

Swimming to a safe place

Sue Pryor¹

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After 20 years of observation, conferences and listening to parents, Sue Pryor Swimming has evolved a strategy of 'Swim To A Safe Place' to be taught at all levels throughout the year. This is in addition to the obvious recreational and health benefits regular swimming lessons provide.

We live in a farming area near beaches and rivers, and the main reason our parents start their children in swimming lessons is to make them safer near these water sources.

From this evolved a greater emphasis on safer swimming where we teach safer practices not only to the child when near and in the water but also to the parents – after all they are with the children most of the time and preferably all the time when they are near water.

Our first levels are all based on the development of:

- Comfort
- Trust
- Feeling
- Buoyancy
- Developing Independence
- Safety Awareness

These skills are then continued and developed through all our other levels and culminate in 'Swim Safer Week' activities where their skills of swimming to a safe place are tested under simulated conditions (dams, rivers, beach, lakes, boats).

All our swimmers are taught to swim in deep water as we feel that this is a vital part of being a safer swimmer. Games are developed which teach them to think about where to swim in case of an accidental fall in. 'Where is your nearest safe place?' is the question heard in most lessons. The children are encouraged to think for themselves in various simulated scenarios.

Our parents are very pleased with this strategy and are recommending our lessons to others. They thank us for making them aware of possible dangers and, more importantly, giving them skills to help should an emergency occur.

Aims/ Objectives

To give children of all ages and their parents skills to make them safer swimmers. We make them aware of potential dangers in a variety of water areas and give them skills and thought processes to make them safer if they are ever in trouble in water.

We educate the parents to be more aware when near water.

We teach the children to 'swim to a safe place' (this is anything that they may fall from or the nearest stable surface to swim to).

Some of the skills which we teach to all levels include:

- I can pull myself to safety
- I can be pulled to safety with a variety of equipment
- Land at a safe place hands first, not feet
- I can enter and exit the pool safely
- I can open my eyes under water
- Front and back balances
- I trust buoyancy in all depths of the pool (no flotation aids)
- I can be thrown away and return to a safe place
- I can swim to a flotation aid, hold on and swim to a safe place
- I can fall in from a variety of surfaces and return – includes slides
- I can climb out by myself I can wait
- I can roll to my back as a safe place

Conclusion

By teaching to swim to safe place we have met the criteria set by our parents. We have created safer swimmers and parents who are more aware of potential dangers in and around water and have given them skills to cope if they ever fall into water.

Acknowledgements

Swim Australia Presentations.

Talking to parents who have been in drowning or near drowning situations themselves or with their children.

By observation of swimmers and developing games and processes from potential dangers.

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