Emotional support – 8 quick tips

1. **Turn off as a swimming parent**. Don’t make swimming the one and only topic of conversation in the car, at the dinner table etc.
2. **Praise qualities like effort, hard work and attempting new things.** Don’t dwell on the winning. Praising other qualities of the swim will help ease pressure on your child and ensure they are focused on the process rather than the outcome.
3. **Encourage good role models.** These are not necessarily based solely on success. Promote people who show values of integrity, humility, honesty and responsibility, as well as good sportsmanship. This will help influence your young swimmer to strive for excellence in the best possible way.
4. **Accept that they can’t win all the time**. Remind them that they cannot win every time they compete, and as in any sport, it can and will take years to reach their full potential as a swimmer.
5. **Don’t compare your child’s performance against others**. Whether good or bad, a performance needs to be about the child only. Comparing the performance with other swimmers’ is likely to lead to an increase in anxiety and stress levels, and this will impact on future performance. Instead try encouraging them to focus on their individual goals and achievements.
6. **Support your child to achieve the goals they set.** And make sure you all take time to relax and enjoy any celebration of achievements together. Remember, this is not just winning. It could be any small goal such as technique improvement.
7. **Stay calm, positive, dignified, and cheer appropriately**. There’s nothing more off-putting and stressful for a swimmer than a crazed parent barking criticism from the balcony. If it were you in the pool how would you feel?
8. **Most importantly, allow them to be a kid and have fun**. Yes, they may be good at swimming, but it’s a hobby and so the key should be enjoyment. You want your kids to look back at that time with fond memories, not a painful soap opera of drudgery, feelings of uselessness, and being criticised all the time.