THE HALLIWICK CONCEPT 2010

International Halliwick Association (IHA) Education and Research Committee 2010 –
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This paper has supporting video clips for the Ten Point Programme. To view these videos please go to http://vimeo.com/channels/halliwick.

Introduction

'The Halliwick Concept is an approach to teaching all people, in particular, focussing on those with physical and/or learning difficulties, to participate in water activities, to move independently in water, and to swim.' (IHA – Halliwick Concept 2000)

When Halliwick was first developed (for further details see the history on the Halliwick Association of Swimming Therapy website at http://www.halliwick.org.uk/publications-2/the-halliwick-story/) it was called Halliwick Method. The International Halliwick Association (IHA) was formed in 1994 with the objectives of promoting and developing Halliwick throughout the world. The IHA decided to use the term Halliwick Concept as the word 'concept' suggests a broader framework within which different practitioners can apply Halliwick, as appropriate, in different contexts.

The Concept has influenced traditional swimming teaching and hydrotherapy techniques. It has also been developed into specific therapeutic activities.

The Halliwick Concept recognises the benefits that can be derived from activities in water, and sets out the fundamentals necessary for teaching and learning in this environment. These benefits are holistic including physical, personal, recreational, social and therapeutic aspects. Therefore it can have an important impact on people's lives.

Philosophy

Halliwick, since its inception in 1949, has always emphasised the fun of being in water and how enjoyment enhances learning. It has consistently maintained a philosophy of equality of opportunities.

Halliwick uses the term 'swimmer' for anyone who is learning in the water, whether they can swim independently or not, emphasising inclusion, participation and high expectations.

'Swimmers' learn to control their own balance in water, without flotation aids. This is achieved by working on a one-to-one basis with a helper who gives adjustable, minimal support.

Working in groups gives the ‘swimmer’ a chance to enhance learning as it improves motivation and allows ‘swimmers’ to learn from each other. The group situation allows opportunities for communication and socialising. Games are also used as a good way of learning through structured play and fun.

Good communication between a ‘swimmer’ and helper is essential for a large number of reasons including the ‘swimmer’ being able to be involved in the learning process.

Halliwick practitioners take into consideration different ways to help people maximise learning. This applies in teaching ‘swimmers’ with disabilities and also when teaching new instructors on courses.

The Ten Point Programme

The Ten Point Programme is a structured learning process through which a person with no experience in water can progress towards independence in the water. He does this through mastering the control of movement in the aquatic environment.

Through the Ten Points the ‘swimmer’ gradually gains better breath, balance and movement control, becomes more confident in the water and experiences increased freedom in the water.

This is achieved by working on a one-to-one basis with an instructor who gives appropriate supports, allowing the ‘swimmer’ to learn without the use of flotation aids. Whenever possible, ‘swimmers’ initiate and control the movements with the instructor supporting as necessary.

For many the Ten Point Programme will be the opportunity to learn to swim competently, whilst for others it will give the chance to join in other aquatic activities.

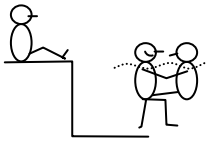
The Ten Points are:

1. Mental Adjustment
2. Disengagement
3. Transversal Rotation Control
4. Sagittal Rotation Control
5. Longitudinal Rotation Control
6. Combined Rotation Control
7. Upthrust
8. Balance in Stillness
9. Turbulent Gliding
10. Simple Progression and Basic Swimming Movement

1. Mental Adjustment

Being in water is different than being on land. Once in the water a 'swimmer' has to learn to respond appropriately to this new environment, situations or tasks.

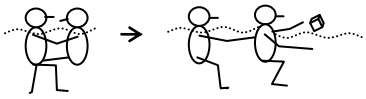
Mental adjustment is an ongoing process throughout the learning process. For example, the learning of breath control (one aspect of Mental Adjustment) can start as a separate skill, just blowing onto the water, but then will be combined with other skills e.g. sitting on the bottom of the pool.



One example of mental adjustment. The swimmer enjoying being in the water.

2. Disengagement

Disengagement is an ongoing process throughout the learning by which the 'swimmer' becomes physically and mentally independent. For example, a 'swimmer' who is afraid to move around in the water will need a lot of support but as they become more confidant and gain better balance they will need less support and are more disengaged.

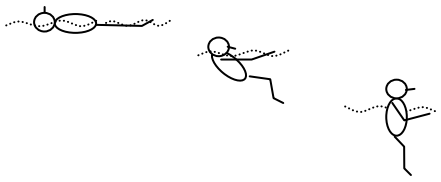


One example of disengagement. The swimmer turning away from the instructor.

3. Transversal Rotation Control

Transversal Rotation Control is the ability to control movement around an axis going from side to side (fronto-transversal axis). For example (i) in an upright position, leaning forwards to blow bubbles (ii) moving from an upright position to floating on the back in the water (iii) moving from floating on the back to an upright position (with or without support) (iv) being able to stay in a upright position without falling forwards or backwards.

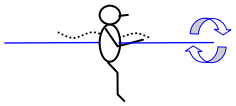
Rotations around a transversal axis.



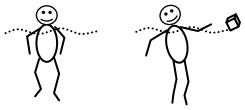
One example of transversal rotation control. Moving from a back float to the vertical.

4. Sagittal Rotation Control

Sagittal Rotation Control is the ability to control movement sideways around an axis going from front to back (sagitto-transversal axis). For example (i) in an upright position putting the ear in the water (ii) in an upright position moving sideways.



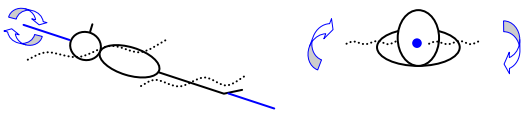
Rotations around a sagittal axis.



One example of sagittal rotation control. Limiting lateral movement of the body when reaching for an object to the side.

5. Longitudinal Rotation Control

Longitudinal Rotation Control is the ability to control movement around a long axis of the body like the axis passing from the head to the toes (sagitto-frontal axis). This might be in an upright position or in a horizontal floating position. For example (i) in an upright position turning round on the spot (ii) from a position face down in the water rolling to a horizontal floating position (iii) while swimming on your front rolling to take a breath.



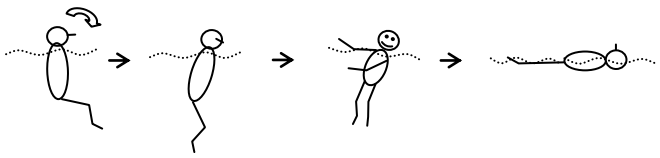
Rotations around a longitudinal axis.

One example of longitudinal rotation control. Stopping rotation of the trunk caused by the head turn.

6. Combined Rotation Control

Combined Rotation Control is the ability to control movement using any combination of rotations. It gives the 'swimmer' control in all three dimensions of movement in the water. For example (i) entering the water from sitting on the poolside and rolling into the water to achieve a horizontal floating position. (ii) regaining a stable position on the back after falling forwards. (iii) changing direction when swimming into the poolside.

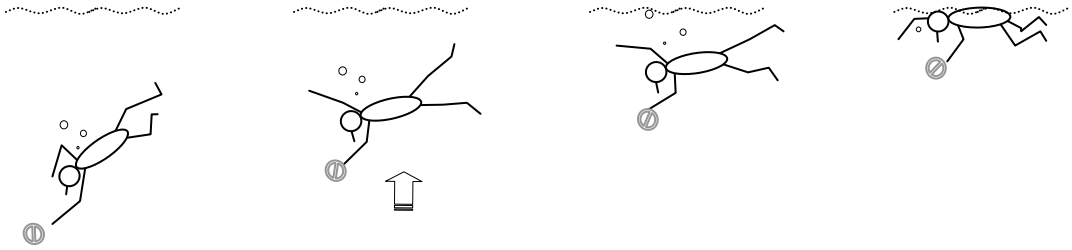
Combining several rotations at once.



One example of combined rotation control. When falling forwards from a vertical position to reach a back float position.

7. Upthrust

Upthrust is a physical property of water that enables the majority of 'swimmer's to float in the water. 'Swimmer's need to trust that the water will support them. This process is often called mental inversion, because the 'swimmer' must invert their thinking and realise they will float and not sink. At this point in the Ten Point Programme submerging is taught, as when submerging you experience upthrust and it is difficult to stay under the water. Examples of upthrust are (i) the 'swimmer' lifting feet off the pool floor and feeling that the water can hold them up (bunny hops) (ii) picking up objects off the pool floor and feeling the upthrust bringing you back to the surface.

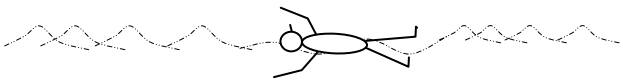


One example of feeling the effect of upthrust. When trying to pick up something from the pool floor, the swimmer will find that he/she will come back to the surface with very little or no effort.

8. Balance in stillness

Balance in stillness is the ability to maintain a still, relaxed position in the water.

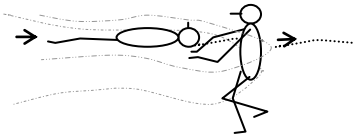
This can be in many different positions and is dependent on both mental and physical balance control. Floating is an example of balance in stillness eg (i) horizontal floating position (ii) vertical float (iii) mushroom float. When balanced other activities can be performed more easily.



One example of balance in stillness. Swimmer maintaining a back float position in rough water.

9. Turbulent Gliding

In Turbulent Gliding a 'swimmer' in a horizontal float position is moved through the water by an instructor without any physical contact between them. This is achieved by the instructor making turbulence under the shoulders of the 'swimmer' and moving backwards. The 'swimmer' has to control unwanted rotations but makes no propulsive movements.



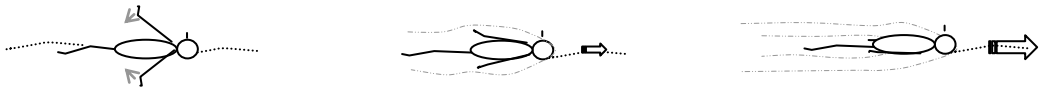
Turbulent gliding: a swimmer glides through the water as a result of the turbulence created by the instructor's hands and/or by the instructor's movement (i.e. taking steps backwards).

10. Simple Progression and Basic Swimming Stroke

Simple Progression is performing simple propulsive movements. This might be a simple arm, leg or even trunk movements. For example in a horizontal back float position (i) clapping your sides, (ii) sculling, (iii) kicking the legs.

A Basic Swimming Stroke would consist of a movement requiring more complex co-ordination and would usually involve bringing the arms out of the water and include an element of gliding (balance in stillness).

For example in a horizontal back float position with the arms at the side of the body, bringing them low over the surface of the water to shoulder level and then, with the arms under the water moving the arms to the sides of the body gliding and starting the stroke again.



One example of simple progression. Clapping the hands on the thighs causes propulsion through the water.

Having mastered the ability to control all the points of the Halliwick Ten Point Programme, the swimmer is able to engage in a wide variety of activities in the water. He can play, submerge, compete and learn swimming strokes. The swimmer has now achieved independence in water.

Halliwick in Therapy

Therapists working in the aquatic environment can use the Ten Point Programme of the Halliwick Concept and its philosophy in a therapeutic manner, promoting well-being in the physical structure and function of the body which will enhance motor-learning and functional independence.

The individual's quality of life is at the centre of the holistic approach to health used in the biopsychosocial model as used by the World Health Organisation's International Classification of Functioning Disability and Health (ICF) - (WHO 2001).

The holistic Halliwick approach of teaching people to participate in water activities, to move independently in water and to swim fits well within the framework of the ICF.

Therapists wishing to address particular limitations can again use the Halliwick structure with specific attention to areas such as movement (including range, co-ordination and planning), strength, stamina, respiratory capacity, oral control, fitness etc. The water can also be a valuable place for sensory-integration.

Social skills, communication, learning ability, psychological well-being and self esteem can be developed through Halliwick sessions, especially when working in groups.

Working using Halliwick introduces a new environmental factor to work on movement and balance control strategies in a different way. The attributes of the aquatic environment, specifically the physical properties of water, can assist the individual in promoting his abilities in physical, emotional and social functioning (Harris, 1978; Adams& McCubbin,1991; Broach & Datillo, 1996; Hutzler et al, 1998; Cole & Becker, 2004; Getz, 2006).

The Ten Point Programme develops the patient's ability to initiate and perform movements and activities which may be difficult to achieve on land.

Opportunities to practise movement in the aquatic environment may facilitate new patterns that increase the recognition and understanding of different concepts of motor learning, sensory processing and cognitive learning and develops the ability to organise movement patterns and control activities required in daily living. (MacKinnon, 1997; Bumin et al., 2003; Getz, 2006; Getz et al., 2007).

Swimming can be an important activity in promoting well-being throughout a person's lifespan. As outlined previously, swimming as a therapeutic tool has an important role in improving and maintaining health.

Conclusion

'The Halliwick Concept is an approach to teach people to participate in water activities, to move independently in water and to swim'. This is achieved through the Ten Point Programme. As well as being a very successful way of teaching swimming to anybody it also can be used in therapy.

The International Halliwick Association (IHA) is a charity organisation with the objectives of promoting and developing internationally the Halliwick Concept. For more details of the IHA go to the IHA website at www.halliwick.org. If interested in attending a course, or organising a course, you can find details of Lecturers to contact on the 'Courses and IHA Lecturers' page of the IHA website.

Illustrations by Jean-Pierre Maes

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