

These 4 Indispensable Skills Can Save You Years of Agonizing Hardship

I grew up in a rough, inner-city ghetto in Miami, Florida, the son of a 16-year-old mother. And as tough as it was growing up without a father, not having him attend any of my wrestling matches, football, basketball or baseball games, one of the most difficult things I had to endure was him never teaching me how to swim.

I know you may find that hard to believe, but I'm not talking about the kind of swimming lessons you're thinking about. In fact, the swimming lessons I'm talking about don't even involve water.

So what do I mean? I'm talking about the four skills every man should know, if not from his father, at least from another man in his life whom he loves, trusts and respects. I didn't meet such a man until I was 33 years old. That delay cost me a 16-year marriage, broken relationships and financial hardships.

These are the four swimming strokes I believe every man must eventually learn to master:

1. The Backstroke:

Every man must learn to come to grips with his past and learn from his past mistakes, hurts, habits and hang-ups. As men, our past may explain us, but it doesn't excuse us from present and future decisions.

It was once said that a man who doesn't learn from his past is destined to repeat it. You won't have to repeat the past if you learn to master the backstroke.

2. The Butterfly Stroke:

Every man must learn to find, accept and live his God-given purpose in life. Every man, metaphorically, starts out as a caterpillar, but he wasn't intended to remain one—crawling on his belly for the rest of his life. He was expected to transform into a butterfly because he was destined and designed to fly, not crawl. But the butterfly stroke doesn't happen by osmosis; it has to be learned.

3. The Breaststroke:

Every man must learn to master and win the heart of his wife. Many men have found themselves treading water when it comes to this area in their life. Whether you become a husband or not, every man must learn not only how to love a woman but also to understand the inner workings of her heart.

4. The Freestyle Stroke:

Every man must learn how to communicate freely with his children without fear, shame or judgment. It's one thing to master the heart of a woman, but it's another to win the heart of your child. A father must learn how to provide his children with a safe place to hurt and a healthy place to heal by getting them to freely share their fears, doubts and insecurities.

Although it took me longer than most to learn how to swim, my current wife and my blended family are so glad I did. I'm living proof that it's never too late for swimming lessons.

Which swimming stroke is most challenging for you as a man? Leave a comment below! {eo}

Dr. Joe Martin is a certified Man Builder, creator and founder of , and an award-winning educator. He's also a husband and father of a blended family of two.

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