

## Crying During Lessons - Helpful Tips for Parents

# HELP

### What Do I Do If My Child Cries When I Bring Them To Lessons?

It is hard as a parent to watch your child cry during a lesson. A part of you wants to go rescue your child while another part of you wants your child to "tough it out" and gain victory over this fear/discomfort. Crying is not uncommon and is a natural expression of your child's emotional discomfort due to immersion in the water or separation from you. We will actively combat your child's discomfort because their emotional comfort will greatly affect the acquisition of new swimming skills. Our instructors are trained to understand the nature of a child's fear. They will work to gain the their trust, in part by acknowledging their fear, and then help them to conquer that fear. Often, a simple reassurance makes all the difference.

*Here are some tips for you....*

#### Hand Your Child to the Teacher

If your child is fussing prior to swim lessons, walk your child out on deck and hand him/her over to their Instructor. Give your child a kiss, a reassuring smile and tell them to have a good time. Then calmly walk back to the viewing room with a pleasant expression on your face. Never make the Instructor, Deck Supervisor or Lifeguard chase your child or tear your child off your leg, this will only make your child fight to protect himself/herself. By handing your child over to the Instructor, you are telling your child that you trust the Instructor. That vote of confidence will help the Instructor to more quickly win your child over.

#### Break Eye Contact with Your Child

If your crying child is continually looking at you and continually calling for you – break eye contact. This can easily be done by looking at a magazine, book or your phone every time your child looks at you. Keep a pleasant expression on your face. We prefer that you not hide from your child or disappear from the viewing room – we don't want your child to feel like you are leaving them.



#### Play with your child in the water

Come for a family swim and play with them in the water to speed the adjustment period. Don't make this a mini lesson, just have fun and enjoy the water together. If you can't make it to a family swim, simply playing games in the bathtub will encourage enjoyment of the water.

#### How Long is Too Long?

How long is too long for your child to cry in swim lessons? On average, most crying swim students have stopped after the third lesson. At the very least you should notice that the crying is diminishing. If not, it is possible that your child may need to try a different Instructor. Sometimes a private lesson or two will help too. Some children are much more comfortable with the undivided attention of a caring teacher to begin to build trust in their

teacher. Remember, the pool is a new surrounding, the teacher is a new person and you are not right there - it will take some children more time than others to adjust to and eventually enjoy swimming lessons.

#### Consistency and Praise

As a parent, the best thing you can do for your child is to keep bringing them to swim class. Continuing to do so sends the message to your child that you, as the child's primary caregiver, approve and trust in this new activity, which in turn, helps your child to better adjust and overcome their fear. Please consider that delaying or avoiding swim lessons may serve to reinforce your child's fear, and create a situation that is more difficult to overcome. The next best thing is to praise them for their participation in class. We are going to tell them how brave and what a big boy or girl they are, but we are certain that these compliments will have a greater impact coming from you. Don't forget children are actually learning even if they are crying. Muscles are being built, coordination is increased, correct patterns are developing in the brain, and breathing control is increased. Even if they cried the entire lesson, "What a good job", "I saw how well you did" and other comments that praise your child will help your child become comfortable with lessons.

#### Follow These Suggestions and Don't Stress

Don't stress - this is harder on you than your child. Follow these suggestions and give it time. If you keep at it, we will turn those tears to cheers and they will soon be begging you to come more frequently.



#### Crying in Our Tadpoles Levels

There are many reasons why a child may cry during swim lessons. Most children do not cry out of fear of the water. More common factors that may cause your child to cry include being cold, hungry, ready for a nap, or having just woken up from a nap. If the parent is afraid of the water, the child may pick up on this fear. If the parent has very high expectations for the child as a swimmer, the child may resist the performance pressure. Finally, a child may cry simply because he/she is experiencing a new place, new faces, new noises, and new positions.

If your child does cry in a Tadpoles class, we suggest that you first address the cold, hunger and sleepiness issues. Hold your child down low in the water so that the shoulders are under water; and schedule your class for a time when meals and naps are not interrupted. If you are afraid of the water or have excessive expectations for the child, try to arrange for another adult to take the class with the child. Finally, give the child some time to adjust to the new environment by concentrating on making the experience fun for the child. We will minimize, at first, the number of times the child is brought under water, sing lots of songs and play lots of games. As the child sees other children having fun in the water, he/she will gradually become more and more comfortable.

