

Redefine your limits

1. Read the article quickly and answer this question.

Free diving is:

- a. diving with special breathing equipment.
- b. a competition for groups of divers.
- c. diving as deep as you can on just one breath of air.

2. Read the first half of the article again.

- a. What did Tanya Streeter do in July 2003?
- b. Why was it difficult thing to do?

Try holding your breath. How long can you hold it for? 30 seconds? 45? If you can manage a minute, you're doing well. Now consider Tanya Streeter, the free diver. In July 2003 she broke the world record by diving to 121 metres on one breath which lasted her for 3 minutes, 38 seconds! Tanya's motto is 'redefine your limits', and she's certainly an amazing example of what a human being can achieve through courage, determination and intensive training. But I'm not sure I would like to follow her example: during the dive her heart rate slowed down to 15 beats a minute (60 to 100 beats is the normal rate for an adult); her lungs compressed like scrunched up plastic bags, and the blood stopped flowing to her hands and feet.

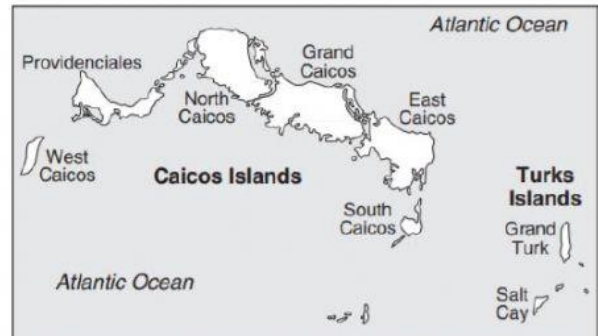


'Coming up by yourself is very difficult because you are not breathing, but your body is using up oxygen,' she says, which all sounds rather uncomfortable to me!

Mind you, Tanya always trains hard before a dive: for three months she builds up her physical fitness with a programme of exercise, which includes weight training – underwater! 'I take the weights down,' she says, 'then hold my breath and do as much as I can. I also swim up and down the pool underwater but without holding anything.'

There are strict safety procedures for every dive. For her record-breaking dive off the Turks and Caicos Islands in 2003, there were 14 other divers providing help and support. Some of them, wearing breathing equipment, took up positions at different depths in the water. During the dive, they banged on pieces of metal to let Tanya know what depth she had reached.

Tanya doesn't believe her achievements are only a matter of physical training: 'Ninety-five per cent of it is about mental strength. I have never let my mind dictate what my body can do.' And for her diving is almost a spiritual experience: 'I have an incredible sense of inner peace throughout a dive. I feel very protected when I'm underwater. I feel as though the sea is on my side and I've always been successful in that environment.'



3. Read the article again and choose the correct answer, A, B, or C.

- 1 Which heading best summarises the article?
 - A The dangers of free diving
 - B Free diving: the power of mind over body
 - C Water sports in the Turks and Caicos Islands
- 2 During Tanya Streeter's record dive, her heart beat
 - A more slowly than usual.
 - B faster than usual.
 - C at the normal rate for an adult.
- 3 What happened to Tanya's lungs?
 - A They were squeezed smaller.
 - B They expanded.
 - C They stopped working.
- 4 While you are holding your breath,
 - A your body doesn't use any oxygen.
 - B your body still uses oxygen.
 - C your body breathes by itself.
- 5 What does the writer feel about Tanya's dive?
 - A She wants to try it herself.
 - B She couldn't try it because she has a normal heart.
 - C She thinks it would be unpleasant.
- 6 How does Tanya train for a dive?
 - A She goes on a diet.
 - B She swims up and down the pool with heavy objects.
 - C She lifts heavy objects underwater.
- 7 During her record dive, what did the other divers do?
 - A They sent signals to her.
 - B They checked her breathing equipment.
 - C They dived with her.
- 8 What does Tanya feel when she dives?
 - A The sea is looking after her.
 - B She has to fight against the sea.
 - C The sea contains spirits.