

Thanks for joining us on our mission to promote inclusive water safety programs around the world!

If you have any questions, or if you witness something that doesn't sit right with you, talk to our Autism Swim Approved Instructors/Therapists, the pool deck supervisor, or contact us at www.autismswim.com.au.



OUR INCLUSION PROGRAM



The aquatic sessions provided here are to teach people of all abilities how to swim and gain essential water safety skills so that they can be safer in the water.

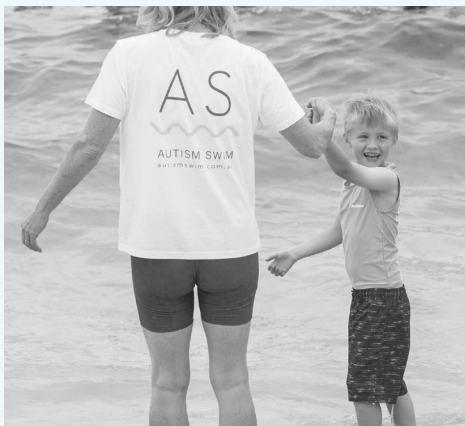
This is especially important for our swimmers with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), as drowning is the most prevalent form of death among children with ASD.

BENEFITS OF SESSIONS

Water based exercise reduces stress on the body and can have many therapeutic benefits.

For example:

- *Reduced musculoskeletal pain and stiffness.*
- *Improved ability to attain motor skills and coordination.*
- *Increased muscle strength and endurance.*
- *Improved self-regulation, attentiveness and concentration.*
- *Opportunities to develop communication and social skills.*
- *Opportunities to meet individual sensory needs.*



WHAT IS ASD?

Individuals with ASD present with social communication and social interaction difficulties, accompanied by restricted or repetitive behaviours, interests or activities.

In the aquatic environment, you may notice some of our swimmers avoid eye contact, may have difficulty initiating a conversation or using verbal language to communicate.

Swimmers may find it more challenging than others to leave the swimming pool at the end of their lesson. Some swimmers make loud noises at times, while others may become uncomfortable and upset by sudden or unexpected sounds.

Each individual has different abilities and needs, and it is important that we create inclusive aquatic environments for everyone in our community to enjoy. You'll notice that our swimmers with ASD also have incredible strengths.

Some things to consider when planning a visit to our pool:



Please consider keeping your voice down, as some of our swimmers are sensitive to sound.



If noisy environments are uncomfortable for you, please consider bringing headphones or noise-cancelling earphones for your next visit.



Please make sure that all doors and pool gates are kept closed during your visit, to ensure safety of our swimmers.



If you notice any behaviours of concern, please discuss these with the pool deck supervisor. Our Autism Swim Approved Instructors and families are experienced and skilled with supporting behaviours of concern.

Please refrain from offering suggestions or commenting during our programs as this may create more stress for our swimmers and their families.

It can be helpful to consider the swimmer's ability to listen and respond during a conversation.

Some things that might be helpful include:

- *Allowing additional time for them to process what you are saying and to respond.*
- *Speaking at a reasonable speed and volume.*
- *Using short and clear sentences (often the less words, the better).*
- *Being open to different communication styles.*
Swimmers may find it easier to communicate through gestures, facial expressions or pictures.
- *Finding common Interests.*
By getting to know an individual who has ASD or other abilities, you will learn that they have special interest areas just like you do. As you get to know each other, you might find common interests, such as a favourite movie, sport, music, book or TV show. Why not ask them what they love?

WHY DO PEOPLE WITH ASD HAVE BEHAVIOURS OF CONCERN?

When people with ASD/other abilities display behaviours of concern, it is not because they are being naughty but because they have communication challenges.

Behaviour serves as a way to communicate or try to change their environment.

Behaviours are typically seen to have a specific function, for example:

TANGIBLE:

A way of communicating wants and needs.

ESCAPE:

A way of avoiding, escaping or controlling a situation.

INTERACTION:

A way to initiate social interactions with peers, and/or to elicit a specific positive or negative response.

SENSORY:

Changing or controlling the environment to increase or decrease particular sensory input.



WHAT ARE THE SESSIONS FOR?

Drowning is the most prevalent form of death among children with ASD. The aquatic sessions provided are to teach these individuals essential swimming and water safety skills so that they can be safer in the water. The sessions also include water therapy to assist our swimmers with other abilities to regulate their emotions and energy levels.

You might notice our instructions sound different and we use visual supports more often in these classes to help our swimmers to get the most benefit from their time with us.

We hope to ensure our aquatic environments are inclusive for everyone in our community. Our aquatic sessions are especially important for swimmers with other abilities, to promote increased water safety and aquatic skills, as well as opportunities for physical exercise and self-regulation in the water.



WHAT CAN YOU DO?

In your lifetime, it is likely that you will meet people and families who have ASD /other abilities.

You can help us to create an inclusive aquatic community by:

Supporting families and carers.

If you see someone having a meltdown, please don't stare or approach the person.

If appropriate you may like to ask if there is anything that you can do to help.

Taking the time to learn about ASD and other abilities.

Use this information to teach yourself and your children how to be a friend and understand individual differences.

Showing kindness, understanding and acceptance.

Take a few moments to assess the fear or discomfort that individuals with ASD or other abilities may be experiencing when sharing the aquatic environment.



We all have different preferences when sharing an aquatic environment.

We want to make your experience as positive as possible.

By working together we can ensure everyone has the same opportunities to be safe in and around the water.

BEHAVIOURS OF CONCERN

Behaviours of concern refer to certain behaviours which restrict an individual from participating in their community and doing things that others are able to do.

They may arise as a result of feelings of frustration, confusion, anxiety or lack of control.

These behaviours may include:

- Having difficulty cooperating with requests/instructions.
- Behaving in ways which you may see as socially inappropriate, such as taking clothes off in public.
- Displaying aggression, potentially harming themselves or others by hitting or biting.

- Engaging in self-stimulatory behaviour, such as rocking or flicking hands.
- Eating non-food-items such as pool noodles, dirt or chalk.
 - » Because of sensory sensitivity,
 - » Have difficulty following verbal instructions, or
 - » Get upset or overloaded by busy or noisy environments.
- Difficulty with self-regulation, in particular with managing emotions such as frustration and anxiety.

For example, swimmers may have difficulty coping with changes in routine or a new swimming teacher.

