

open water panic?



[jimfarrick](#) 1 posts since

Mar 14, 2009

Maybe someone can help me.....I can swim laps in a pool all day, bi-lateral breathe, pretty good swimmer all the way around. However, when I get into a triathlon swim I semi-panic and cant put my face in the water. I end up doing the whole swim with my head out of the water and almost hyperventilating. I know it costs me time on the bike, really not catching my breath, etc. Does anyone have any suggestions for any kind of training, etc, that would help me out. any tips would be helpful.



[bernarb](#) 7 posts since

Jun 14, 2009 1. **Re: open water panic?** Jun 18, 2009 6:58 PM

***i did the 2 mile park to park swim for the first time in open water w/o any problems. what i did do in the past 2 months was practice swimming in different beaches. could it be we can see the bottom of the pool when we and what we do everyday with our practice. try to combine a collection of strokes. to be honest i was doing side and breaststroke most of the time during that race and still outswam a lot of free-stylers. bernard*



[LBingear](#) 2 posts since

Aug 9, 2008 2. **Re: open water panic?** Jun 21, 2009 2:27 PM

A tip that a friend who's a practicing child psychologist: first, write out what a "comfortable" open-water swim would feel like--what you want it to be like. Write out the whole process, then, read this aloud into a digital or tape recorder, making a copy you can play repeatedly before the o-w swim. Play daily, particularly during "relaxed" times. Focus on a "good swim" for your narrative, but don't turn cold water into bathtub warm water as you imagine a good

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swim. Keep it real, but narrate "good" or "comfortable" reactions to those real (cold, murky) conditions.

I also tend to close my eyes when my face is in the water--what is there really to see, anyway? I open up, obviously, to sight the bouys.

Desensitiation also helps--which another reader mentioned (swimming at every beach). Don't laugh, but it does help to start the way the little kids start at swim class, by putting your face in the water, blowing bubbles underwater while your feet touch the bottom. Might want to pick a quiet day at the pond to do that one, or take a kid along and make it into a game.


If you find yourself panicking, you can try setting yourself the number of strokes "face in" to shoot for. Try twenty consecutive strokes (breathing the way you normally would while swimming in the pool), then breaststroke a few while you tell yourself you'll do twenty five, and so on. In part, you end up spending so much brain power counting strokes, that you're less likely to be focused on the freaking out part.

I did most of my first triathlon as backstroke--which I do not recommend because it is next to impossible to sight the bouys this way! It happens. Hope this helps!



[LBingear](#) 2 posts since

Aug 9, 2008 3. **Re: open water panic?** Jun 21, 2009 2:30 PM

 in response to: [LBingear](#)

Oops! I meant "desensitization"!

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[DAVIDLIGHT](#) 1 posts since

Nov 9, 2007 **4. Re: open water panic?** Jun 25, 2009 10:22 AM

First spend a few minutes acclimatizing to the water temp, weather you breath bilateral or every stroke slow your stroke down if you still are out of breath slow it down more until you can get a full breath in and a full breath out, try four stroke with your face in the water and stop then five and so on until you get comfortable also reduce your kick too hard a kick can tire you out also.



[RBC_KC](#) 1 posts since

Jul 13, 2008 **5. Re: open water panic?** Jun 28, 2009 11:28 AM

I'm glad to hear I'm not the only one with open-water panic. I even get a little panic when swimming into the 12-foot end of a competition pool. I'm getting over that fear, mostly of the height below. Thank you all for the tips. I'll try them at the local lake's swim beach.



[sweatequity](#) 97 posts since

Dec 12, 2008 **6. Re: open water panic?** Jun 28, 2009 1:32 PM

↑ in response to: [RBC_KC](#)

I know what I found very helpful was to do open swims in a group. I also attended a great open water swim clinic where we talk about swimming starts and transition as part of my triathlon training.



[Bro'](#) 4 posts since

Apr 5, 2009 **7. Re: open water panic?** Aug 19, 2009 9:19 PM

I've always struggled with the open water, especially when it's cold. One day about 3 months ago, in a 56 degree lake, I took a deep breath, dunked my entire head and neck and blew out all of my air with a quick, forceful exhalation. Viola!

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I'm a nurse and know that cold water that rapidly strikes your face actually can slow your heart rate down (we still sometimes use that technique in the ER to slow very rapid heart rates). Since then it's been all good.

I'm swimming Alcatraz in 3 weeks so I'll see if my hypothesis really has validity.

Stay strong, keep trying!!!

Scott



[bernarb](#) 7 posts since

Jun 14, 2009 8. **Re: open water panic?** Aug 20, 2009 8:29 PM

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TO SCOTT,

I ADVISE YOU TO GET A WETSUIT.I AM A REGISTERED NURSE ON THE EAST COAST.LEG CRAMPS AND HYPOTHERMIA CAN SET IN.KEEP YOURSELF WARM SO YOU CAN LAST LONGER IN THE RACE. MY NEXT EVENT IS IN THE ATLANTIC OCEAN- A 1 MILER FOLLOWED BY A 2 MILER AROUND THE GOVERNOR'S ISLAND IN THE HUDSON RIVER. IFYOU ARE ADAMANT ABOUT SWIMMING WITHOUT A WETSUIT, DO SPEND AT LEAST 10 MINUTES TO WARM UP. BERNARD. FEEL FREE TO CONTACT ME AT 347-886-2830 IF YOU NEED FURTHER ASSISTANCE.



Bro' 4 posts since

Apr 5, 2009 9. **Re: open water panic?** Aug 20, 2009 8:38 PM

Hi bernarb et. al.,

Forgot to mention that I wear a full suit, latex and neoprene caps, gloves, booties and pour warm water down my suit.

My bad!!

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Thanks!!!