

Coach Koehr's Swimming Awards Banquet Talk – March 8, 2015

Toxins and Tonics for Warm and Welcoming Team Environment

- **What does a team look like?**

1. Characteristics

- Have a discussion
- Commonality of purpose
- Mutual support
- Encouragement
- Identification with someone else's struggles
- A community where everyone is welcomed and everyone is loved
 1. Not necessarily liked, but loved
 2. Love: when you sacrifice for the good of another

2. Don't we all want a team like that?

3. We want an environment on our team that is

- **Warm**
- **Welcoming**
- **Fun**

4. That is going to be my **biggest focus** next season

- And we can start right now

- **Poisons to a Team**

1. Many things can poison a team atmosphere

2. I'll highlight 3 of them, 2 of which you learn about in religion class

3. **Calumny**

- the making of false and defamatory statements in order to damage someone's reputation; slander.
- a false and slanderous statement.

4. **Detraction**

- a lessening of reputation or esteem especially by envious, malicious, or petty criticism : belittling, disparagement

5. Another name for these is **gossip**

6. Gossip, especially vicious gossip, is a variation of trying to kill someone
 - Like trying to:
 1. Lessen them
 2. Diminish them
 3. “Kill” them
 - It’s a serious sin
7. But we all do it – even me
8. But why?
 - Ask the group
 - Makes us feel more important
 - Makes us “in the know”
 - Makes us feel “above” others
 - Makes us feel better about not liking others if we know other people don’t like them either
9. To those two, I’ll add a 3rd - **Exclusion**
 - Conversation with the a teammate’s **little sister**
 1. Mr. Koehr, what’s “exclusion”?
 2. “Well, did you ever have a time when your friends were playing a game and they wouldn’t let you play?”
 3. “Oh yeah”
 4. “Well how did it feel?”
 5. “Oh, I didn’t like it at all!”
 6. “Well honey, that’s ‘exclusion’”
 - This may be the **worst of the three**
 1. At least when you are talking about someone negatively, you are **acknowledging that they exist**
 - How does it **manifest itself** on our team?
 1. Sitting in the stands with the same group of kids
 2. Watching you pick seats for the bus trip to Richmond
 1. “Coach Koehr, I have no one to sit with”
 3. Leaving your younger teammates to finish the relay after you left
 1. I hope you all read my blog called “Imagine”

- We all have certain people that **we prefer to be with**
 1. That's OK
 2. The problem comes when they are the **ONLY** people we are ever with
 3. That's called a **“clique”**
 1. And that's when it passes from
 1. “I only need a few good friends” to
 2. “I'm excluding others to both their detriment and mine”

- **Tonics for a Team**

1. You don't build a warm and welcoming team environment by **NOT** doing things
 - So let's talk about some **simple things that we can actually do**
 - We had our **“Toxins to a Team”**
 1. So let's call these **“Tonics for a Team”**
2. Let's **start** with the **most basic one**
 - Almost all of us have someone in their life who causes us pain
 1. Some of us just can't seem to let it go
 - We get to the point with that person, or group of people, that we put the **worst possible interpretation on everything they do**
 1. Think about politicians attacking one another
 2. Or think about, in some cases, mother-in-laws and daughters-in-law
 - How easy it is to get to the point with someone that **only a heroic act of virtue can redeem them** in your mind
 - If you are at that point with someone, then the problem is just as much in you as it is in them
 - We can only control ourselves – so let's start there
 1. What I'm talking about is the sometimes courageous act of**forgiveness**

- There's a funny thing about forgiveness
 1. More often than not, **it helps the forgiver more than the forgiven**
 - I think we have some real opportunities on our team to give it a try.
3. And the **second big tonic** is based a **simple secret**
- It is the secret to dealing with people that will help you for the rest of your life
 - I didn't come up with this myself, but few things I've heard are as true
 1. **Everyone wants to feel important**
 2. The desire for importance distinguishes us from the animals
 3. Unless you are going to be a hermit, than
 1. understanding this simple truism will be the **key to dealing with people** for the rest of your life.
 2. Think of a time that you had trouble dealing with someone?
 1. Did you make them feel unimportant in any way?
 2. I guarantee that you did
 4. Our need for importance is why we:
 1. Wear a Notre Dame jacket
 2. Want to be the Captain
 3. Want someone to tell us "Happy Birthday"
 4. Like it when someone greets us with a smile and uses our name
 1. Hey, I think he's really happy to see me!
 5. It is why wives like it when their husband's listen to them and don't try to solve their problems
 1. I know you can handle it
 6. It's why people would rather talk about themselves than us

7. And, as we discussed, it why we sometimes like to put other people down

4. **Simplest way** to make someone feel important?

- **Sincere Appreciation**

- The same power that gives **gossip** such overwhelming **negative energy** also

1. gives **sincere appreciation** and **gratitude** overwhelming **positive energy**

5. Three **(3) Ways** to Show Sincere Appreciation

- **Compliments**

- Think of all of the times when a **good thought** about someone has **passed through your brain**

- Did you let it **come out of your mouth?**

- Funny how the **bad thoughts seem to come out** of mouths so easily, but the good ones don't

- Who knows how to give someone a really **good compliment?**

1. Well here are the two (2) keys

1. Make it **Specific**

1. Not "good swim", but "great start"

2. Not "good game", but "great shot in the 2nd quarter"

2. Make it **Sincere**

1. An insincere compliment is called "flattery"

2. And here's how to make it really powerful

3. It's the **power of "gossip"**

1. Nothing is more powerful than a **3rd party compliment**

1. "We were just talking about you?"

2. Or better, I heard Coach Lowell say that you were his "Swimmer of the Meet"!

3. How could that not be sincere?

2. And equally good is for you to **overhear a compliment**
 1. This works particularly well with small children oh by the way
 1. “Patrick sure is doing a nice job with those dishes honey”
 3. Just like when you speak poorly of someone behind their back, **they eventually find out**
 1. The same thing happens when you speak kindly of someone

- **Inclusion**

1. You **upperclassman** have an **amazing power**
 1. And you may not even know it
 2. When you talk to a younger teammate that you’ve never talked to before, or
 3. When you sit with a younger teammate with whom you never sat
 4. How do you think that makes them feel?
 5. I remember being a 9-10 on the Virginia Hills Swim team in the summertime
 1. **Rudy Tarlowski** talked to me
 2. He was larger than life
 3. **He had hair under his arms!**
 4. He was my hero from that time on
2. And it **works with kids your own age** too
 1. **China trip with Darden MBA** class when I tried to sit with everyone in the class either on a bus ride or at a meal
 2. Some amazing things happened
 1. **I met some great people!**
 1. The quality of your life is directly proportional to the quality of your relationships

2. Do you know why Sikh's wear Turbins

1. I do – I rode the bus to a show in Shanghai with Jash Singh

2. (Care for hair, promote equality, preserve Sikh identity)

3. Do you know who Cedar Walton is?

1. I do – I sat at breakfast with his daughter

2. I **became more popular** in the class

3. And I **had a great time!**

3. I know my wife is back there saying that I found that enjoyable because of my **temperament**

1. And she's right

2. So you don't have to do it the entire team or an entire class

3. But **do it with someone!**

▪ **Kindness**

▪ Finally, **simple kindness** can really make someone feel important

1. Bringing lunch for Dr. Brown or Bill Patchett (CPA) when I had a lunchtime appointment

2. Bowling with Naisha at Darden

1. Her thumb was deformed and wouldn't fit in the ball

2. So our whole team bowled without thumbs

3. What do you do when someone on the team

1. Lost their googles?

2. Needs a swim cap for their race?

3. Needs a place to sit?

4. Just **choose to see opportunities** for small acts of kindness

- **Looking Toward Next Season**

1. Our goal for next season is to create the **warmest, most welcoming** and **most fun** team that we've ever had
2. Our **metric for success**?
 - Not a 22nd straight Conference Championship for the girls
 1. Although I certainly expect that to happen
 - Have we created an environment so welcoming that we have the **biggest team** ever next season
 1. Do kids at Seton want to hang out with us?
 2. Do girls in the current 10th grade class want to join our team?
3. Achieving this goal is **going to take leadership** – from our **Captains**
 - I'm going to **expect more than ever** from our Captains next season
 1. You've all read about this on our **web site**
 2. I hope our Captains will
 1. **Set the example** with
 1. their work ethic
 2. their fundraising for the CF Swim-a-thon
 3. their performance in the pool
 4. their commitment to the team as their primary activity for the winter
 2. But they will also be the **Servant Leaders** who take the lead by
 1. creating **warm, welcoming and fun environment** on our team
 2. knowing everyone's name
 3. Arriving early to every practice and meet to greet everyone as they arrive

- So I'm also going to have **expect more from myself** as well
 1. I'm going to have to invest more time in developing these leaders
 2. And I am committed to that
- 4. Picking **Captains for Next Season**
 - I'm **changing the way we do this now**
 1. I think I just had a
 1. bad system
 2. with bad incentives
 3. no clear expectations
 4. and too little personal investment from me
 2. Starting this year, I'll be picking the Captains for next season at the end of the previous season
 3. Selections based on **three things**:
 1. How the coaches saw them **behave all season** long
 2. What their **teammates thought**
 3. How much do I think I can **develop** them into leaders
 4. So it is not a simple vote, but that definitely carried the most weight by far
 - So here's who's **eligible** based on this criteria:
 1. Come on up when I say your name
 2. '15-'16 Captains – Koehr
 1. Girls
 1. **Meghan O'Malley**
 2. **Claire Kenna**
 3. **Michaela Pennefather**
 4. **Vivian Zadnik**
 2. Boys
 1. **Matthew Fioramonti**
 2. **Patrick Dealey**
 3. **Brian Koehr**
 4. **Tim Costello**
 - I say "**eligible**" because

1. I am first going to **need to hear from each you** that are **willing to commit** to that level of excellence
 1. Reread the description of our expectations of you on the web site, think about it, and then let me know
 2. If you decide that you cannot make this level of commitment for whatever reason
 1. No big deal
 2. **We make choices**, and I can respect that
 3. But I do want you to know that both the coaches and your teammates think you would be a good captain
 4. But the choice is yours
 - So for now, congratulations on earning the respect of your coaches and teammates!
- And now, let's conclude our awards for the season with the two awards that are the most important to me.
 1. Most Improved Awards
 2. Coach's Awards