



Goggles

Let me relate an experience that happened to me in 1998. It was during an after school class and I notice a new pupil was coming into my next class. I noticed from the date of birth of the child that this boy 4 1/2 years old, which meant that he was not a school yet, and there was a note beside his name telling me that he could swim but had had a bad experience in the water.

I invited the class into the water and then proceeded to find out what this new pupil (Sam) could do in the water. The first thing I noticed was he was wearing goggles. I have a policy on goggles and that is when one of my pupils can swim 50 meters (4 laps of a Shapland Swim School teaching pool) without goggles then they can wear goggles as much as they like.

This being the first time I had seen Sam in the water I did not insist he show me how well he could swim without his goggles on. So I asked Sam to swim up to the other end of the pool doing his favorite stroke. He took off and swam very strongly to the other end of the pool. I asked him to swim back, which he did without any effort. I thought, "What a good little swimmer".

Now for the big test. I asked Sam to take off his goggles and swim the length for me. He looked at me and shook his head. I asked him again to take his goggles off and show me how he could swim without the goggles on. This time he burst into tears. His mother came out of the observation room and said to me, "I am glad you asked him to swim without his goggles on because where he had swimming lessons previously let him swim with his goggles on, in fact he never has a swimming lesson from when he was 12 months old without goggles. Because I was in the middle of the class and had to press on I organized to phone the mother after my session in the pool to find out what the problem was. I tried every trick I knew for the rest of the lesson to get Sam to go under the water without his goggles on. The closest he would come to that was, he would let me pour some water over his head, but refused to open his eyes and let some water touch his eyes.

After my session in the water I phoned the mother and she proceeded to tell me this story. They have a pool at home and Sam and his brother (6 years) were playing around the pool and Sam was teasing his bigger brother, as boys, to the point where the bigger brother got so mad that he yelled something like, "*When I catch you I am going to hurt you*", and races after Sam. Sam ran along the side of the pool and jumped into the pool to get away from his brother. The pool was over two meters deep in that particular part of the pool, and Sam after he landed in the pool immediately started to panic. Not because he could not swim, but because he had never been in the pool for a

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swim without goggles, and was freaking out because the water was getting in his eyes. The older brother realized that Sam was in trouble and jumped in to drag him back to the side. Sam's panic was so intense that he grabbed hold of his older brother as soon as he came in contact with him. Wrapped his arms and legs around his older brother and in doing so pinned his brothers arms to his side. The mother had to jump into the water and rescue both of her children.

In my opinion someone who cannot swim without goggles, is not safe in the water. Goggles are a great swimming aid, but your child needs to know that they can swim just as well without them. There is a very good chance that when your child really needs their swimming skills to save their life they will be in a situation where goggles are not available.

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