



# Bring Meaning to the Monotony





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## INTRODUCTION

# Hi, I'm Shannon Keegan

Swimming is more than a physical activity —if you allow it, swimming can be a journey of growth, self-discovery, and transformation. Whether you're stepping into the pool for the first time or pushing your limits in open water, the act of swimming offers endless opportunities to explore your potential and shape your life in meaningful ways.

A lifelong swimmer, I spent decades taking for granted what the water gave me. Now I realize that swimming is a defining part of my personal and professional journey. Over 15 years of open water swimming, I've experienced firsthand how this sport can inspire confidence, resilience, and a sense of purpose. As a SwimMastery Fundamentals, Advanced, and High Performance coach, I've had the privilege of guiding swimmers of all levels to discover their limitless potential in the water.

But my perspective on goal setting extends beyond the technical aspects of swimming. With a background in technology and systems thinking, I've always been passionate about breaking down complex challenges into achievable steps. This mindset, combined with the profound life lessons I've gained as a late in life mother, has shaped how I approach swimming and coaching. I believe that the goals we set in the water can ripple outward, transforming not just how we swim, but how we live.





## Why Lofty Goals Matter

Setting lofty goals in swimming isn't just about achieving a personal best or completing a challenging event. It's about daring to dream big and committing to a process that demands focus, discipline, and growth. When you pursue ambitious goals in swimming, you develop qualities that extend into every area of life: resilience, adaptability, and the ability to find meaning in the journey itself.

For some, a lofty goal might be conquering a fear of the water or completing a swim without stopping. For others, it could mean preparing for a long-distance open water race or mastering a new stroke. No matter the scale of the goal, the process of striving toward it connects you with a deeper sense of purpose. It teaches you to embrace discomfort as a pathway to growth, to celebrate small victories, and to value the effort as much as the outcome.

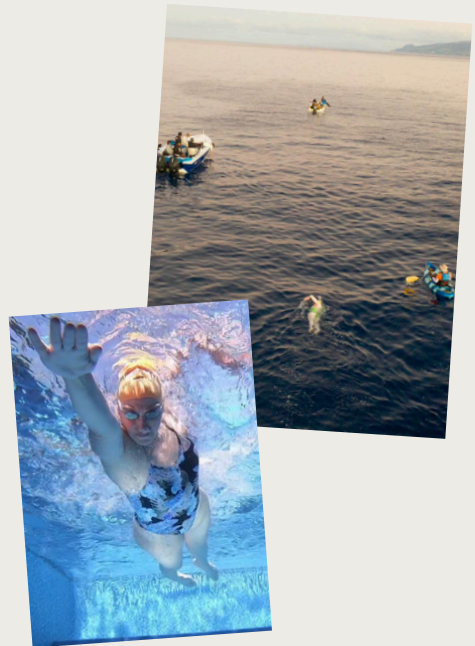
Swimming also has a unique way of grounding us in the present moment. The rhythm of the strokes, the sound of the water, and the sensation of gliding through it create an environment where you can tune out the noise of daily life and focus on what truly matters. When you set and pursue goals in this space, you're not just improving as a swimmer—you're creating a blueprint for living a life of meaning and intention.

## Your Journey Starts Here

This ebook is designed to guide you through the process of setting meaningful goals that align with your aspirations and support your growth as a swimmer and as a person. It's not (only) about swimming faster or farther just for the sake of it—it's about cultivating a deeper connection with the water, a better understanding of yourself, and what's possible when you lean into the learning along the way.

Together, we'll explore how to set goals that challenge and inspire you, create a pathway for progress, and align your swimming journey with your values and vision for life. Because when you swim with meaning, you unlock a life filled with possibility and purpose.

Let's dive in.





## CHAPTER ONE

# Understanding Goals

Setting goals in swimming is about finding meaning in the quiet, repetitive nature of the practice. Swimming's power lies in its rhythm—each stroke is an opportunity to improve on the one before. This monotony isn't mundane; it's where growth happens. Goals give purpose to each session, helping you focus on the small, deliberate efforts that lead to transformation.

### Why Goals Matter

Swimming teaches us that progress is built in the in-between moments—the quiet laps, the subtle adjustments, the focused effort when no one is watching. Goals anchor us in this process. They turn repetition into discovery, allowing us to see each session not as a chore but as a step toward something meaningful.

### Types of Goals

To guide your journey, consider these types of goals:

#### Outcome Goals

These are the big-picture achievements, like completing a race, swimming a distance that you never thought possible or in a place you've only dreamed about.

#### Performance Goals

These goals focus on measurable progress, giving you clear markers of improvement. Swimming a certain time at practice or in a swim meet.

#### Process Goals

These focus on the actions you can take every day. They're about showing up, practicing intentionally, and trusting the process.





### **The Power of Blending Goals**

The best goals are those that inspire you to stretch beyond your comfort zone while keeping you grounded in what's achievable. A balanced approach blends outcome, performance, and process goals, ensuring that you have both a destination and a roadmap for how to get there.

For example, imagine your outcome goal is to complete a 5K open water swim. A supporting performance goal might be to increase efficiency over long distances. And a process goal could involve dedicating one session per week to focusing on what happens in your body in the water to gain efficiency.

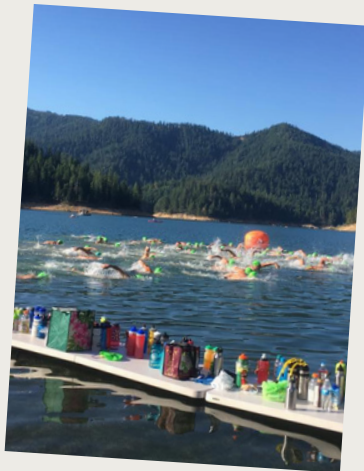
Together, these goals form a holistic strategy that keeps you motivated and intentional.

### **Finding Meaning in the Monotony**

Repetition is where mastery is born. Each lap is a chance to refine, connect, and grow. By focusing on the process, you discover that the monotony of swimming holds endless opportunities for learning and self-discovery.

### **A Relationship with Growth**

Goals are not just about reaching an endpoint—they are about who you become along the way. Progress is rarely immediate, but when you embrace the rhythm of consistent effort, you'll uncover both your potential as a swimmer and a deeper connection to the water—and to yourself.





## CHAPTER TWO

# Aligning your Goals

Are you a swimmer who comes to the water for exercise, relaxation, or camaraderie? While the act of swimming feels rewarding at first, over time, the lack of direction often leads to skipped workouts, waning motivation, and disappearing for months on end. Without a deeper connection to why you swim, it's easy to drift away from the practice entirely.

When your goals reflect your values and vision, swimming transforms from a routine activity into a meaningful pursuit. Aligned goals provide structure and purpose, helping you stay consistent and inspired, even during challenging times.

### Why Alignment Matters

Unaligned or unclear goals over time lead to simply going through the motions in the water. On the other hand, misaligned goals—those imposed by others or disconnected from what matters to you—can feel draining and unsustainable or lead to burn out.

When your goals are rooted in your values, every session serves a purpose. They keep you engaged, turn monotony into growth, and provide the drive to show up. Alignment ensures that the effort you invest in the water enriches both your swimming and your broader life.

### Clarify your Values and Vision

To align your goals, start by reflecting on what matters most to you:

- *Why do I swim?* For connection, health, or growth?
- *What do I want to gain from this journey?* Confidence, resilience?
- *How do I want swimming to shape my life?*

Your vision is the bigger picture of what you want from swimming—whether it's to feel empowered in open water, improve your health, or cultivate mental clarity. When you connect your goals to this vision, they become a natural extension of your deeper "why."







## Crafting Aligned Goals

Once you're clear on your values and vision, set goals that reflect them:

- If your value is *connection*, aim for regular swims in environments that inspire you, like open water or with a community.
- If your vision includes *health*, focus on building endurance, refining your technique to reduce injury, or committing to a consistent routine.
- For *growth*, work toward mastering new skills, increasing speed, or extending your distance.

Even small, value-based goals can bring meaning and keep you engaged.

## Revisit and Realign

Life evolves, and so will your values and priorities. Periodically revisit your goals to ensure they still reflect what inspires you. Adjusting your goals isn't failure—it's a way to stay connected to your purpose and keep swimming meaningful.

## Swimming with Purpose

When your goals align with your values, swimming becomes more than laps in a pool or distances in open water—it becomes a practice of self-discovery and growth. Aligned goals sustain your commitment, ensuring that swimming remains a source of health, joy, and connection in your life.







## CHAPTER THREE

# Pathway to Progress

Progress in swimming doesn't happen by chance—it's the result of consistency, intention, and creating an actionable plan to guide you. Combining the structure of an actionable plan with the mindset of embracing the process creates a powerful approach to achieving your goals and living your values.

### Start Where You Are

Begin with an honest assessment of where you are today. Acknowledge your current abilities, identify areas for growth, and connect with what inspires you. Approach this exercise with self-compassion, it is an opportunity to understand and appreciate where you're starting from. Whether you swim for your health, to confidently complete your first open water swim, or to cross the English Channel, progress begins with knowing where you are today.

### Define Your Path

To move forward, break your larger goal into smaller, clear objectives. Think of these as milestones that mark your progress. For example:

- Instead of "improve my swimming," focus on "gain efficiency by focusing on the fundamental skills."
- Rather than "swim more," set duration goals to test your efficiency then objectively review what it would take to swim longer.

Each objective should feel manageable and provide a clear step toward your bigger vision.





### Journal and Reflect

Document *while* you swim—how the water feels when you focus on a single cue, moments when you feel overwhelmed, and what disrupts your ability to connect with each movement. Journaling uncovers patterns, identifies areas for growth, and reveals small wins. Reflection deepens your connection with your body in the water, fostering progress and sustaining motivation.

### Consistency Builds Momentum

Regular, intentional effort is the cornerstone of progress. Plan a weekly routine that balances technique, endurance, and recovery. Consistency transforms effort into habit, making each session a building block toward your goals.

### Reframe Challenges

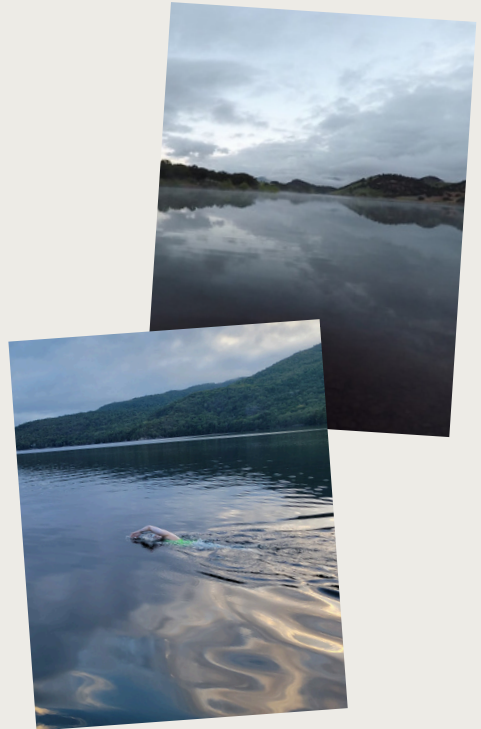
Life happens. Missed workouts, illness, waning motivation, or moments of feeling stuck are inevitable. Instead of seeing these challenges as roadblocks, treat them as opportunities to adjust and grow. A missed session isn't failure—it's a moment to pause, reassess, and get back on track. Similarly, plateaus, where progress feels stagnant, are chances to double down on fundamentals, reconnect with your purpose, and trust that growth is happening beneath the surface. Reframing these moments as part of the journey helps you stay resilient and committed to your long-term goals.

### Celebrate Wins, Big and Small

Every intention matters. Whether it's discovering new awareness, feeling new sensations with an old cue, having the confidence to run a new experiment, or simply showing up on a tough day, acknowledge your progress. Celebrating all victories keeps the journey rewarding and motivating.

### Stay Connected to Your Purpose

Regularly revisit your goals and vision. Adjust your approach to ensure it aligns with your values and reflects the swimmer you want to become. Even when plans shift, staying anchored in your "why" ensures every stroke is purposeful.





CONCLUSION

# Embrace Your Journey

Swimming teaches us that the beauty of progress lies not in the destination but in the steps we take to get there. It's about finding meaning in the rhythm of each stroke, the quiet of the water, and the challenges we overcome along the way.

Progress is rarely immediate, and it rarely look how we expect. There will be days when the water feels effortless, and others when it feels like a fight. But the true reward of swimming isn't just the goals we achieve—it's the growth we experience as we move toward them.

Every single stroke is a step forward, a chance to better understand how your body moves through water. Every session, whether it feels triumphant or tedious, is a chance to learn, refine, and reconnect with why you swim. The monotony of practice—the repetition of taking a stroke, then another, and another —holds the potential to transform not just your swimming, but your perspective on life itself.

When you embrace the journey, you open yourself to the profound lessons that swimming offers: patience, resilience, and the value of showing up. Trust that the effort you invest today is shaping the swimmer—and the person—you're meant to become.

Remember, the water meets you where you are, every time. Keep showing up. Keep moving forward. The journey is yours, and the meaning you find within can take you to places you've only dreamed.