



# SWIM

THE WORLD'S FOREMOST AUTHORITY ON ADULT SWIMMING

SWIM was started by Kim Hansen in 1984.

It became the official magazine of United States Masters Swimming in 1992.

Today the title lives as a section in Swimming World Magazine and can be downloaded separately.

## the POOL'S EDGE

MOTIVATION ■ TECHNIQUE ■ TRAINING IDEAS ■ EQUIPMENT USAGE

# IT'S A BREAK, NOT A BREAK-UP

BY KARLYN PIPES-NEILSEN

In March of 2010, I did something totally out of character. While competing at the New England Short Course Masters Championships at Harvard, I scratched most of my events... and I have not swum a race since.

It's not that I don't love the sport of swimming. In fact, I may love it *too* much. However, after 17 years of non-stop racing, the passion that used to fuel me to the finish line was missing. So, rather than force myself to continue when my heart was clearly not into it—and possibly suffer a total burnout—I decided to step off the blocks. It was a big decision.

I plan to be back one day—refreshed, renewed and ready to take on the next goal. So really, this is a *break*, not a break-up.

Perhaps it's time you examined your own feelings about swimming. Ask yourself:

- Are you still enjoying the sport?
- Do you feel like you are in a rut?
- Would you feel lighter and less stressed if you stopped?
- Is there a new interest pulling you in a different direction?

If your honest answers indicate a need for a change, here are some suggestions to help guide you.

**Give yourself permission:** Athletes often wrap up their identity in their sport. However, swimming is something you

do, not *who you are*. On a soul-searching walk or hike, ask yourself if you would be happier not competing, and then give yourself permission to walk away. You are not “quitting”—just stepping back for a while.

**No couch potato:** Stay fit and active, but make it fun! Even without any specific goals in mind, I discovered I am an athlete at heart. I still swim, but now I mix in spinning, Zumba, yoga, weights, hiking and running. The biggest difference is that I work out because I *want to*, not because I *have to*.

**Re-direct your energy:** Do you have an interest or passion that has gone unfulfilled

due to your swimming commitments? Reinvent yourself and don't be afraid to step outside your comfort zone. Whether it's cake baking or mountain climbing, now is a perfect time to turn those dreams into reality.

**Take a “real” vacation:** Instead of dedicating your vacation time to attend a major swim meet, plan an entire trip with fun and enjoyment as the focus. Sure, join the local Masters team for a workout, but the idea is to see the sights, not just the inside of an aquatic complex.

**Focus on technique:** Now that the pressure is off to perform, this is a great time to update your technique. Attend a clinic, check out YouTube or buy a DVD for some virtual coaching. Also, work on your “off” strokes. Who knows, you may even learn to love butterfly!

**Give back:** Re-charge your batteries by volunteering. Be a timer at a meet, help out the youth team or offer to coach the Masters workout. By changing roles, you may just come away with a brand new appreciation for our wonderful sport.

**Come back:** Swimming can be a heavy load to carry because it takes time, energy and dedication. When you are ready, come back. I promise, the water will embrace you like an old friend.

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I love my new relationship with water—it's much more playful. I no longer obsess about yardage or a skipped workout, and I have redirected my energies toward a more positive outlet—teaching swimmers of all ages and abilities how to swim faster with less effort at my Aquatic Edge swim technique clinics and camps. Check out my schedule at [www.aquaticedge.org](http://www.aquaticedge.org) to see if I am coming to a city near you! ♦

Karlyn Pipes-Neilsen is offering a swim camp in beautiful Costa Rica, Feb. 21-25. For more information, e-mail [aquatic-edge@hawaii.rr.com](mailto:aquatic-edge@hawaii.rr.com). In 2011, Pipes-Neilsen will write the “Pool's Edge” column on a quarterly basis.



[PHOTO BY DOUG HENBEST]

ABOVE » On a soul-searching walk or hike, ask yourself if you would be happier not competing, and then give yourself permission to walk away. You are not “quitting”—just stepping back for a while.