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by Amanda J. Butler



The Wellness Column





If a friend came off their bike,

Would You Know What to Do?

The last time I did any first aid training, I was in the fourth form at boarding school, learning CPR, mouth-to-mouth and how to stay afloat using my pyjamas in the local pool. I'm still waiting for the occasion when that last skill might come in handy - I certainly don't think you can inflate a bikini.

So when I saw **Amanda Hewson Beaver's Wilderness & Survival First Aid course** advertised, I signed up straight away. I spend a fair bit of time on a bike, or hiking out in the mountains in Mallorca. If someone I was riding with came off on a quiet road, or there was an incident on a trail, would I know what to do in those first few minutes? Once I got past 'call for help', my answer was a little hazy.

It doesn't take much to feel remote

The training took place at Lizzie Graham's retreat near Artà, just a few kilometres off the main road. My phone had already lost signal. It felt a little like the outback, although the welcome from Lizzie and her team, complete with a lovely cup of tea before we gathered in the yoga shala, was rather more civilised.

Amanda is a registered nurse, maritime medical educator and professional sailor. Her work has taken her from emergency departments and intensive care to remote-area nursing and medical retrieval, as well as offshore racing and expeditions. She teaches the Ocean Wild course with a question in mind that applies just as readily to a walk in the Tramuntana as it does offshore. What can you do for someone in the time it takes for help to reach you?

Amanda started with how important it is to take a moment to look around. On a cycling route, someone lying in the road might be just beyond a blind bend. At sea, there might be a running engine or a line under tension. Then get help on its way early. It's also important to know the emergency number wherever you are in the World, and before you go adventuring. In Mallorca it's 112, in case you didn't know. If you're with others, one person can call and give your location while another fetches the first aid kit. It made me think about how I'd describe my location on some of the quieter roads I ride.

What comes first?

For a serious injury, Amanda taught us a sequence called **S-MARCH**. The **S is for scene safety**. Then comes **Massive bleeding, Airway, Breathing, Circulation**, and finally **Hypothermia** and head injury. Having an order to fall back on made sense to me. In a stressful moment, it would be easy to give all your attention to the injury that looks most dramatic and miss something more urgent.

We practised applying firm pressure to control bleeding and using a tourniquet for life-threatening bleeding from an arm or leg that direct pressure can't control. We also talked about keeping an injured person warm. Even on a mild Mallorca day, someone lying still on the ground can lose heat. Amanda's 'crash bag' made me rethink what I carry. Gloves, dressings, an emergency blanket (they are very thin shiny material that packs like a disposable rain cover), an EPI pen and a small notebook and pen suddenly seemed well worth the space.

The afternoon took us to the pool for water rescue practice and CPR. A sudden collapse calls for a different response from the trauma sequence we'd been practising. If an adult is unresponsive, call 112. If they aren't breathing normally, start CPR and use an automated external defibrillator (AED) as soon as one is available. The emergency call handler can guide you. We also learned why rescue breaths, where you breathe air into someone's lungs, are especially important after drowning. At the pool, we discussed how to help from the poolside without putting ourselves in danger.







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What to say while you wait

One of the lessons that stayed with me was about talking to the injured person. 'You'll be fine' is probably what I'd have said instinctively. Amanda encouraged us to tell people what we actually know. We can say that this is a difficult situation but we've got some training and have sent for help. Explain what you're doing and keep talking to them. There's something reassuring about being told what's happening when you can't see it for yourself.

There was a delicious lunch, homemade cake later on and a few surprise scenarios designed to catch us off guard. They did. I could follow the order quite happily in the shala, but it felt different when I had to decide what to do without being prompted. It also made me think about how what we were taught at school was so insufficient, and how few of us would be prepared for a serious accident, without some updated training.

I would highly recommend a hands-on first aid update, whether you spend your weekends on the water, on a bike or at home with family. I can also see why Amanda recommends practising to reinforce the training. It certainly added to the training experience in the forest, with such an experienced medical educator d rather find out what I've forgotten in a practice session near Arta, with a cup of tea and a piece of homemade cake waiting afterwards.

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