

## Wellness

### Reader fitness goal Learn how to swim

A Brooklyn mom wanted to make a splash, so we hooked her up with lessons. By **Lisa Freedman**

Dear **TONY**,

My fears: drowning; I almost drowned in the Sunset Park pool during a day camp trip. Posing naked; I have two kids, assorted stretch marks and cellulite. Need I say more?  
 I want to learn how to swim like a fish.  
 And I want to lose my lifetime membership to Lane Bryant!

Thanks for reading!  
 Adele Greene

"I'm not afraid of water," explains our letter writer, Adele Greene of Bedford-Stuyvesant, Brooklyn, "I'm just not very confident in it." The 35-year-old mother of two says she had a near-death experience when she was eight ("I was standing in a pool and slipped, and my head went under!"), which may explain why she never learned to swim. Except for one session two years ago, Greene hasn't logged any water time. That's about to change with a series of swim lessons at the **JCC** in Manhattan (334 Amsterdam Ave at 76th St; 646-505-4444, [jccmanhattan.org](http://jccmanhattan.org)) and the coaching expertise of aquatics program director **Miguel Pagan**, who's rumored to have the ability to turn anyone into a swimmer in five minutes flat. "The first thing we're going to work on is buoyancy," explains Pagan. "Adele needs to learn firsthand that her body can float. Bodies are like boats, and our arms and legs are just the propellers. Once she learns that,



she's halfway there."



**1** As the pair climb into the pool, Greene appears brave, saying, "I can do this." She mirrors Pagan as he bobs up and down "to get accustomed to the water." Then he shows her the proper way to blow bubbles as she submerges her face. (You should start exhaling before your head is underwater.)



**2** Now it's time for the dead man's float, which Greene pulls off while holding onto the ledge of the pool. Pagan drifts a few feet away and tells her to try it again, only this time without holding on. Greene repeats his directions aloud as though trying to convince herself to do it and eventually lets go of the wall and floats. Next, Pagan tells her to assume the same position, only this time with her head above the water and her hands resting on his. He teaches Greene how to kick her legs to support her body and, although her splashes are a little small

for Pagan's liking, she stays afloat.

**3** Time to work just the arms! Pagan instructs Greene to walk down the lane while paddling her way forward. "You've just learned all the pieces you need," he tells her.



Greene takes a few minutes to practice pushing off the wall and kicking and paddling for a few feet at a time.



**4** The 30-minute lesson ends with her floating on her back and kicking up and down the lane. Next week, Pagan says he'll do a quick review, piece everything together and get Greene swimming with full-out strokes. "I swallowed a lot of water, but I accomplished a lot more than I thought I would," Greene says while getting out of the pool. "I just need to relax and believe in myself." With four more lessons to come and a three-month swim pass (thanks, JCC!), this newfound water lover just might grow gills. Or, more accurately, lose some of that mommy weight that she's been dying to shed.



