

HUDSON VALLEY TRIATHLON CLUB

Racing Judgment Free

By Mark Wilson-Triathlon Coach

Do you ever judge yourself while you're racing? Do you get to the turn-around buoy in the swim and think "I hope I make the cut-off!" or "I must be in last place by now!"? Do you think to yourself "I suck!" when people pass you on the bike? Are you criticizing yourself when you have to walk during the run portion of a triathlon? Lastly, when the race is over and you're driving home is your head full of self-annihilating chatter that isn't suited for this article? If so, you're not alone. Many athletes are brutally self-destructive when it comes to inner dialogue regarding their performance in sport. It's not recommended and there is a better, healthier way to respond to otherwise un-favorable race results. Let's explore some options!

The number one important strategy for preparing for a great race performance is to establish a peaceful pre-race environment. Listening to relaxing music, your favorite self-help guru or having your coffee on the front porch listening to the sounds of Nature all instill a calm demeanor which will set the tone for an awesome race experience. If there are family members to consider on the morning of your event (i.e.-children, spouses, etc.) simply ask them to join you and turn this opportunity into a connecting time for everyone. It'll be an extremely rewarding and enjoyable experience for everyone. Your mantra might be; I'm okay.

Once you're in the race and there's a number of individuals attempting to swim in the same space as you, remember your commitment to stay calm yet assertive (it is a race after all) and keep your stroke rhythm steady as you chant inwardly; I am a fast swimmer, I am a fast swimmer. It's possible that your swim coach gave you very specific focus points to consider while in the race. Utilize these points to benefit you in moments of "panic" or self-doubt. Thoughts such as "stay long," "swim silently" or "maintain rhythm" are all great ways to accomplish an inner focus allowing you to perform at your best.

When you're on your bike and set-up your comfortable cadence/pace, avoid thoughts of self-sabotage like "I hope I don't flat!" Keep your mind on self-assuring thoughts that assist you rather than slow you down. Images of you riding strong up hills and steady on flats will keep you catching people and not the other way around. Of course, chanting the mantra "I am a fast cyclist" wouldn't hurt one bit, either!

After having cycled your little buns off, running is quite an interesting experience! So, it's hugely important for you to keep positive during this portion of the triathlon. Try chanting the mantra, "I am a fast runner!" Then, any doubts that creep in need to be handled immediately. Here are a few suggestions; "I am okay." "I am a champion." "I am a triathlete." "Yes, I can!" "God bless everyone in this race." "I am okay." (It's alright to repeat them.) "I feel good." "I love this sport" and so on. You want to maintain this

HUDSON VALLEY TRIATHLON CLUB

barrage of positive self-talk right through the finish line; you'll be blown away by the results!

These are recommendations for racing, but please understand that you can apply this to everyday living, as well. Anytime you feel yourself judging you, your life, others, etc., feel free to stop and replace the skepticism with thoughts you prefer. Even if it doesn't change your feelings right away, it's your intention to do so that will allow a better way of living and racing to enter your field of existence. See ya out there!

Mark Wilson is a full-time triathlon coach. He is the Founder/President of the Hudson Valley Triathlon Club (www.hvtc.net). He is a USAT Level II Certified Coach & Pose Method of Running Level II Certified Coach. You may contact him by e-mail mark@hvtc.net or phone 845-679-8602.