

Drawn to Water

Kids with autism drown at a rate 160 times greater than typically developing children, wander from caregivers, are naturally drawn to water, have nearly NO safety awareness and oftentimes don't know how to swim due to lack of access to appropriate swimming lessons.



TIPS FOR DROWNING PREVENTION IN AUTISM

1. DON'T SWEAT THE SMALL STUFF

Relax your standards of required apparel. Bathing caps, goggles and other items may be uncomfortable and even painful for your students with heightened sensitivities. Allow the use of preferred gear.

2. SETTING THE STAGE

Prepare your students for the loud sound of whistles. Demonstrate them and briefly explain why they are used, allow students to touch and blow the whistle to decrease anxiety.

3. POOL DAY INTRODUCTION

Begin with the child outside of the water, on the pool deck, to show spacial relation of their bodies to the water before actually entering the pool. This allows them the opportunity to see what the expected movements will be and gives them a chance to acclimate.

4. FAMILIARIZATION IS KEY

Allow the student some time to familiarize themselves with the pool, the instructor, and the objects they'll be using, like the kickboard, goggles and fins. Familiarization helps to minimize difficulties they may have with the new experience.

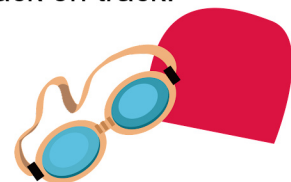


5. DISCOVER WHAT THEY LOVE

During the first lesson pay special attention to what the child loves most in the pool (e.g., splashing, jumping). When they do what's asked, give them reinforcement, like verbal praise or high-fives. Some kids need tangible rewards such as rockets, rings, or fins.

6. QUIET SPACES ARE GOLDEN

Offer a quiet room or an area away from the noise and activity of a busy pool where the student can go if they need a sensory break to regroup and get back on track.



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