

What to Expect During the Initial Stages of Learning

The first few days of lessons are an adjustment period for new students. Physically they are working their entire body in a new way. They may need more sleep until their body tones up and they get in better condition overall. If they wake up during the night in the initial stages of lessons it may be due to fatigued muscles twitching. If they have this problem you may need to analyze their diet to see if they are lacking in vitamin B or iron.

Emotionally we have found that the concern about coming to lesson peaks somewhere between the 3rd and 6th lesson. This means that the concern seems to increase for a few days and then after the peak day the complaining goes down. They begin to trust the teacher and they realize that the lessons are not very long. They learn the sequence of the lesson and they realize that they can actually do things that they thought were too hard.

Children who are 2 years and younger may take longer to adjust to the new environment. Their verbal skills are more limited, therefore they are much more likely to express their feeling through crying throughout the course of the training. Please remember that not every cry means "I'm afraid". A child may cry because they want candy for dinner, or they don't want to go to bed etc., etc. If your child is one who continues to cry BEYOND THE 6TH LESSON please watch for the type of cry or complaint and try to see what they are trying to COMMUNICATE.

CRYING AT THE POOL BEFORE THE LESSON BEGINS-The child wants to maintain contact with the parent and/or has associated the instructor with **HARD WORK**. To achieve success in a new skill there will be days when you need to work even when you would rather sit on the sideline and watch instead. A contact cry of this type will usually drop in intensity as soon as the child is actually in the water and the work has begun.

THE CRYING BEGINS DURING THE LESSON-The child has learned the sequence of the lesson. When we get to the skills that have not been mastered they may cry about having to work on things that they are not comfortable doing. Even as adults we tend to avoid what we aren't good at yet. Once the skill has been mastered the crying will stop.

GUIDELINES TO FOLLOW TO HELP YOUR CHILD EXPERIENCE SUCCESS:

1. Within the area of crying and fear, probably the most important factor is how you, the parent, react. If you reinforce crying by paying more attention to your child when they are crying you will get more crying.

What your child really needs is for you to support his efforts by reinforcing the positive things he is doing. This can be done by clapping and giving verbal praise during and after the lesson. Make your comments as specific as possible i.e. “nice laying quietly on your back”, “I saw you put your chin on your speed button”.

2. Communicate your child’s feelings to the instructor as specifically as possible. This way we can help the child deal with their concern. (ie: He says he hears his head filling up with water when he is lying on his back.)
3. Talk to your child about their lessons -- what was easy today in lessons what was hard? Remind them as they move hard things to the “easy” category that they have mastered a skill.
4. Let them watch some other lessons. Point out to them that it seemed easier for the child when he listened and did it the way the teacher suggested.
5. When you see another swimmer doing something your child can do say, “You can do that too!” If you see another swimmer doing something they are struggling with remind them that if they keep working on the skill it will become easy for them too. If you see a swimmer doing something your child has never done say, “You will work on that skill some day when you are ready and it will become easy too.” Examples of these skills would be: diving down in the water to pick up rings, floating without help, rolling back to breathe.
6. Talk with them about other successes they have had and how they had to work to develop the skill. Maybe even show them movies of them learning to stand, walk, use a fork, and other things that are easy for them now.
7. Let them show off their sticker (make sure to give your child his sticker on Thursdays) to parents, siblings, and neighbors. Tell the person “Jake got his sticker for being a hard worker in swimming today. He especially did ___ well (Catching the wall, floating, kicking or finding the rings.)

8. Make up songs to sing together on the way to and from swimming. “This is the way we kick our feet in the swimming pool”. Change the song to fit the situation.
9. Let your child pretend to be the swimming teacher with toy people in the tub or with stuffed animals on the couch. This lets them feel in control and you may learn by listening where their biggest concern lies.
10. ALL fears are learned, and the only way to overcome a fear is to confront it and conquer it. If you are afraid and your child sees that fear it will be harder for them to ever feel comfortable in the water.
11. Once your child has learned to swim, please continue to reinforce positive swimming behaviors. Avoid allowing them to swim in a floatation device. It causes poor head orientation and teaches them to bicycle kick.
12. You play a big part in making this a positive experience. Remember, even if your child is not yet verbal he/she understands a lot of what you say and also HOW you say it. These lessons are individualized to meet the needs of each student, so please communicate any concerns you may have and let’s work together to help your child experience success!

*** GIVE YOUR CHILD CONFIDENCE THROUGH COMPETENCE.**

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