



Why do kids cry at swimming lessons?

- A fear of water (this is less common; is caused by traumatic experience)
- A new environment
- Seeking attention from parent/ separation anxiety
- Stranger danger
- Sensory overload
- Water harnesses an emotional response
- Infants cry to communicate

How to help?

- Let the child watch the other lesson while parent and instructor engage in conversation. This will help bridge trust when the child sees the parent enjoy the instructor.
- Have parent sit on the side of the pool/stairs to help aid with separation anxiety.
- Instructor and parent need to identify why the child is crying. Is it fear? Is it reluctance? Is it overload?
- Give the swimmer small tasks. Make benchmark hurdles, start small, it might look like the child getting in the water to have a conversation on the stairs; it could be getting in the water and walking through the pool with the instructor holding the child; have the child dip one ear at a time in the water and shake it out; it might be getting one toy at a time and walking it to the parent; it can be taking that toy and kicking to the parent. It can look like many little things. Identify the goal- cheer for the goal and reward with praise.
- Be positive, even when it is difficult to do so.
- Parents practice at home. Start with the bathtub- pour water over their head, have them dip their ears in the water, have them practice laying on their back. Make water fun at home.
- Instructor can talk things through with the swimmer. Explain why we do things; explain to parent as they do floats
- Have calming strategies- parent and instructor communicate to determine what they are.
- Figuring out how to help your child works different for every family.
 - While in sight: clap, thumbs up, parent be calm and reassuring
 - Out of sight: for some children, it is best that the parent be out of sight (if this is the case, the parent must let the child know they will return, must reassure that they are safe with their instructor).
- Parent must create motivation. We expect children to cry. We try to lessen the tears over time but for some children, crying occurs longer than what the parent would like.
- Some things to be aware of:
 - Crying is normal. Water brings out emotion- some kids get in the water excited and splashing, some children do not even want to get in the water
 - No one enjoys hearing their child cry, your instructor will do everything they can to help your child enjoy swimming lessons. We can sometimes overcome the tears quickly and other times, we may not. The bottomline is your child needs to learn how to swim and save themselves in the water.
 - One truth remains the same- regardless of your child's enjoyment- water is a danger that does not discriminate or care how the child feels about swimming lessons.
 - If your child dislikes swimming- do not define the experience as a 'bad experience.' It is not necessarily the case of a bad experience when a child cries. Children cry when they are against difficulty. Our goal is to teach your child how to live in the event they fall in the water.