

Wet and Writhing: Bon Cabiles Discovers the Other Side of Diving

Contributed by Bonita Marie Cabiles
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Falling Issues

"Do you have falling issues?" This was the first question that my dive instructor, Mike Lazaro, asked me during our debrief after my last dive as a student. Although he caught me off-guard, I just laughed at his question. Laughing, of course, has always been my best form of defense.

It was my final dive lesson, and again, I requested to practice my hovering skills. Despite Sir Mike's assurances, I still felt that if I were to rate myself, I would fail on this skill. One minute, I'm perfectly still and nearly upright underwater. The next minute, I'm fluttering my hands trying to cling to some semblance of balance. Sir Mike would signal me to keep my hands close to my body. I would eventually hover, but then start to feel as if I'm falling again.

My inability to hover notwithstanding, I realized that beyond the theories I read in the manual and the skills I was taught by my instructor, I have definitely gained a lot of interesting insights from my PADI open water course.

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Lessons Learned

In fact, I can still feel the pounding of my heart the first time I descended underwater. I remember the sense of exhilaration as I deflated my BCD. I remember the sweet triumph of finally going down and managing to stay down. But more importantly, I remember tucking away bits and pieces of wisdom as I struggled to master the science and art of scuba diving...

- Lesson #1: Going under can cause a paradigm shift that can open your eyes to the beauty of life.

I took scuba diving because of my love for the ocean. Yet, in spite of my passionate love affair with the sea, I still found myself facing a multitude of fears. The thought of drowning was constantly in my mind. And, ironically, I was more afraid of what I would find under the surface. I grew up with the belief that to enjoy the sea, I had to learn to swim or at least float on the surface. Diving, on the other hand, entailed just the opposite. But even as I confronted fears of sinking, the view that met my eyes as I went deeper was totally worth the shift.

- Lesson #2: One cannot reach the horizon unless he loses sight of the shore. Comfort zones work only for those who wish to remain on the shore.

No activity has actually taught me the significance of taking risks as vividly as diving had. Every dive had its own

unpredictable challenge and surfacing carried its own distinct feeling of reward and accomplishment.

- Lesson #3: Fear truly is the most dominant limiting factor.

It was the feeling of falling that stood in the way of hovering vertically. As Sir Mike would always remind me, "It's all in the mind. It's psychological." Indeed, it is. How could I be falling when I was not standing on anything? I was merely floating upright in mid-water.

Finding Peace

As I learned to deal with my own fears, I finally found the solace and peace that I was looking for underwater. In fact, if I may be so bold, I dare say that I truly found myself amid the vibrant marine life and the colorful treasures down below.

And even now, after jumping the last hurdle in my course and finally enjoying the underwater world as a licensed PADI open water diver, I am still amazed at how many answers I find just by basking in the sheer beauty of the fathoms below.

Of course, I continue to ponder on the question that Sir Mike asked me. Do I have falling issues? Hmmm. I wonder if coming to terms with the answer will actually benefit my hovering skills.

About the Author: Bonita Marie Cabiles is a neophyte in the world of Scuba Diving, but an old pro in all sorts of outdoor adventures. She has previously scaled mountains, explored ancient caves, paddled across islands as a kayaker, conquered the Singapore wilderness, and broke countless hearts in her wake. Bon recently ended her stint as an Adventure Camp trainer, and is currently on her way to Indonesia to do God-knows-what-else. Her boundless energy and often-misplaced-wit make the world a better place. Or so she insists. Ohhh, Bon, you are so terribly missed.

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