Why Do Good Swimmers Drown? Looking at Survival Swimming at Beginner Level.

By Torill Hindmarch and Mats Melbye

The Norwegian Lifesaving Society
Founded 1906

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Looking at the research drowning occurs:

- Most often outdoors, between 0 and 15 degrees C. (<20 in the summer)
- When one is fully dressed in ”heavy” clothing.
- Over estimation of own ability to manage the demands of the environment
- An under estimation of conditions, waves , currents , weather change.
- Inability to tackle the unexpected
- Occurs close to possible rescue
- ”Good” swimmers drown more often

Analysis tells us that :

- Know your environment
- Be used being in cold water
- Manage owns inter-actions with cold water and the milieu
- Be able to swim with clothes and shoes, (winter clothing)
- Swimming is not enough

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One of the main goals of the Norwegian Life Saving Society

- Reduce drowning incidents in Norway by Focusing on Self Rescue in all swimming education.
- Manage their environment first
- Cope with the unexpected

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Why attempt School Swimming outdoors

- No access to pools
- Poor or no swimming skills
- High drowning statistics in relation to population
- Close proximity to the sea

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swimming versus survival

- Swim suit
- Low resistance
- Specific techniques
- Head down
- High speed
- Calm , stable conditions

- Fully clothed
- High resistance
- All round swim skills
- Head up
- Slower speed
- Variable /challenging conditions

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Coping with the environment

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Beginner Swimming in School

Facts about the Project.

- Started autumn 2007:
- 2nd grade, 3 classes
- 55 pupils, 6-7 years old
- 2 well established junior school teachers and 1 assistant (between 40 and 55 years) in the water
- 1 forest school teacher

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Conducted from 1.mai to mid June, and mid August to September

- Parental Support
- 100 % participation.
- Pupils divided into 3 groups.
- Lowest temperatures : water = 8 degrees C
  air = 7 degrees C

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May in Norway

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Learning Pathway

- How to use a PFD
- Familiarisation with the immediate environment
- Gain breath control in cold water,
- Rotation skills needed for survival
- Transition to wet suits (all the above)
- Traditional swimming skills
- Without wet suits

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Natural Learning

- It was necessary to let the child's personality direct their activities (the cautious and the adventurous).
- Each pupils new skill was the platform for their personal next step.
- Their different approaches all led to the same learning.
- Strengthened and supported each others learning

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Risk Management

- Life saving was an integral part of the program
- From an organisational perspective
- From a learning perspective

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Learning Outcomes

- Where are my clothes? Being organised.
- Coping with cold shock
- Body awareness: stopping before the onset of exhaustion
- The value of a life jacket (PFD)
- Importance of regaining body heat.
- Swimming became a small part of the whole learning experience
- 55 children swimming

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Results

- 55 pupils can swim in cold water.
- Pupils understood why wearing a vest (PFD) was important , also when one could swim.
- Pupils mastered the all round ability and techniques to get themselves out of a potential crisis

The Need for Further Research?

- Can Swimming Education only be classed as Drowning Preventative when it is linked to the environment where accidents might occur?

It **is** Possible **even** in Norway

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