



As the Beatles Sa

UNITED STATES SWIM SCHOOL
ASSOCIATION
www.esswimschools.org

By Kathy Hubbard

We consider ourselves a sophisticated, state-of-the-art swim school. We try really hard! We have analyzed, discussed, argued and augmented our system, our teachers and our training. And yet, sometimes, at the end of the day, we find ourselves reverting back to our favorite quote, our strongest “call to action.” As the Beatles said, sometimes we just have to: LET IT BE.

We encourage our instructors to let their students relax and enjoy their swim lesson! Let the water do the work! Why work hard? Hard work is the teacher’s job! Just hold still and let me push you to the wall. Don’t do anything—I want you to be lazy and feel what the water does for you. Come to swim lessons to take a nap! Too tired today to swim? Great—just close your eyes, hold your breath and rest in the water on your belly or your back. Find your float—find your buoyancy.

Different students, different ages, different body types. We all have students who fix their hair, sing songs or lazily cross their legs while floating in the water! Some days instead of being such strict teachers, we have to step back and just give our students/swimmers the time and freedom to figure out their relationship with the water. Of course, this comes after we have given them the primary skills to help keep them safe in the water. Oftentimes our search for speed or propulsion through the water makes us skip the essence of solidifying our relationship to the water.

When we teach, we feel it is as important for a child to relax and enjoy the water on their stomach as

well as on their back. We work on both with equal patience and resolve. As an instructor, teaching the back float is not your clue to take a deep breath, grit your teeth, take two Tylenol and head for work! Teaching floating is fun. It is a challenge! It is often an overlooked skill!

Just because a child can traverse the pool with arms churning and side-breathing, do not believe that they have any idea or understand the relationship of their body to the water. They may be swimming across the pool fast simply because if they stopped in the middle, they would not know what to do!

In our lower levels of new 3- to 5-year-olds, we build in lots of quiet swims from the wall to our instructors or our teaching island. Quiet arms, faces in the water, looking at the bottom of the pool. This may be a four- to five-second float. Then our instructor

will pick them up or oftentimes quietly roll them over to begin their introduction to a back float.

Streamlining is also a great time to let our students gain a great understanding of their relationship to the water. The sequence can begin with just stepping off the steps to the instructor. We then progress to a more traditional streamline position with arms extended, biceps squeezing their ears, faces looking at the bottom of the pool and blowing bubbles. Finally we add in a quiet kick to gain propulsion.

Our instructors will also have their students curl-up in a ball, face in the water, and float. We will then bounce them like a basketball by pushing down on the curve of their backs. Amazingly, many children believe that if they curl-up in this position, they will sink to the bottom of the pool. It gives them great confidence to know they will float. We then reverse the

Two-year-olds Christopher and Katie Greene enjoy the benefits of the Hubbard Family Swim School’s “call to action”: LET IT BE.



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process and have them float quietly on their backs, delivering the message that if you can float like a ball on your tummy, think how easy it is to do with your face out of the water!

Oftentimes we find that our upper-level swimmers do not have a good sense of their breath control or buoyancy. Ask a developmental swimmer to sit on the bottom of a five-foot-deep pool for five to eight seconds. Many will not be able to relax enough to get down there, let alone stay there. We believe giving them time in the water to gain these skills will lead to a more relaxed swimmer with better breath control and body position.


In our teaching environment, we encourage our instructors to get out of the way and let the students teach them what they need to learn. Letting them play in the water—even at a developmental stroke level—will oftentimes provide the students with new skills.

Our society today is moving at a very fast pace. Our instruction does

not have to match it. In our teaching environments—whether at the swim school or swim team—we need to let the children learn not only swimming skills but about their bodies and their

intimate relationship with the water.

Research today indicates that our children do not know how to play outside of structured environments. Gone are the days of pick-up basketball or baseball games. Even though our swim lessons or workouts are highly structured, adding a little non-structured time can provide a great reward in skill development. Focus on keeping the “fun” in FUNdamentals.

Sometimes just step back, watch and LET IT BE. 

Kathy Hubbard is the co-founder with her husband, Bob, of the Hubbard Family Swim School in Phoenix, Ariz.

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