It's often been said that we can be our own worst enemies.

I know that I have been my own worst enemy on more occasions than I can count, not only in the pool but in life outside of it as well. From missed opportunities to incomplete efforts, the effect of self-inflicted defeat is endlessly infuriating.

While we all have our idiosyncratic list of ways that we choose to sabotage ourselves, here are 5 of the common methods in which we hold ourselves back in the pool:

**You isolate yourself from outside help.**

Self-reliance is a critical thing to have. But when you embed this quality with such depth that it means you are pushing out the good advice as well than you end up kneecapping your abilities and growth.

We love to think that we have a grip on things, that we know with absolute certainty what's best for ourselves and our swimming, but don't let this pride shield you from advice and expertise that can propel you further than you ever could on your own.

**You hold on to the past.**

When we don't know what the future holds we tend to look backwards to make some forecasting. While this can be helpful when reviewing past performances, some swimmers lock in on the exceptionally bad performances, and allow those moments of yore to define them swimmer they are now.

Use both the good and bad from your swimming career; the good should remind you of what you are capable, while the bad should provide you with fuel and a lesson.

**You have trouble committing to your decisions.**

There was a time where I was very fond of this tactic. Over the course of a weekend I would decide that I was going to do XYZ to improve my swimming. When things didn't progress as fast as I thought they should, I would spend another weekend re-writing my goal plan.

Over and over again I would repeat this procedure that left me feeling more like a yo-yo, while also leaving me with the feeling that I was constantly stuck at square one.

Make a decision, commit to it, and don't be willing to back off at the first sight of difficulty.

**You are unwilling to accept that unexpected challenges will arise.**

Nobody wants to sit around and consider the idea that something will go awry with our swimming. Our goals are perfect, glossy and shimmering; why should the steps it will take to get us there be any different?

There are a multitude of things that can go wrong. We all get injured, get sick, get demotivated. While it's a little much to ask you to muse endlessly and exhaustively on what might go wrong, it is unrealistic to think that your swimming will always go perfectly according to plan.

**You act like a part time athlete and expect full time athlete results.**

We all want high performance results with our swimming. No matter how ambitious our goals, we all want to kick butt in the pool and test the limits of our abilities. Living the lifestyle of a part-time athlete – going out all the time, eating poorly, shorting yourself on sleep – and expecting to secure the results of a full time athlete is unrealistic.

Having these lofty ambitions without the foundation to back them up is a free recipe to being a pouty face on the pool deck. One of the great things about competition (and not just in swimming) is that it is the great equalizer – you can fake your way through practice, fake your way through a nutrition plan, but you can't fake your way through on race day.

**So where does this leave you as a member of the Jones-Payton Boys Swim Team in general?**

We need to begin to focus on the things we can control in order to guarantee that we each hit the goals and goal times that we plan to achieve over the course of the season. Thus, I want you to fill out the following chart in order to get on track as we head from the first weeks of training into the slate of upcoming meets.

| Things I can control | How I will control | How it will benefit me |
|---|---|---|
| Giving Maximum Effort on Every Set in Practice | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| Things I cannot control | What I can do to overcome | How this will benefit me |
| Other swimmers in the group | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |

Goal Times

| Event | Previous Time | Goal Time |
|---|---|---|
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |