

## Swimming Lessons without the Hassles

*It's summer and for many parents they're either well into or thinking very seriously about how important it is to get the kids pool-safe and swimming with confidence. Now this is no easy trick as most parents know.*

*With 302 people drowning, 50 of them children, between June 2008 and July 2009 according to the Royal Lifesaving Society of Australia, it's vitally important that parents persevere with swimming lessons and water safety classes. In my personal experience of a reluctant son it ends up creating real water lovers, particularly important when living on the largest island in the world!*



*We asked Parent Educator Carole Disseldorp to give us a rundown on some of the techniques you can use to make swimming lessons a less painful experience for both you and your kids.*

### **Difficult Behaviour:**

"I wish my daughter would get ready for her swimming lesson on time!"

### **Carole's Suggestion:**

- Let her know when you are leaving home, or from elsewhere, and try to consistently stick to the same time. Allow an extra 5 minutes for road works, parking or other unexpected hold-ups.
- Allow plenty of time for getting ready so that there is no rushing.
- Talk about the lesson in a positive and motivating way.
- Encourage every effort to get ready, no matter how small. Encourage her to do as much as possible on her own.
- Tell her when she has 10 minutes to go.
- Make sure that your child has had a snack and drink before she goes and is healthy and rested, with energy for her time in the pool.

### **Difficult Behaviour:**

"My son won't go in the pool! I have paid all this money and he agreed to participate!"

### **Carole's Suggestion:**

- Ensure that your son is familiar with the surroundings and the teacher.
- Explain the reasons for learning to swim or gaining water confidence.
- Remain calm!

- Resist nagging, threatening, shouting, getting angry, shaming and bribing.
- Ask your son, in a relaxed manner, why he doesn't want to go in the water. Try to reassure him and answer his worries honestly. Explain what it will be like in the water.
- Tell your son what you would like him to do in a firm, yet relaxed manner.
- Encourage your son to have a quick go and get out if he is uncomfortable.
- Tell him about something good that's happening after swimming is finished e.g. hiring a DVD or seeing Grandpa.
- If he doesn't want to go in after this, accept it and say something like "Maybe next time". There is no point in pushing so hard that it becomes an unpleasant memory.
- If you wait a few minutes, without pressuring him, he may very well change his mind.
- Ensure that your son has seen you swimming in a pool or at the beach. A male role model, preferably the parent or brother is also helpful in this way.
- Lots of water play including baths, showers, squirter bottles and splashing in puddles will help familiarise your son with water.

Most of all reinforce all the good things about going to swimming lessons and playing in the water. Enjoy!

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