



*Stronger. Better. Faster.*



# How to Swim Stronger, Better, & Fearless

Wisdom, Practical Advice, & Inspiration  
From 7 of the World's  
Best Coaches & Athletes

# Content

Why.....	Page 3
How.....	Page 3
Who .....	Page 4
What .....	Page 5
Lifestyle .....	Page 5
Technical .....	Page 7
Physical.....	Page 10
Race Day Preparation.....	Page 12
Mental/Emotional .....	Page 14

*“Always bear in mind that your own resolution  
to succeed is more important than any one thing.”  
–Abraham Lincoln*

# WHY

*“Everything we want in life is on the other side of fear.”  
–Jack Canfield*

Swimming in open water swim can be daunting, especially for the inexperienced, and even for seasoned athletes when the race is overcrowded. While an exciting prospect, it can also fill people with fear. Racing takes it up a notch, and swimming in churning water, getting bumped, kicked, elbowed and pushed down truly adds to the challenges of doing a triathlon or open water swimming race. Striving to relax & breathe, sighting to stay on course, remaining strong, and confident all add to the challenge. This is not an endeavor to take lightly.

At Vasa, we believe you are more powerful than you know. We believe if you face your fears, follow a sensible swim training plan and prepare well in consideration with your life circumstances, then you will break through your fears and access the real power that resides within.

We are privileged to work with many highly qualified and successful coaches, trainers, sports medicine professionals, and athletes worldwide, all of whom use Vasa products to assist athletes in being stronger, better & faster. For this project, we asked seven of these great people to answer key questions as succinctly and “fearlessly” as possible. Their eloquent answers have exceeded our high expectations.

We hope their wisdom will resonate in your head and your heart. While it informs you to be better, we hope it also inspires you to face your fears and move through them so you can access your real power.

To achieve our goals in sport — and in our lives — the power of our dreams must be stronger than our fear. One of our primary missions at Vasa is to support you in becoming stronger, better, & fearless... in training, racing, in life. There is no time like the present, so let's get to it!

# HOW

This guide is a potent distillation of wisdom, experience and insights from these great coaches and athletes. We asked them some relevant, important questions and requested they reply succinctly and as “fearlessly” as possible. Their eloquent answers have exceeded our high expectations.

Their expert guidance will resonate in your heart and mind. While the information will inform you how to be better, we believe it will inspire you to face your fears and move through them to access your real power. Best to prepare well. Best to feel the fear...and do it anyways.

# WHO



**Eric Neilsen** is an exceptional multisport coach who works with athletes of all abilities. Eric holds an ASCA Level 4 swim coaching certification. At [coachericneilsen.com](http://coachericneilsen.com) Eric provides coaching that empowers his clients to achieve their full athletic & personal potential. Read more: <http://vasatrainer.com/blog/be-the-best-version-of-yourself/>



**Lesley Paterson** is a little Scottish lassie who packs a mean punch! As a three-time World Champion in XTERRA off-road Triathlon and as a coach, Lesley understands how to use physical training to make emotional breakthroughs. <http://www.braveheartcoach.com>  
Read more: <http://vasatrainer.com/blog/vasa-sponsors-lesley-paterson/>



**Tim Crowley** is Head Strength & Conditioning Coach at Montverde Academy, a talented Triathlon coach (<http://www.timcrowley.biz/>) and accomplished athlete. He has an irrepressible positive attitude with a knack for simplifying complex tasks that get results for the athletes he coaches. Read more: <http://vasatrainer.com/blog/dry-land-swim-circuit-by-tim-crowley/>



**Joe Beer** is a British sports scientist and coach who has been guiding athletes to success for three decades. He is highly skilled at combining training, performance nutrition and the smartest technologies to coach athletes in achieving their personal goals. His latest book, *Time-Crunched Triathlon*, is ideal for all levels of ability. Read more: [www.JBST.com](http://www.JBST.com)



**Lisbeth Kenyon** is a multiple age-group world-champion Ironman triathlete. She also happens to be a wonderful human being, wife & mother of 3, a biomedical engineer, and a business co-owner of [www.ttbikefit.com](http://www.ttbikefit.com). Read more: <http://vasatrainer.com/blog/lisbeth-kenyon/>



**Dan Bullock** is a highly regarded British swimming coach specializing in triathlon & open water. He is also a champion Masters swimmer. He has been coaching since 1990 at Swim For Tri <http://www.swimfortri.co.uk/> Dan is co-author of the book *100 Essential Triathlon Sessions*. Read more: <http://vasatrainer.com/blog/q-a-with-swimming-coach-dan-bullock/>



**Eric Harr** is a former professional triathlete, author of "Triathlon Training in 4 Hours a Week"—and one of the world's most passionate Vasa brand evangelists. As a former fitness expert for CBS News, Eric uses his reporting skills to interview the experts for this document. He's also a successful father of two, an entrepreneur and founder of Stand. Read more: <http://company.stand.tc/>

# WHAT

We distilled the interview conversations with our experts and present their best answers—across five subject areas: Lifestyle, Technical, Physical, Psychological, and Race Day Preparation....as follows. Enjoy!

## Lifestyle

*The idea of “reverse engineering success” is compelling, and not just for swimming—it works for life. What’s your secret?*

It’s all in how you look at things. You have to think outside the box. I used to think I was weird the way I looked at things. I have an art background, and I see the world differently. We often over-complicate things. Keep things simple. Know what you want and work backward. Ask and answer questions, in one sentence each: “What do I want?” “Why do I want it?” and, “How do I get there? It’s really straightforward. The wisdom is in simplifying everything. –Tim Crowley

*“Simplicity is the ultimate sophistication”  
–Leonardo da Vinci*

*What is the secret to achieving balance in work, family & sport?*

It’s not about being superhuman. It’s not about squeezing every second out of every day. It’s about being realistic and honest with yourself. I mean really, deeply honest. When I had my kids, it was a 7-year-period that I actually stepped back from the sport. I couldn’t do it all very well. You have to ask yourself: “What takes precedence in my life?” Achieving balance means having the courage to say “no” to things, not thinking you can “do it all.” If you want to achieve balance and excel, you must give up something. When you do that, it works out.

When I became a new mom, I just maintained my fitness. When the time was right, I came back to competitive racing. Also, a note on efficiency, because this relates: most people train waaay too much. Stop that. Get a good coach, who can minimize those sessions that don’t optimize you. Nail the stuff that matters. Don’t waste time. And integrate! For example, if you have 20 minutes of down time, hop on your Vasa Swim Erg. Find the pauses in life and make the most of them. –Lisbeth Kenyon

*How do you get more out of your day?*

I will defer to one of the greatest thinkers of all time, Aristotle, who said: “It is well to be up before daybreak, for such habits contribute to health, wealth and wisdom.” –Eric Harr

*Time is our most precious, non-renewable resource. What do you tell people who have minimal time for the pool?*

Mix things up with intervals. Most people hop in and swim one speed for most of their workouts. Just as in life, variety is the spice! –Lisbeth Kenyon

### *What is your one best travel tip?*

Start packing early. This falls under the category of “extreme preparation” for me. This one tip had the most positive impact on my travel experiences, not just to events, but generally. It’s simple: a week before you leave, allocate a corner of your bedroom to your “packing pile.” Go through your event / race checklist and start adding to your suitcase. Then, a couple of days before you leave, remove anything that’s non-essential. (Come on, do you really need four mini-bottles of anti-fog?) By doing this, you’ll invariably pack better because you won’t forget anything—and you don’t over-pack. –Eric Harr

Get in the next time zone as early as possible. It may sound small, but it’s not. Mentally prepare for that time zone. This applies to workouts and life as much as travel: Tricking your brain is really powerful.

–Lisbeth Kenyon

### *I don’t like chlorine pools. What should I do?*

Most people have a “vague idea” of what they don’t like about something. So start with looking at this issue squarely. What exactly bothers you about chlorine pools? The smell? The dry skin? The brittle hair? Once you know what that is, work up a solution. I mean, really go after it. Focus and find a solution. Give yourself 30 days to see if you can learn to work through it. If you simply can’t, if you simply despise chlorine pools, if that is stronger than your desire to swim/get in shape/excel, then honestly, seek alternatives. Unless you make a living from the sport, don’t torture yourself in the pool. Either find open water (it’s worth the extra driving time) or use your Vasa Swim Erg. You have one life to live. Don’t needlessly suffer through things you don’t enjoy. Bottom line: Identify the issue. Aggressively seek solutions. If you can’t find one, seek alternatives.

–Eric Harr

### *You have a day to live. What one thing would you tell people?*

Success is about passion and perseverance. You can’t have one without the other. Tap into what you love and give it all you’ve got. –Lesley Paterson

Live a life that inspires people to respect what you’ve done. That deep sense of humility can lead to results. It’s not about the trophies. It’s about the process. Focus on improving every day, as a swimmer, an athlete, a parent, a businessperson. Always ask yourself: “How can I do this better and more efficiently?” –Tim Crowley

I would go right at the barrier and the belief systems. Look: If I can do it, anybody can. Just believe in yourself and go do the thing you want. It really is that simple. –Lisbeth Kenyon

### *What one piece of advice would you give someone? What’s your “one thing” in life?*

This applies as much to swimming as it does to life. Be a good listener. Sometimes doing nothing is doing everything. Take the time to listen to someone; take the time to recognize when someone needs to be heard. Everyone is busy talking. It’s hard to keep quiet and let someone talk. We all think about the future, we’re not focused on how and what we’re doing now. When you listen, that’s when the magic happens. –Eric Neilsen

# Technical

*What is the most important aspect of good freestyle technique? One thing.*

Streamline. I would say especially for long distance Freestyle (front crawl) stroke, which is what I teach primarily. Regardless of how strong or fit you are, you cannot beat your way through the water with power and fitness alone. Basic elements of propulsion are needed of course, but even limited propulsive moments will yield more reward when coupled with better streamline. –Dan Bullock

*What are the best “I-have-time-for-2” swimming drills?*

1. **Out of water:** Train on the Vasa Swim Erg. Find your optimal stroke rate to create your desired speed & power. If you have more strength, you may not need to take as many strokes. With the Swim Erg, I consider the distance I want to go and ask ‘what is my optimal combination of stroke rate?’ Find your sweet-spot, your specific stroke rate. That’s going to be different for everyone.

2. **In the water** – Head up swimming. Why? Because it’s a multifaceted drill:

- (a) you can look at the spacing of your hands out front (they can’t cross over if you’re doing the drill right).
- (b) It ensures that you’re digging with an early catch.
- (c) It ensures proper turnover. If you have too slow a turnover, you cannot keep your head up.
- (d) You have to accelerate through the stroke.
- (e) You must get your hands out front to keep your head up.
- (f) It also works on your kick.

Head-up swimming is really a “big-bang drill” because you can break down the various parts of your stroke and get so much benefit in so little time. –Eric Neilsen

This video will provide more of Eric’s excellent coaching on proper form: [WATCH VIDEO NOW](#)

*What is the most efficient and powerful way to integrate the Vasa Swim Erg with in-water training?*

If you have a Vasa Swim Erg on the pool deck, that’s the best-case scenario. It provides profound tactile feedback that can be immediately translated to the pool. The Erg really helps the breathing or stroke-rate challenged, because you can breathe and keep your body in a straight line. Breathing inherently creates imbalance. Swimming on the Vasa Swim Erg is like being in the pool with a front-mount snorkel. It helps you isolate and engage your bigger muscles. You can re-create the clean line on the Erg into the water. –Eric Neilsen

This video has more ideas for integrating drills on land with swimming in the water: [WATCH VIDEO NOW](#)

When we had an endless pool, the combination of technique work on dryland with the Vasa Trainer, followed by work in the water, was amazing. Since then, we mostly use the Swim Erg at weekend workshops where we are pretty quick at getting into and out of the water. As mentioned, complex movements become easier once performed firstly on dryland without the issues of breathing and timing.  
–Dan Bullock

This video explains how to improve the “high elbow catch” in Freestyle swimming: [WATCH VIDEO NOW](#)

*Thoreau wrote, “know thyself.” How can people assess their strengths and weaknesses in the water?*

Here it is. Ready? Numbers don't lie. You can measure your sustainable power on the Vasa Swim Erg, which is a huge help. The power meter will tell you so much (and the ANT+ power meter allows you to record & analyze the data). You've got to focus on data where possible when assessing your strengths and weaknesses. –Eric Neilsen

*How do you best develop open water swimming skills for:*

- **Breathing.** Focus on breathing out, your body will fill your lungs back up again naturally.
- **Positioning.** Every race is different; however you can draft so use people's feet to save energy.
- **Dealing with unwanted contact.** Relax. Most people are in the same boat. Don't be aggressive back, try to find clear water.
- **Sighting.** In swimming pool sessions, site objects ahead and to the side whilst still trying to breathe efficiently.
- **Drafting.** Buddy up and get used to swimming just to the side of other people's feet, so you can maintain your preferred side for breathing. –Joe Beer

*Do you get more from playing to your strengths or working on your weaknesses?*

The beginner stands to benefit from shoring up their weaknesses because that can have a much bigger impact on overall performance. The more advanced you are, the more you can start to play to your strengths. Once you get to a certain level of proficiency, then conditioning nets more results. Start with developing great technique with drills or on a Vasa Swim Erg, and, then grow your beautiful engine!  
–Eric Neilsen

*Triathlon open water swims can be daunting. How does consistent training with the Vasa Swim Erg increase confidence in the athletes you coach?*

If your technique is good and not something you need to think about with every stroke, then you now free up 'bandwidth' to focus on things like navigation, race tactics, determining if a draft off someone is of use or hindering me? Asking if I am on the best line or what is my rate of effort? Do I want to speed up or slow down? If you can absorb the race and be in it rather than stitching together swim movements to create Freestyle every stroke, then confidence builds. It is like driving a car. Early on, you are nervous,

as you are absorbed in the controls rather than focusing on road conditions. Once familiar with the controls and locations, driving safely becomes easier. The Swim Erg allows for more repeated accurate movements to put the technique into the subconscious sooner, allowing you to race rather than struggle.

The beauty of the Vasa Swim Erg is its simplicity and adjustability. I am no expert, but we have crafted Swim Erg workouts and routines for all abilities. Experiment and stay safe. Honestly, it is almost impossible to get it wrong. Pull in the wrong direction with the wrong musculature and the bench barely slides or the movement just feels wrong. Wrong pull on the Swim Erg and power (watts) will be low. Feedback that would not be felt in the water is immediate and changes to technique come so much easier. –Dan Bullock

### *What are people afraid of in the water?*

I've found people are worried about breathing. And if that's true, then they can't work on the rest of their stroke, because they're worried about air! So, spend all the time you need learning to breathe. Once you master that, the rest will flow from there. Also, a lot of people are fearful of what they look like at the pool, so they cannot focus. They think: "I'm not good enough for this Masters Group. I don't fit in here." I am here to tell you: you're good enough. People are very accommodating and forgiving and inclusive. –Eric Neilsen

### *How can people overcome their fear and swim with more confidence?*

Swimming with confidence is about breathing, relaxing, breathing, relaxing. Time and time again. It is not a natural process to have one's face immersed in water. Just have the mental bandwidth to be technically efficient whilst enjoying the process. That is not an easy combination to achieve. But, it is possible. –Joe Beer

## Physical

*I have 20 minutes in the water. What should I do to maximize my time?*

Never try to cram a quart into a pint pot. Always use the early moments of any exercise session to take your body into relaxed movements.

Breaking the swim into shorter 1-2-3 or four-length intervals allows you to have good composure, good technique and also to allow the upper body to gradually get used to swimming for longer distances.

-Joe Beer

*How do you develop core control, stability, & strength?*

To excel in swimming, you need what I call “three-dimensional control in the water in all planes.” TRX training is amazing. Do that twice a week.

There is a myth that the inability to “rotate” on the Vasa Swim Erg makes it less effective for developing total body swim strength. That mythical thinking totally misses the point. Everyone agrees that indoor trainers work for cycling, but you’re not braking or cornering or maneuvering. Same with the Erg. It’s not designed to do everything. It does most things well. And it does something exceptionally well, instant feedback on stroke rate and power. If you want to be the best you can be, use TRX to develop that three-dimensional control,” and complement that with the Vasa Swim Erg for the rest! -Tim Crowley

Integrate these core strengthening & stabilizer exercises into your swimming routine: [VIEW EXERCISES](#)

*Sustained power. We all want it. How do we get it?*

Having the ANT+ power meter. The ability to get data from the Erg into a platform was a major breakthrough. That happened with power meters for other sports, but before the Vasa Swim Erg, never in swimming. Open sourcing it changed the game. It’s where things are headed. Period. The VASA has so much application for open water swimmers. I can get them to do 10-15 minutes on the Erg and derive a lot of value from that. Most swimmers don’t lack aerobic power, they lack muscle endurance. And the Vasa Swim Erg is hands-down the best way to do that. -Tim Crowley

*Time is our most precious, non-renewable resource. What do you tell people who have minimal time for the pool?*

Mix things up with intervals. Most people hop in and swim one speed for most of their workouts. Just as in life, variety is the spice! -Lisbeth Kenyon

These videos will give you ideas on time-efficient workouts: [WATCH SWIM-BIKE “BRICK” WORKOUT](#)

### *I've got limited pool time. What's best to do?*

Get a Vasa Swim Erg. Period. It will give you the most bang for your buck. If you don't have a Swim Erg, then you need do drills within swims. I call it a "systems check." Do a 500 swim and within each 100, pick a focus point: your first 100, focus on the catch. The next 100, on accelerating your stroke. The next 100, on breathing. The fourth 100, relaxed recovery. Then put it all together in the last 100. When you focus on drills within a continuous swim, you're "solving two problems with one answer" (fitness and technique).  
-Eric Neilsen

### *Injuries are no fun. How do we prevent them?*

Everything I do revolves around injury prevention. Strength and conditioning are the way to prevent injury. Overuse injuries are preventable. You need to learn about HRV, also known as Heart Rate Variability. It is only starting to get attention, but it's integral to avoiding injuries. With HRV, you can measure workload and stress-load of the workouts themselves. Because you can't measure the stress of everything else in your life, this tool helps you be proactive rather than reactive. -Tim Crowley

Prevent Swimmer's shoulder with these exercises: [VIEW EXERCISES](#)

# Race Day Preparation

*What 10 things should I do to prepare myself for my best performance on race day?*

1. Do the training in the first place.
2. Know the details of the race.
3. Taper your training with five days to go so you are fresh.
4. Do workouts that go double or triple the race distance.
5. Keep your equipment well maintained and up-to-date.
6. Believe in yourself. You are at the helm.
7. Don't go off to hard.
8. Look back at previous races, what's your weak spot or worst habit?
9. Remember it is not life or death. It's playtime.
10. Eat well the day before and don't worry if you sleep lightly. -Joe Beer

*It's race day, time to see what I'm made of. What is the best way to warm-up, mentally, physically and spiritually?*

You've got to stay within yourself the first 5-7 minutes of a race (unless it's a sprint). When you get to the start line of an event, you're so pumped up, with adrenalin coursing through your body. You feel great, and when the gun goes off, most people go out way too fast—and then reality sets ("Ooh, boy. That wasn't a good idea!") Then, your technique will suffer badly. For beginners here is a simple thing you can do to start your day off with a much lower stress level. After the gun goes off, stay still, count to 10, and then start. The amount of stress you alleviate is amazing. When you ease into your race, your technique will hold up much better. -Eric Neilsen

To warm up you need at least 10 to 15 minutes. If you have to put a wetsuit on also add that time before you start your warm up. Running is not a good idea that's more lower body-it would be better to use pull cords, typical swim upper-body mobility exercises and to get into the water before your actual start time. Immerse your face into the water as you will have a big breathing reactionary response - is that the way before you need to start swimming fast with other people around you. Every time you do a mass swim start it gets a bit easier. -Joe Beer

There is nothing more fearful for a novice than approaching Open Water for the first time in the crowded frantic environment of a triathlon or OW race, especially if it is a deep water start with athletes packed in tightly. I have seen strong swimmers panic and not enjoy OW at their first attempt. To me, being successful at OW swimming is about controlling, and being in control of, as many aspects as possible. Then, when some 'issues' crop up that are out of your control, they do not phase you. Goggles should have been investigated through the year and not still be an experiment, hoping they do not leak on race day. Confidence you can race the distance without stopping, without touching a wall or spending extra time & energy... are all possible from consistent practice & training in the water and on the Vasa Swim Erg, and all the while good technique must be used and reinforced. -Dan Bullock

## *What tools can help a proper physical race-day warm-up?*

Some simple rubber tubing or swing ropes. Tie them around a tree or solid object and just do light pulling bent moderately at the waist. The rest of your warm-up can be done in the water as you would with any swimming session that includes high-intensity effort. -Joe Beer

## Mental/Emotional

### *How can physical training help power emotional breakthroughs?*

Effort and Attitude are the only elements I can control in EVERY situation. I make a decision to control my attitude about every situation I'm in. I just live there. With effort and attitude as performance benchmarks, I am always in control of the outcome. I can, therefore, decide not to fail. I went through everything as a youngster. I was in Scotland and played rugby. There were 250 boys—and me. I was the only girl rugby player in the whole of Scotland. They would laugh at me. It was hard to deal with. I find the magic in being out of my comfort zone. This is where we develop and harden the competitive spirit. For me, the swim was where I needed the biggest breakthrough. –Lesley Paterson

### *Everything we've ever wanted is on the other side of fear. How do people deal with that fear and transform it into action?*

We all have fear. The way to deal with fear is to focus on the process. I have this conversation with my athletes, and my son, a lot. The most successful people are also big failures. People are afraid of what others will think. We think that life will come to a halt when we're not successful. When Jarrod (Shoemaker) didn't qualify for the Olympics, I thought my career was over. But, looking back on that difficult experience, I realized I wouldn't be seeing the success now if I didn't go through that. The seven national championship teams I have been a part of (at Montverde Academy, Florida) we achieved would not have happened. Let go of the fear of failure, because when one door shuts, just find another one and kick it in. –Tim Crowley

### *What is the essence of overcoming one's fear of the water?*

When I was a little one, my dad threw me into the water—and that's how he helped me overcome my fear! When the conditions are tough, I actually love it. So, first of all, just know that you're not going to drown. What's the worst that can happen? Drown. And you won't. Don't think worst-case scenario. Because, if you think about it: worst-case scenario never happens. –Lisbeth Kenyon

### *How can people overcome a hardship in life—and how can you apply that to the swim?*

It's tough, but you have to do it. Here it is: focus on the bright spots, on the positive things in life. Bring the good things forward. It's that simple. Learn from things that weren't as pleasant at the time, so you don't repeat them. Everything you've done shapes who you are. So, take a look at what worked before, and bring that forward. Have a consistent can-do attitude by always staying mindful and considering all possibilities." –Eric Neilsen

### *How do you turn your dreams into reality?*

It has to start with a deep belief in yourself. You cannot wait for others to give you the confidence. I grew up as a middle child. I was always good and never the best. That is what drives me. More people will push you down than will bring you up. Focus on the process. Do the right things every day. Treat people correctly. Work as hard as you can and go to bed knowing that you wouldn't have changed a thing. It's the little things that count. Do them enough, day in and day out, and your dreams will become reality. –Tim Crowley

## *What are people afraid of and what can we do to break through to the other side of fear and access the real power?*

Fear of failure is what stops most people from trying new things. And fear is self-made, which means it's not really there. It's just our prediction of the future—and we aren't so great at predicting the future. If fear is self-made, then it can be beat!

Ask yourself one simple question: "What am I afraid of?" Most of your time should be spent identifying the problem. Then you can chart a path to success. For example, if you are afraid of contact in the swim, get into a pool and swim with people in a lane. Bump into each other up, play with it. Play is a key concept. If you can actually laugh at your fear, it makes it so small. And, it disappears. –Eric Neilsen

People are sometimes afraid of taking on something new. How do people break through fear to where their real power dwells.

I would like to talk specifically to women here. There is so much lack of self-belief out there. We have 100+ people who come through our lab every week. I see women in particular, and they are self-conscious, they don't think they're good. A lot of times they would never consider calling themselves an athlete. I think it all boils down to self-belief. I discovered the power of consistency. When you build your own greatness, brick by brick, over time your fears will give way to power. –Lisbeth Kenyon

## *How do you maintain a consistent "can do" attitude?*

I approach everything as a problem to be solved. That keeps me focused on what can be done, rather than dwelling in what can't be done. It's about a different way of looking at things. You won't always be successful and that's okay. Keep moving forward. Everything is dictated by outcome in sports, but we can control the process. Just always ask yourself: "How can I do this better?" The rest flows from there. –Tim Crowley

## *What are people afraid of? Not just in the water, but in life.*

People are afraid of being judged as not being good enough. This can reveal itself as avoiding challenging situations, of being scared to 'lay it all on the line' or simply not letting others see the 'real' you. Showing a weakness is not a bad thing. It's a unifying thing that binds people's experience and brings them closer together. The best thing we can share with others is empathy. Think of your weaknesses as a gift. Face it, share it with others and they will do the same. Now that takes strength. –Lesley Paterson

## *What are people afraid of? What holds them back from their true greatness?*

You often have to wear strange clothing to work out - you are seen shuffling up the road. All of this makes people uncomfortable so it's hard to move out into a different bracket of people who want to achieve great endurance feats. Perhaps in going to greatness you put yourself open to observation. It's easy to hide in mediocrity. –Joe Beer

## *How do you deal with fear to build “in-your-bones” confidence?*

By first recognizing and acknowledging that my brain is wired to make me scared. Everyone's brain is wired that way. The strategy is to not ignore it, but face it, embrace it, and manage it. Yes, I'm scared. Sure, we're all scared. And that's okay! Know this: Admission takes you one step closer to managing it. What am I scared of? If you know WHY, then you can face it—and overcome it.

Turns out, there many different forms of confidence. I'm married to a sports psychologist, Dr. Simon Marshall, so I had an opportunity to learn this. The confidence to overcome fear in the swim is different than the confidence to be kind to yourself and to embrace weaknesses. The secret sauce to all of these 'confidences' is giving yourself opportunities to feel successful and good about yourself. Change your perspective by how you define success and failure. My mantra is control “Effort” and “Attitude” -- the only two 'pure' forms of self-judgement. To get there, you start by faking it. When I stepped up to the elite level, I didn't feel worthy of calling myself a pro so I forced myself to just pretend I did – it was weird at first but I soon starting believing it. In races, I would give it absolutely everything I had, every time. “Fake it until you make It” works. I'm living proof of that. –Lesley Paterson

## *What one thing do you most believe in? What is the most important advice you'd give someone?*

In the timeless words of Talk, Talk: “Life's what you make it.” So, go make it. –Joe Beer

*“It is not because things are difficult that we do not dare;  
it is because we do not dare that they are difficult.”  
–Seneca*