

# SPORT PSYCHOLOGY

*by Carrie Hastings*

## MENTAL SKILLS FOR SWIMMERS

Your mindset in the pool is just as important as your physical training. Developing strong mental skills will help you stay focused, confident, and resilient during practices and competitions. These skills aren't just about performance—they're the foundation for handling pressure, overcoming setbacks, and consistently pushing your limits. Remember, the strongest swimmers train their minds as much as their bodies, and that's what sets them apart from the rest!

### REFINING GOAL SETTING: SHIFT FROM GOOD TO GREAT

**THINK ABOUT WHERE YOU WANT TO BE—NOT JUST AT THE NEXT MEET, BUT BY THE END OF THE SEASON OR EVEN IN YOUR CAREER. START SETTING LAYERED GOALS. SURE, YOU'VE GOT YOUR TIME GOALS, BUT NOW ASK YOURSELF: WHAT SKILLS OR TECHNIQUES WILL GET ME THERE?**

Key Tip: Break your races into segments and set micro-goals for each. For example, focus on hitting a faster breakout speed or improving your wall time by just a tenth of a second. The small wins stack up.

### MASTERING HIGH-PRESSURE VISUALIZATION

**YOU'VE VISUALIZED YOUR PERFECT RACE BEFORE, BUT NOW TAKE IT FURTHER. PICTURE THE HARDEST SCENARIO YOU MIGHT FACE—MAYBE YOU'RE A SECOND BEHIND AT THE FINAL TURN OR THE LANE NEXT TO YOU HAS SOMEONE OUT-TOUCHING YOU. HOW DO YOU RESPOND?**

Challenge Yourself: Use visualization to rehearse staying composed and executing under pressure. Can you see yourself finding that final gear even when you're gassed? This prepares you for moments where races are won or lost.

### MENTAL RESET FOR MISTAKES

**YOU'RE NOT NEW TO THIS—YOU KNOW A BAD START OR MISSED TURN CAN THROW YOU OFF. BUT THE BEST SWIMMERS ARE PROS AT LETTING MISTAKES GO MID-RACE. PRACTICE A RESET ROUTINE FOR WHEN THINGS DON'T GO AS PLANNED.**

In Practice: If you miss a cue or mess up a set, focus on the next lap, the next turn, the next stroke. Learn to reset, refocus, and re-engage in under five seconds. In races, this skill will keep you in the game when things don't go perfectly.

### OWNING YOUR INNER DIALOGUE

**AT YOUR LEVEL, CONFIDENCE ISN'T JUST ABOUT FEELING GOOD; IT'S ABOUT BEING MENTALLY TOUGH WHEN IT MATTERS MOST. START BEING HYPER-AWARE OF HOW YOU TALK TO YOURSELF, ESPECIALLY WHEN IT GETS HARD.**

Game Plan: When your mind says, "I can't hold this pace," flip it to: "I'm trained for this, and I'm tougher than I feel right now." Build a library of power phrases you can tap into during your most grueling sets or when fatigue hits in the last 25 meters.