

## Slow & Steady Wins the Wave

I emerged from the waves, unable to see my own hands. My feet broke the surface first, before I tumbled over, taking a large breath of air. Brushing my hair out of my face, I am tugged immediately to the right and then to the left. My surfboard, attached to my foot, pulls me back into the waves, as if encouraging me to not give up.

The sun beat down as I slid onto my board again. The most recent of wipeouts was unmemorable - just another among a long list of falls. The waves were gorgeous today, pristine blue and towering as tall as they could for a Massachusetts beach.

I paddled deeper into the water, swimming past my friends and camp counselor who were casually riding the waves. It seemed like they were walking across the water - their feet effortlessly slid into the correct place, and their arms never wavered. Unlike a certain someone who hit their head on the rocks or started dancing the “windmill” a few times too many (me).

My arms turned the board and my head twisted to spot the growing waves. A small lull passed by, slowly raising me up and down. Suddenly, I saw it. The wave, rapidly growing in size, approached steadily. A few other surfers down the beach also lined up, arms crouched and elbows poised to paddle.

I whipped my head to face the shore and pushed myself forward. My arms cut through the water like a knife through butter, and as soon as the wave crested, I popped up.

*Knees: low, above the feet*

*Feet: shoulder width apart*

*Eyes: towards the sand*

My legs swiveled to the left, and my arms shot out. The once bumpy path smoothed and I was coasting. *I did it!*

Suddenly, the board sprinted past my feet, and for a second I was in the air, arms reaching for anything to hold. Letting out a gasp, I fell back and splashed into the ocean.

Once again, I break through the tumultuous waves, unable to see my hands. Unheeded advice accompanied the long trip to the deep end. My camp counselor calls out, "You should go into the pig position first!" Then I hear a friend yell as she zips past on a wave, "Yeah, you have to go pig!"

My eyebrows furrow and I start paddling faster. Everyone next to me started at the same time, but they could stand up easily. The pig position was the first lesson we learned: crouching one knee and extending your back foot. Once we mastered the position, we could then try standing up. The pig position was easy... I presumed before falling again into the waves after getting on one knee.

*Slow down, breathe, relax.*

I took a deep breath and closed my eyes. Surfing isn't a race. I don't need to be the first one back to shore or the first to stand. Surfing is a sport of personal growth, where you have to find your own mistakes and improve on them.

I opened my eyes and spotted a small wave approaching. This time, I pushed myself off with purpose, not with speed. My arms cut through the water like a clean slice with a knife. I felt the wave push ahead before I popped on one knee. My arms shook from the excursion, and my toes gripped the board tightly, but I was up.

It was the first time today that my feet touched the sand before my head. Appreciative yells welcomed me back into the deep end as I prepared for the next wave. For the rest of the day, I never tried to fully stand up. There were many more falls, but returning to the basics made me realize how many important steps I missed.

The sun began to set as the group stepped out of the chilly waters. Laughter bounced around and we dragged our boards up the rocky steps and into the truck. I stared back at the beach, ready for tomorrow. Impatience might have gotten the best of me today, but the ocean hasn't seen the last of me yet.