

To The Little Girl In The Swim Cap And Goggles

I hope that you never take this time in your life for granted.

When school finally lets out for the summer, most kids your age look forward to leisurely days of staying up until late in the night and getting up even later in the day. They look forward to sleepovers at friends' houses on weeknights and going on weekend trips, but not you. You are special. You will spend your summers getting up at the crack of dawn to go to the local pool for practice and getting up even earlier to travel to the local swim meets. You, sweet girl, are a swimmer.

I'm not sure what got you here, maybe your mom signed you up for it in hopes of you getting better at swimming, (like mine did) or you begged her to do it because it was what all of the girls in your class were doing this summer; regardless of the reason, you are here. And there will be times in the future when you regret signing up, but then you realize all that those summer practices and meets taught you, and you will not want it to end. Honestly, I don't think that you realize just how much you will learn from being a swimmer, I know that in the beginning I did not.

Whether you stick with it through high school, or stop after a few summers, there is no denying that the lessons you learned will still be there inside of you. The friendships that were formed from all of those early morning meets and practices and seeing who could touch the bottom of the pool without the coach noticing will last the rest of your life. The memories and self-discipline formed at that pool will forever be ingrained in you, and your love for the water will never go away. Cherish this time you have, time of learning new things and making new friends, because all too soon one thing will lead to another and life will get busy or you will grow up and have to "throw in the towel" on something that defined a major part of you for such a long time.

I envy you, getting to experience this all for the first time. There is truly nothing like being on a swim team, though you more than likely do not realize that right now. While those 8 am summer practices mean that you cannot spend the night out like the other kids in your class can and the vast majority of your weekends will be taken up by swim meets all over, you should be so grateful that you get to experience this. You have the opportunity to meet, and become best friends, with people who you would not have met under any other circumstances in life. You learn discipline by having to go to bed early and

wake up early, not so much the discipline of not eating, because let's face it – swimmers eat all of the time, but as far as everything else goes, those are qualities that you will carry with you, and benefit you, for the rest of your life. The added bonus is that you get to swim every day of the summer, and who wouldn't love that?!

You will learn so much about yourself and others at this time in your life. You will learn how much you can take, and how to keep pushing yourself when you feel like you cannot go on. You will learn how to cheer others on and how to believe in yourself, which will be useful when your coaches sign you up for an event you don't think you can do; but then you will finish the race and have a self confidence you never dreamed of. You are so, so lucky to be a swimmer. I hope that you do not take this time in your life for granted.

Sincerely,

A girl who doesn't have her swim cap or goggles anymore