

## Five Seasons Sports Club Instructor Helps People Overcome Fear of Water

Submitted By: [Mattbaron](#)



Drew Surinsky during a recent triathlon

Drew Surinsky is just your everyday, ordinary supremely fit triathlete who enjoys playing with dolls.

All right, so maybe a little explanation is in order for Surinsky, a recent instructional addition to the Five Seasons Sports Club in Northbrook.

Among his myriad athletic coaching skills, Surinsky has developed a passion for helping people overcome their fear of the water. And one aid in that process is using dolls, weighted in different ways, to demonstrate the mechanics of floating.

"If people can see how it works on an inanimate object and think of themselves as something that's built along the same lines as that object—buoyant and heavy in the same spots—then it's easier for them to see themselves as able to float," Surinsky explains.

"I tell them the water doesn't know if it's you or me," he continues. "If you do the right stuff, the water's going to let you float."

And if that approach doesn't work, Surinsky is willing to float other concepts by newcomers.

People's fear of water was a topic he studied extensively when he was in pursuit of his Master's degree in exercise science. With more than 70 triathlons under his belt since 1987, the exercise physiologist and swim and triathlon coach has a wealth of practical experience.

"Most swim instructors try to get people to learn motor learning, the skills," says Surinsky. "But there's a whole world of stuff to be dealt with, which affects how the skills are learned."

He employs a variety of metaphors and visual aids to convey the principles of swimming. To help beginners think about the way their arm should enter the water, with the body trailing after it, Surinsky talks about placing a needle through fabric.

"Or you can talk about propulsion, how you grab the water and push on it is a lot like ice skating," said Surinsky.

Another key to helping those manage their trepidation is to proceed very gradually because he's addressing a deep-seated fear.

"At first and sometimes for quite a while, you need to do things gradually, so gradual that it would bore the heck out of most people," said Surinsky.

He likens the process to "learning how to live on a different planet for a while."

"We're used to walking around in the air, moving ourselves through air by pushing on something solid," he explained. "All of a sudden, when it comes to swimming, you're surrounded by water, moving yourself through liquid by pushing on liquid. It's really a tricky thing to do."

A competitive swimmer since 1971 and an instructor since 1979, Surinsky's diverse background includes a six-year period as a Cook County public defender.

In December, he is in the midst of leading three clinics at Five Seasons—all geared toward people with experience and comfort in the water. He has led sessions on structuring triathlon preparation with an annual training plan and focusing on strength training that minimizes the risk of injury and enhances triathlon performance.

At Five Seasons on Monday, Dec. 17, from 7:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m., he will lead a simple drill sequence to increase participants' streamlining, rotation and relaxation in the water.

Five Seasons is located at 1300 Techny Road and online at [www.fiveseasonsnorthbrook.com](http://www.fiveseasonsnorthbrook.com). For more information, contact Drew at [niceguytraining@ameritech.net](mailto:niceguytraining@ameritech.net) or 847-502-0630.