

## **All I Need to Know about Kayaking I Learned from Momma, Chp 1 – “Sit Up Straight”.**

You have probably seen or heard of the book “All I Really Needed To Know I Learned in Kindergarten”. I don’t know about that, but it occurs to me that one of my mother’s frequently delivered admonitions meant to make me a nice young gentleman (that pretty much failed) may be one of the key things we all need to focus on when in our kayaks. “Sit up straight! Elbows off the table!” Whose mother hasn’t told them that? While our mothers meant it to apply to the dinner table, sitting up straight also applies to our kayaks.

Why focus on sitting up straight? Well for one, we should be striving to generate paddling force by engaging the large muscles of the torso. These torso muscles are the ones that rotate our upper body about the axis of our spine. So like the axle of your car, if our spine is bent, things just don’t rotate very well. Try it. Where ever you are, slouch and try to rotate your upper body. Now lean back and again try to rotate. Next, sit up straight and try it again. Both slouching and leaning back inhibit rotation, while a straight, upright spine facilitates it.

What about those elbows on the table? Well if we keep our elbows low while paddling, it forces us to have a low angle on the paddle shaft. Low angle paddling is less efficient and less dynamic (weaker kinematics). Getting our paddle shaft up to about 60 degrees brings the blade in closer to the boat (more force going forward) and better aligns the shoulder, upper arm, elbow, forearm and wrist of our high hand, allowing generation of a better push.

If you have pretty much had it with all this talk of torso rotation, or if it just doesn’t work for you, don’t give up on it. Instead, each time you go out to paddle, devote a few minutes to trying to engage the torso. Try to sit up straighter, raise the paddle shaft to a 60 degree angle and rotate your torso all the way down to your hips as you paddle. Think of it as a core body exercise and just do it for a few minutes to start. Then, each time you go out, try to do it a bit longer. After a few times out, you might notice a change in the feeling of strength in your back and abs. This is a good thing. Hey, you are getting stronger and having fun. Thanks, Momma.

Stay tuned for more saying from Momma.