

TOWARDS AN INCLUSIVE SOCIETY THROUGH SPORTS

INCLUSIVE SPORT CONFERENCE 2021

DATE & TIME
16 TO 18 MARCH 2021
9AM - 5PM



Host



Co-host



Developing an Inclusive Aquatic Program Suitable for All Abilities

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Clinical Lead and Occupational Therapist at Autism Swim



91% of parents surveyed in the Autism Swim community had withdrawn their child from mainstream services due to them not understanding or accommodating their needs.

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About the Presenter

Jessica Thackeray (*BHSc, MOccThySt*)
is an Occupational Therapist with
experience as a swimming instructor and
Special Olympics Coach.



What we will cover today...

1. What is Autism Swim?
2. Why Provide Specialist Supports in aquatic environments?
3. Common Challenges and how to overcome these
4. Becoming Autism Swim Approved!



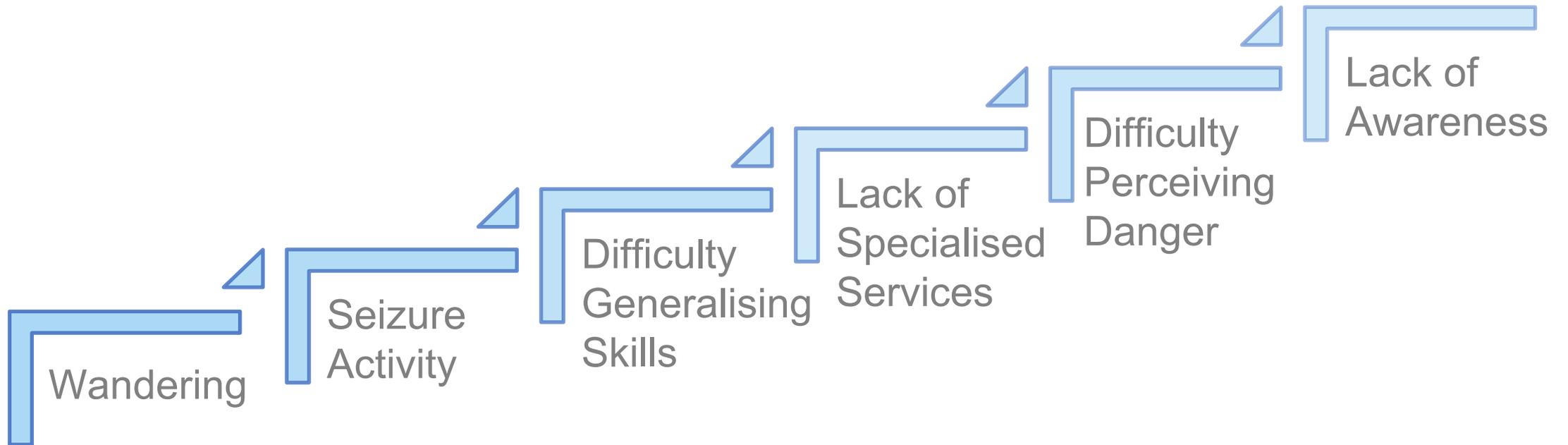
About Autism Swim



Accidental Drowning accounts for approximately 90% of deaths reported in children aged 14 or under (subsequent *to wandering*).

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Why Provide Specialist Supports in aquatic environments?



Current drowning prevention strategies have neglected to address specific needs of individuals on the Autism Spectrum and those with other abilities.

What are the benefits of the water?

“For many people with ASD, the properties of the water help to moderate levels of excitement and anxiety which can help making it easier to concentrate and maintain attention.”



“One of the most important benefits that have been found from aquatic therapy and swimming lessons is the changes in social behaviours and interactions.”



Common Challenges Encountered

- Staying focused/on task
- Managing his/her emotions
- Lying on his/her back
- Putting their face under water
- Cooperating to instructions
- Comprehending water safety
- Getting into or out of the water when it's start and finish time
- Being touched
- Having other swimmers undertaking their lessons nearby
- Coping with the sensory experiences of the pool environment

TOWARDS AN INCLUSIVE SOCIETY THROUGH SPORTS

VISUAL SYSTEM:
This information is the 'glue' that brings together what we're hearing, feeling etc.
This system is really important for improving how we use our sensory systems to help us feel grounded in space!

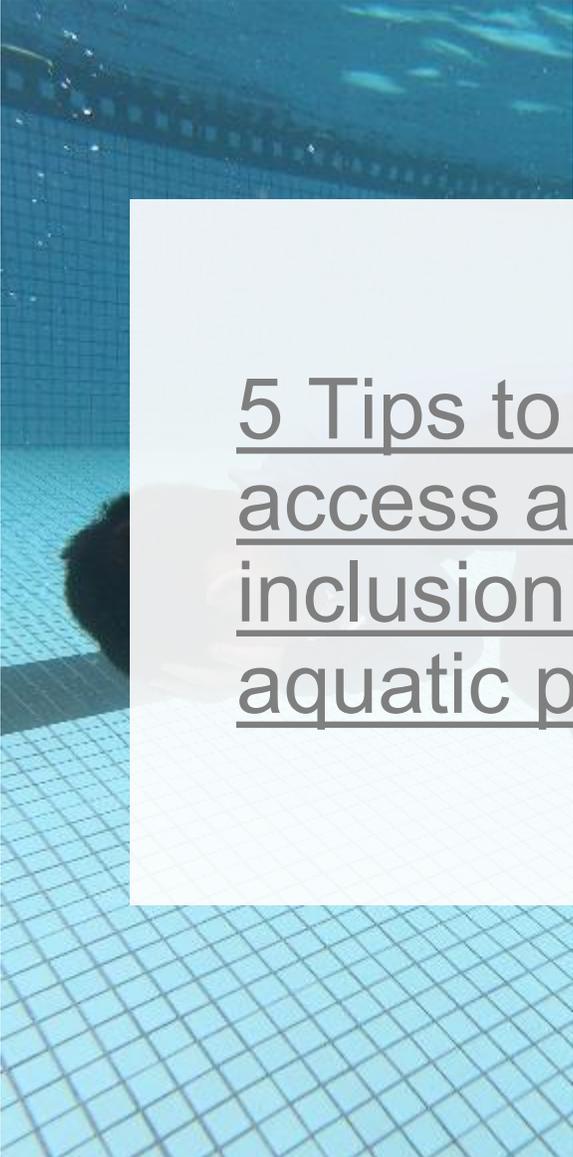
TACTILE & PROPRIOCEPTIVE SYSTEMS:
Receptors on and in our skin, muscles and joints give us information about our body.
Good information from these systems can help us to feel more grounded!



VESTIBULAR SYSTEM:
Fluid behind the ears. As this fluid moves around it tells us about how we're moving in relation to gravity.

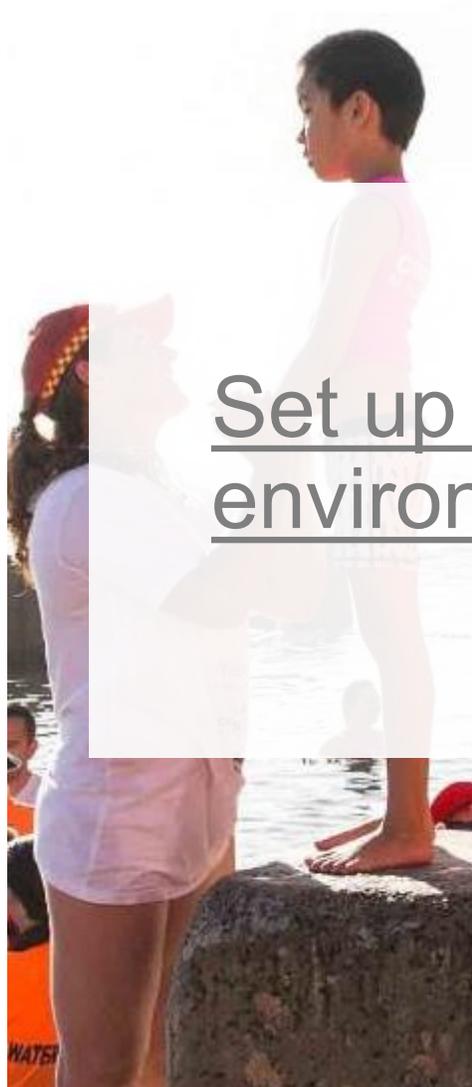
AUDITORY SYSTEM:
This gives us information about the external environment.
Different sounds have different properties which help us to know where things are and what they are, if they're moving etc.

When all this information is processed well and talking to each other, we know exactly where our body is in relation to everything else in our environment, which makes us feel safe and confident.



5 Tips to improve access and inclusion in your aquatic program:

1. Create a safe and inviting aquatic environment
2. Get to know your participants
3. Introduce Visual Supports
4. Modify your program
5. Commit to ongoing learning



Set up your environment:

- 30-90% of individuals on the Autism Spectrum have sensory processing difficulties which impact on their participation in the community.
- In one study, 65% of children with a diagnosis of Autism reported sensitivity to noise.
- Noisy environments have been suggested to trigger incidents of wandering or provoke other behaviours of concern for children with auditory processing difficulties (4-5).
- Environmental set up considerations include: quiet pool times, sensory rooms, removing startling noises (i.e. whistles or electric hand dryers), automatic doors and signs to prevent wandering.

What can you remove/change to make the environment sensory friendly?

Utilise quiet times

**Remove obtrusive noises
(e.g. hand dryers, whistles)**

Provide express lane to reduce wait times
during peak times

**Develop a sensory room or quiet
space and advertise it!**

Tone down your lighting

Turn off music or loud speakers



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Introductions Count!

We use Enrolment Forms to **get to get to know our participant's:**

- Communication Preferences
- Social Goals
- Sensory Needs
- Behaviour Support Needs
- Interests, likes and dislikes
- Goals and past experience in the water.



Introduce Visual Supports



Modify your aquatics program for all abilities!



4. Use Water Therapy Principles to promote self-regulation and readiness for learning.



Whole Body Movement Activities to promote regulation before/after/during your program.



Teach self-monitoring and self-regulation strategies with tools such as Emotions Fish Scales and "I need a break" cards.



Use water-based activities to provide vestibular and proprioceptive input. This will help to keep your participants engaged, regulated and ready to learn and enjoy the water.

Water Therapy



Autism Swim Provider, Suha Saeed, 2020

Positive Behaviour Supports:

Use Positive Behaviour Support strategies to ensure the time spent in the lesson is focused on developing water safety and swimming skills rather than supporting behaviours.



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Become Autism Swim Approved!



AUTISM SWIM

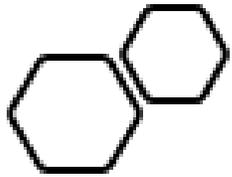
Keen to
learn more?

www.autismswim.com.au



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How boring it would be
if we were all the same.

Embrace diversity.

Questions?

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Helpful Links:

- Become Autism Swim Approved: <https://autismswim.com.au/swimming-instructor/>
- Download Autism Swim’s Wandering and Drowning Prevention Toolkit: <https://autismswim.com.au/product/wandering-drowning-prevention-toolkit/>
- Purchase Autism Swim Resources: <https://autismswim.com.au/product-category/resources/>
- Watch the videos:
 - “Drawn to Water”, SBS, 2017: <https://www.sbs.com.au/news/the-feed/drawn-to-water-swimming-lessons-for-children-with-autism>
 - “Sensory Processing Disorder Explained by a child”, 2012: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D1G5ssZIVUw>
- Read the whole comic, “Understand the Spectrum”, The Art of Autism, 2019: <https://seureservercdn.net/50.62.172.212/i87.725.myftpupload.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/UnderstandtheSpectrum.pdf>