



What should I do if my child cries and is afraid at swimming lessons?

It is hard to know what to do when your child cries during swim class. A certain amount of crying is OK from time to time and is to be expected from most beginners. The crying is a natural expression of your child's emotional discomfort due to a new class experience in the water, and/or separation from you. We will actively work with your child to reassure him or her and ease your child's discomfort. Our great staff of instructors will work to establish trust with your child and find creative ways to ease him/her into this new experience.

What can you do as a parent to deter the crying?

- Try to be proactive and prepare your child for this new experience. Explain to your child that he/she will be working with a teacher and meeting new friends while learning how to swim. Explain to your child he/she will learn how to play new games, blow bubbles, and float in the water. Assure your child that the teacher will **NEVER** force him/her to go under water or let go until he/she is fully ready. You are always welcome to arrange and observation of our program with your child. Please contact Jamie Johnson to set up an observation of the Clarence Learn –to – Swim Program.
- If your child is fussing prior to swim lessons, acknowledge that you understand that he/she is afraid. Then tell your child that you know that he/she can do the things that the teacher will be asking him/her to try. Next walk your child out onto the deck and hand him/her over to the teacher. Then calmly walk to the other side of the pool and sit on the bleachers with a smile and confident expression. (If you look terrified, so will your child.) Try to avoid having a teacher chase your child or physically pull them off you as this will more than likely make your child want to argue more. By handing your child over to the teacher you are telling your child that you can trust the teacher. That vote of confidence will greatly help the teacher as well.
- If your crying child continually looks at you and calls to you, break eye contact or move to the other end of the pool. This can easily be

accomplished by looking at a magazine or book every time he/she looks at you. By breaking eye contact with your child during lessons, your child will become involved in his/her lesson and the instructor will have his/her full attention. The teacher will address the issue of crying and come up with a positive solution, so your child can conquer his/her fears. Feel free to take a peek at your child without he/she noticing. Keeping a pleasant expression assures your child there is no reason for alarm.

- Be sure to share with the instructor if your child has had any negative experiences in an aquatic environment.
- Another reason for crying, other than fear or separation, could be the pool temperature. The water temperature is typically maintained between 82 and 84 degrees Fahrenheit. (However, CLTS is not able to regulate the pool temperature; this is done by the Clarence Central School District.) Even though, 82 degrees is a comfortable temperature for most children, some are chilled by the temperature. It is suggested that these children try wearing a rash guard. Our coaches will keep your children active in the water so that they are constantly moving to keep their body temperature up.
- Be persistent and don't give up! Crying is usually toughest on the parent. After the first few lessons children usually become comfortable in the class. Delaying or avoiding swimming lessons can make an imagined problem only bigger. Think of learning to swim like wearing a seat belt or a bike helmet. Until you can swim it's simply not negotiable. Children don't have the maturity to understand they are at risk around water. As a parent you need to have the courage and confidence to make learning to swim an important priority.
- For more helpful advice feel free to contact Coach Jamie Johnson or our Parent Liaison, Renata Towne.

How long is too long for your child to cry in swim lessons?

On average, most children have stopped crying after the third or fourth lesson. At the very least you should notice that the crying is less with each lesson. If not, you are welcome to contact Jamie Johnson and a transitional lesson can be arranged with your child and an instructor in a more private setting, possibly involving the parents.

What causes fear of the water?

Some of the more common causes of early fear of the water have to do with the way parents relate to their children in and around water. These causes include:

- Being forced into water activities before being properly prepared.
- Being reared by parents who are afraid of the water and have either knowingly or unknowingly communicated this fear to their children.
- Being involved in or witnessing a traumatic water accident.

Fear of the water is acquired over time. The older a child is when first beginning a learn-to-swim program, the more challenging his or her fear will likely be to overcome.

Remember, learning to swim is a life-saving skill – the best day to start lessons, was yesterday!