

Coach Koehr's Swimming Awards Banquet Talk – March 3, 2019

Hope is Anti-Fragile

- **My niece** is a Physical Therapist in New York who definitely tends toward “liberal”
 - I love her very much so **over the years**, we've **maintained a dialogue** in my constant attempt to show her the Truth
 - She's **very thoughtful**, so a lot of times, it can be sort of fun.
 - Recently, she sent me a podcast called “The Coddling of the American Mind”
 - It featured an NYU Stern School social psychologist and business school professor, **Jonathan Haidt** who **recently published a book** by that name.
 - New York liberal professors are not normally preferred reading for me, but **my niece suspected that I would like** what Dr. Haidt had to say
 - Because she's heard me say things similar to Dr. Haidt for so many years.
- **She was right**
 - I liked it
 - And it really got me thinking
- **The underlying premise of Dr. Haidt's**, as I try to apply it in my role as parent and coach, is that
 - **kids are not fragile**
 - **nor are they completely durable,**
 - **they are antifragile**
 - This is a concept actually coined by **Nassim Nicholas Talib**
 - A quantitative scientist at NYU who some of you might recognize as the **author of “The Black Swan”**.
 - The word describes an **entity that is strengthened by stress**.
 - A **fragile** object **fractures**.
 - A **durable** object **maintains its integrity**.
 - An **antifragile** object **may break down** now and then
 - but properly supported, you can bet **it will bounce back from the experience stronger than ever**.
 - Like **Steel** hardened in the forge
 - Or **Clay** hardened in the sun
 - Some things get stronger with stress

- Parents, **remember** when you had **your first baby**
 - You were so **afraid it was going to break**
 - Over time, you found out that they are **not as fragile as you thought**
 - And then, over more time, the **sleep deprivation** finally got to you, and you learned that **babies are capable of crying themselves to sleep.**
 - Of course, you **want to cuddle your infant**
 - But you eventually learn that a little less cuddling is actually good for the kid.
- It's also **how our muscles work**
 - When we are training, it is actually the **healing where our muscles get stronger**
 - The training just **breaks-down our muscles** so that they need to heal.
- After speaking with a friend about this concept, he sent me another link to **Fr. Mike Schmitz's** talk at the latest **SEEK Conference**
 - He referenced this very topic in a particularly interesting way
 - He asked if we had ever heard of “**Helicopter Parents**”
 - He was referring to us parents who hover over our kids making every attempt to keep them from any sort of pain or suffering
 - Then he added a **new label – a “Zamboni Parent”**
 - A Zamboni is the ride-on device that smooths the ice at a hockey rink between periods
 - So, a Zamboni Parent goes in front of their child's every move to ensure that their ice is always perfectly smooth for them
 - It has never been my goal to be a Zamboni Parent
 - Which is why I don't operate as a Zamboni Coach
- **What is our Goal here** at Seton Swimming?
 - In my mind, Seton Swimming has very little to do with swimming
 - Swimming is just the vehicle to accomplish the real goal
 - Our Goal is:

To develop confident young men and women who can go out into their world and apply the Truth of their Catholic Faith for good

- On so many levels, **Swimming is the perfect vehicle to prepare an anti-fragile being to achieve such a goal**
 - On the shallowest, **physical level**, we're talking about a sport where
 - you get faster by **accepting pain in practice**

- And the **winner** of the race is most often the **person willing to accept the most pain to win**
 - Anyone ever heard me say that before?
- But there are other stresses we encounter in swimming that can make us stronger too:
 - Do you think I like to **get up early** any more than you do?
 - It is so **sad** to me to hear people say they don't want to swim because they are **“not a morning person”**
 - Who the heck is!
 - How about those of you who **didn't make the “A” Relay?**
 - Or worse, got **knocked off the “A” Relay**
 - Or like most of you, those who never qualified for a scoring relay at all?
 - Are those **bad things?**
 - They **may hurt, yes**, but they are **not bad**
 - Unless you haven't been giving your best effort all along
- Here's how you know I'm right here
 - Think about the level of joy you felt the last time you were hanging out with your friends and listening to your iPods
 - Now compare that with the joy you felt when you looked up at the Scoreboard and saw your new PR time?
 - Or the joy you felt at the WARF after winning the DAC Championship meet?
 - If you are honest, the two just don't compare
- Most of you don't appreciate what a unique time this in your life
 - **Your sole responsibility is to make yourself better**
 - Your **parents provide** you with **everything**:
 - Shelter
 - Clothing
 - Food
 - Electricity
 - Transportation
 - Education
 - Entertainment
 - Love
 - That gravy train is going end before you know it, and you need to be ready

- And you will NEVER be ready if you spend this time of your life avoiding discomfort
- **Why is developing ourselves under stress so important?**
 - Hope
- Hope is very important in the life of a man or woman
 - **Hope leads to action**
 - **Hopelessness leads to inaction**
- And **what leads to Hopelessness?**
 - **Victimhood**
- **We'll all a victim** of something to some degree
 - Some of us are victims much more than others
 - I don't why God made it that way, but He did
- **Succumbing** to victimhood is **relinquishing control** over what you can control
 - And there are **always things you can control**
 - Like your own **attitude, and**
 - **Your own actions** and reactions
- **So Never Play the Victim, Even if You Are**
 - When you do, you are just **making an excuse** for your own **mediocrity**.
- There are always going to be things outside of our control
 - Mom's reaction
 - Teacher's ability
- In a **tough situation**,
 - you can **whine**, or
 - you can **control** what you can control
 - In other words, you **need to become Self-Reliant**
- **Self-reliant people have Hope**
 - And **Hopeful people will act** to make the world around them better.
- So, don't avoid the discomfort that comes with the difficult challenge
 - You are training yourself for a life of Hope
- Let me wrap up here, with one of my all-time favorite quotes
 - It is from a former Tennis great Andre Agassi:

“There's a lot of good waiting for you on the other side of tired. Get yourself tired”

Now let's move on to the **final part of our program**.

Captains for Next Season