE!

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME!

QUESTIONS??

11/16/2020
CONTACT INFORMATION

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