

English 101 Section 47

9/16/13

A Normal Day

I grabbed my whistle and put on my visor. Lathered up with sunscreen and cold ice in my water bottle, I walked out of the guard room to set out for another day on the job. I rotated my fellow lifeguard and climbed the ladder to get up into the hard white chair. I started scanning the water just like any other day. It's smooth and sparkling surface made me realize how much I miss actually swimming in the water instead of just staring at it. Missing the water and bored out of my mind, it was just another normal day at the pool.

I was rotated again, again, and... again. I finally was rotated to Chair 4 and my heart rate went up. All the guards are a little weary of that chair because that is where most of the saves happen. It looks over the middle of the pool where the zero-depth entry turns into the six-foot water. Little kids don't realize that it gets deeper, and wade a little too far, resulting in a save. But it wasn't a busy day and I wasn't worried. While thinking all these things I noticed what seemed to be a ten-year-old boy making weird jerking movements about halfway under the water. I kept an eye on him and it kept happening for about five more seconds. I stood up. *Is he having a seizure?* Patrons were looking at me as if to say *why aren't you doing anything?* And by the looks they were giving me made me realize, *he was*. Only 7 seconds had passed since I noticed him. I grabbed my whistle and blew the double-long signal in mid-air.

I landed in the water after my compact jump, shoved the guard tube under my arms, and swam faster than I have in any race over to the boy. I did a front drive and my fears were confirmed; he was having a seizure. I laid him on the tube and allowed him to finish seizing, but once he stopped jerking around he did not wake up. I yelled for a backboard and other equipment to extricate him. The break guards showed up on the side of the pool with it, yelling directions to guide me to them. The sight of that and the crash bag (all the equipment used for CPR, rescue breathing, the oxygen tank and masks, and so on) freaked me out a little bit. *Calm down, I thought, this is exactly why we have training sessions every week. You can do this.*

The break guards pulled the boy out of the water on the board.

“He went unconscious after seizing underwater!” I said.

We pulled the board he was laying on six feet away from the water in case we had to activate the AED. Immediately I ran to the head and checked for a pulse. The whole team counted with me as our manager stood over us, already in contact with the paramedics.

“One-one-thousand, two-one-thousand, three-one-thousand, four-” I found it before we got to ten.

“Begin rescue breathing!” Someone next to me said.

I grabbed the BVM and put it over the child’s face. I did a jaw thrust and created a seal with the mask and another guard squeezed the bag to deliver oxygen. The team joined in again.

“Slow-squeeze, one one-thousand, two one-thousand, slow-squeeze, one one-thousand, two one-thousand.” I was losing control of the situation because I was so tired, so drained, and my adrenaline was fading fast. After two minutes of rescue breathing you’re supposed to check for a pulse again, and my energy was spent so another guard took my place. I watched. The boy lost his pulse.

“Beginning CPR!” The team yelled, so I grabbed the AED and started getting it ready. I turned it on and someone dried the boy’s chest. Then I applied the pads and plugged them in to the machine.

“Shock advised. Charging. Stay clear of patient.” was the AED’s response. Everyone backed away except for me; *someone* had to deliver the shock. So I did. And as soon as I did the team returned to CPR. Eventually the paramedics arrived and took over the scene, but that’s beside the point.

The point is that lifeguarding is no joke. Teens apply to be a lifeguard as their first job and think it’s the easiest thing they will do. I mean you just sit in a chair all day and get tan, right? No, *wrong*, lifeguarding is probably the only job out there with multiple and imperative responsibilities. That is why there are so many drownings happening in America, because of untrained lifeguards. Those drownings don’t have to happen, but they do because no one is watching the water. No one is watching because most lifeguards don’t realize what a huge responsibility their job is. We are responsible for the lives of children—that’s how essential we are.

There has never been a drowning at Sholem Aquatic Center, the only pool in Champaign, Illinois (where I work). That statistic is not by chance but because of trained

staff that knows what they are doing. Each guard is required 4 hours of training sessions per month. It is to keep us vigilant so we don't forget what we learned when we were certified at the very beginning of the summer. Some pools don't even require their guards to do this "re-certification" process, or if they do, it's one hour every other month just practicing how to compact jump. Would you feel safe bringing your children to a pool where the people who are supposed to know what they're doing, don't actually know?

Pools should stay prepared because there are MANY people who come to them that don't know how to swim. Even the boy I rescued, who knew how to swim, had a seizure and started to drown. What if someone breaks their leg in the pool and then they can't swim? There are so many things that can lead to a drowning besides not knowing how to swim. These are all normal things that can happen any day. All these things are so *regular*. My story really was just another normal day at the pool. These things can happen anytime, anywhere, and that's why lifeguards always need to be prepared for just another normal day at the pool.