

Sydney Leyden:

Swimming competitively is a huge part of my life and has truly shaped who I am today. Over the course of the eleven years that I have been swimming year-round, I have learned so many valuable lessons that I have carried over into my life.

Swimming has taught me perseverance. Through this sport, I've actually learned more from my failures than I have from my successes. Because of that, swimming has taught me how to have grit. Rather than giving up when a goal is not achieved, I've learned how to make adjustments, both in and out of the pool, to ultimately reach my goals. Those sweet moments in the sport when you touch the pad and see the time that you have been working so hard for, make all of that grueling, hard work completely worth it.

Through swimming, I've learned to give 100%. I don't want to have any regrets and wake up someday saying, "I wish I had worked harder..." By pushing myself outside of my comfort zone in swimming, I have learned how to embrace situations in life that are less comfortable. Through those uncomfortable situations, I've gained confidence and find that "the fear of the unknown" scares me less and less.

Although many think of swimming as an individual sport, that could not be farthest from the truth. Swimming has taught me the true meaning of teamwork and sportsmanship. I've learned that when a swim team operates like a family, that team becomes a powerhouse together. Achieving successes with others is far more gratifying than achieving success alone. "Good players inspire themselves. Great players inspire others."

Swimming has taught me patience. As a young swimmer many years ago, I remember the times when I would cry or get upset if I did not get a best time every time I raced. Now, at age seventeen, I have learned the importance of being patient. Many friends of mine who do not swim have a difficult time understanding why I would pursue a sport where in my best event, I only dropped tenths of a second over the course of the past few years. Those tenths of a second have been a big part of my short-term goals and have gotten me closer and closer to reaching my long term goal. Essentially, those tenths make me hungry for more successes.

I have developed such a love and appreciation for the sport of swimming. As I close my chapter on NH swimming in a few short months, I look forward to starting my new chapter of swimming in college. My past experiences and memories will forever be a part of me.