

Dread, and other stimuli

Dear weakest link,

Today I discovered who you are and where you live. Rest assured that I'm going to be coming round very often from now on, to chat and get to know you better. With time we'll become best friends, in fact we'll be inseparable. Then I'll be able to start calling you 'strength'...

*Yours sincerely,
WT.*



There is that moment when you realise that a skill that you'd really like to possess is very difficult for you, or when you realise that you're putting off doing something because you dread it: in that moment you have actually been profoundly empowered. You now possess the knowledge of *what needs to be done*.

In that moment two paths (briefly) open up for you: in one you tell yourself you really ought to put more time into it in the future, but for now you're just going to carry on with what you've been doing for a bit longer; in the second you turn the full glare of your undivided attention onto that one facet, there in that very moment.

So if you feel *dread* of anything in training, whether it's a particular exercise, training table, stretch or type of dive, then that is the calling card of a weakest link. Analyse it, isolate it, and make a commitment - *the type of commitment you know you can't break* - to turn it into your strength. Then begin.



I had this revelation recently with training for the monofin kick. Most of my training tables are designed to be as hard as I can manage, but I realised that I couldn't even stomach the idea of doing a dolphin kick table without fins of any kind for propulsion.

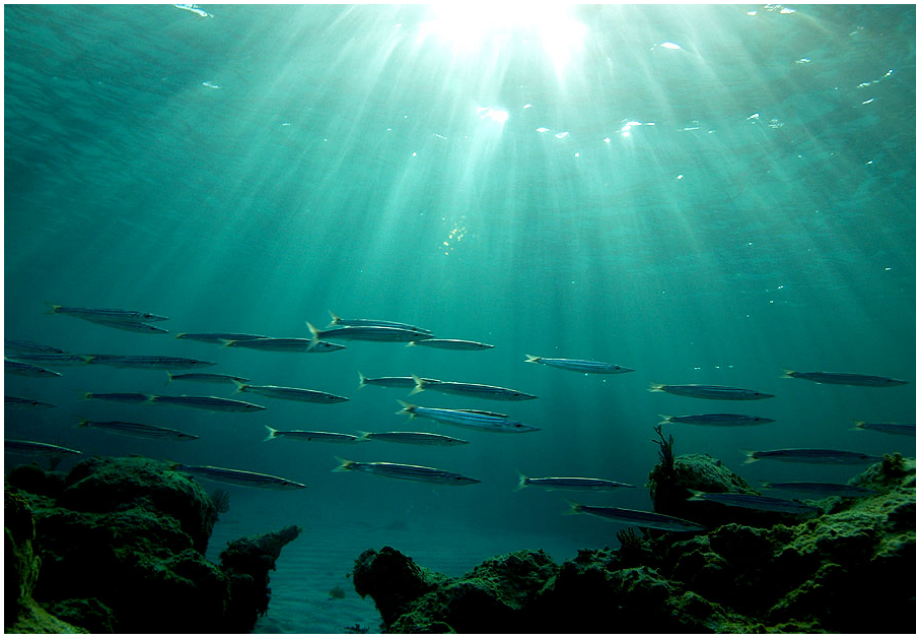
My barefoot dolphin kick technique used to be so shocking that I would just lie there in the pool and wiggle my hips without any forwards movement (but occasionally some backwards). These days it is at a point where I can swim a lap in a semi-respectable time, but still with major expenditure of energy. So the idea of doing a table of repeated swims like this, with short recoveries between them, well it wasn't just that I thought that it would be hard, but I doubted altogether that it would be possible for me. As soon as I realised that I had this belief I set out to prove myself wrong.

Having now completed some of these tables, I know that I was wrong, but I still have a long way to go before I can think of calling this a strength. Ask me about it again in a year!

So, can't get your arms into a streamlined position above your head? You could swim with your hands by your sides, or you can start stretching those lats and shoulders and not stop until you can lie one forearm on top of the other.

Hate doing CO2 tables because they are so claustrophobic and bothersome? Look under the rug and your weakest link is hiding there, waiting to pounce. Start conservative and build the tables into a powerhouse of training stimuli.

Don't think you have a weakest link? *Maybe that is it...*



Very nice post. A simple point to put across but so relevant for every freediver. Performance anxiety, fear of poor performance and as you put it 'dread' are such stumbling blocks to achieving your potential. Like everything in life, these fears are best confronted rather than brushed aside in order to take an 'easier' path.

by Ian Donald on 2012-08-18 02:20:40

I have told you before and still lament, how unfortunate it is that you did not learn the kick as a child. For those of us who did; it is effortless. I believe it is almost impossible for an adult, especially males, to learn it properly. The required flexibility is simply not there. That does not mean you cannot be successful. It just is not as easy as it should be.

by carla on 2012-08-18 08:51:26

Nice post Will! Very well said and probably the reason you have become a champion! rnrnCarla, it is not impossible for an adult to learn the kick it simply requires dry training specifically targeting the areas that lack the flexibility and strength to perform the movement :0)

by William Winram on 2012-08-18 13:28:01

Thanks guys! I have definitely been doing my damndest with the monofin kick: today I spent an hour in the gym working the core, suspended between the TRX and a medicine ball, with weights hanging off my stomach.. I have a lag in the CWT ascent where my speed slows from 1.6m/s initially to around 1.2m/s at 70m. Hopefully I can address that with this kind of work!

by William on 2012-08-18 13:44:54

Wish i had known you were going to be a freediver! i failed you there. Funny that we never knew about a dolphin kick - it would have been fun. But somehow or other you developed the determination to take you there, anywhere! your attitude rocks - I take lessons from it

by linda trubridge on 2012-08-19 18:25:27

No failing at all - I got practice at breaststroke kicking and snorkelling from the age of 2! Can't beat that!

by William on 2012-08-20 08:13:57

William, rnl saw your FB post in the pool with the kick training. Have you tried to Michael Phelps weighted vertical kicks? I do those and time myself. RE; Winram-- remember you telling me at WC 2009 you wish you had my kick? That's because I learned it at 6 years old. You breastrokers are notoriously bad butterflyers () and vice versa for me and the breaststroke ! rn

by carla on 2012-08-20 09:02:03