



# FLOAT, BABY,

**O**n the surface, the technique sounds simple enough: a kid without great swimming skills accidentally falls in the pool and instead of panicking and flapping hysterically, simply begins to swim, then rolls back and floats a bit to catch his breath and rest, flips over and swims some more, rolls back to float-rest, and swims one final time to reach the edge of the pool and pull himself out.

Apply the same story to the beach – the current carries away a kid playing on the shore – or the boat – a kid falls off the side – and any number of life-threatening water situations, and the result is an awful lot of lives saved.

How many? Consider this little known fact: drowning is the #1 cause of death among infants under one year old – the leading cause! – and the second cause of death among children under ten (behind car accidents), according to numerous studies.

And for every child who drowns, six receive emergency treatment for near-drowning or submersion injuries and traumas, according to the U.S. Center for Disease Control and Prevention.

That makes drowning prevention a cause of the utmost worth, as the parent of any victim would no doubt attest, including three highly reported cases in



Mariana Martínó (left) and Wanda Blanco teach students a self-rescue technique during a recent class.

# FLOAT

Have a pool at home, and children?  
Go out on the boat, with children?  
Have a bathtub, with infant children?  
Here are 10 minutes that can save  
their lives, and give you priceless  
peace of mind.

Puerto Rico this summer alone.

Wanda Blanco and Mariana Martínó certainly agree. Close friends since high school, both had developed highly promising careers (the first in marketing, the second in architecture) and formed their respective families, when an email video on the drama of infant drowning changed their lives.

Wanda received it first. She had long dreamed of working with children and had plans to launch a day care business.

"As soon as I received the video, I decided to look into drowning prevention in Puerto Rico," she told C-Level.

But first, she shared it with Mariana, who after working for an architecture firm for awhile, felt the calling to do something more fulfilling.

"I've always been drawn to children," she said. "So when Wanda sent me the video and suggested we do something about it, I was ready."

## Discovering ISR

Their research led quickly to Infant Swimming Resource (ISR), a unique Florida-based company that developed the swim-float-swim method more than 40 years ago to keep infants and children six months to six years old from drowning.

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ISR carries out its drowning prevention mission through a global army of well-trained instructors, including Wanda and Mariana.

"I called and was told that instructors undergo a special training, so I invited Mariana and off we went," recalled Wanda. The training takes place wherever there is a master instructor present. Wanda and Mariana went to Miami.

"We figured we would enjoy the city, go shopping, go to the beach, the whole thing. But the training was so rigorous, we hardly had time for any of that."

In addition to teaching ISR's techniques, the seven-week course drills new instructors on dozens of safety tips families can follow, inclusion of parents in the process, child psychology and physiology, communications skills and much more.

Wanda and Mariana, now 30, returned and launched ISR's Puerto Rico practice 2½ years ago. They have since taught the method to more than 400 infants and children, and at the time of this writing (August) were working with 60 kids.

"It's about saving lives," said Mariana. "That's our motivation. And now that we have small children ourselves, it brings the mission closer to home."

### Buddy system

ISR's focus is self-rescue, allowing an infant or child who accidentally falls in a bathtub, pool or natural body of water to save himself or herself, or at least to remain safely in the water while an adult arrives and pulls him/her out.

All classes are individualized and run five days a week for 6-8 weeks, with each class no longer than 10 minutes and students no older than six.

It's all thought out. "The key is the daily repetition over the seven weeks or so," explained Wanda. "The 10 minute limit allows for optimal learning without fatigue. Remember that these are not swimming lessons, which may require more time. These are self-rescue lessons using



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*Wanda Blanco, ISR Certified Instructor*





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"It's about saving lives. That's our motivation."

*Mariana Martínó*  
ISR Certified Instructor

a particular method. What we want is for the child to feel supremely confident that he'll be OK when falling in the pool or finding himself in the deep part of the beach by accident, and that he'll know exactly what to do."

And that is, essentially, to swim a bit, roll back to float (which allows for rest and calm breathing), flip over to swim a bit more, roll back to float and rest again, and so on until reaching an edge he or she can grab or until someone reaches him/her.

While the method is the same for all, the teaching is personalized according to the age, physique and health of each child. Infants, for example, tend to cry at first more than toddlers, until they grow confident with each class.

For some kids, special health conditions must be taken into account. And for all of them, pre-class bowel movements (B), urine patterns (U), diet (D) and sleep hours (S) are tracked carefully by parents using ISR's BUDS system.

"That not only tells us whether the kid is ready for class, but it also involves the parent in the process, which is one of the objectives of the course," said Wanda.

In addition to BUDS, parents are guided through a manual that includes a myriad safety tips recommended for the home, including bathtubs, swimming pools and toilets.

"You'd be surprised how many infants drown in bathtubs and toilets," said Mariana. In fact, an estimated 60% of all under-one infants who drown do so in bathtubs at home. "All it takes is a couple of inches of water."

So, as the ISR website says, give your child the competence, confidence and skills he or she needs to minimize the risk of drowning, and give yourself the peace of mind that comes with knowing that, while always vigilant, you can at least turn your head for a couple of minutes and feel confident that your child will know what to do.

And probably even enjoy it.

You may contact Wanda and Mariana at [infantswim.com](http://infantswim.com), where you'll learn more about the program, about infant/child drowning prevention, get dozens of safety tips and watch the video that changed their lives.

Who knows. It may even change yours. ▲