

IN THE POOL - COPING WITH UNHAPPY LITTLE SWIMMERS



Not all children are immediately at ease in the water, or with the unfamiliarity of new people and surroundings, but don't worry, there are proven strategies and the tears won't last.

Whatever the reason, we're here to help

There are many reasons why your child may be an unhappy little swimmer, however some are more common than others and we have a whole range of strategies that work. So, if you're reading this as the parent of a tearful one, don't worry, we are here to help your child learn to overcome their worries. They'll soon be enjoying the fun of coming to swimming lessons with you.

They may simply be scared

If your child is feeling scared, the first thing is to try and find out why. Have they had a bad experience with water? Has someone unintentionally scared them by saying something like "don't ever go near water you'll drown" or "you will sink to the bottom if you go in by yourself". Or, it may simply be that they are taking time to adjust to new people and noisy surroundings.

Once you know what the problem is, it is often easy to fix. Talk to your teacher and talk to your child, working together to find the reason why they are scared.

Tears are their way of communicating

Tears aren't always bad, they are often a child's only way of telling you they are unhappy with where they are or what they are doing. They are not hurt or in pain. They just want to change the situation they are in and don't have the words or power to do so.

Most young children cry at some stage

You should expect, as we do, some crying from our little learners. Some don't want to put themselves in new and difficult situations and will fight to get back to their comfort zone but new situations and challenges are how we all learn new skills.

You'll find our experienced teachers are trained to deal with this and are not upset, angry or frustrated, they know they can work through the tears with you to end up with a happy little swimmer if given the chance. It is a very rewarding experience turning a screaming child into a happy swimmer.

Please don't be part of the problem

You shouldn't be embarrassed, angry, or visibly upset with your crying child. Seeing your emotions won't help your child, but it could make them more upset and harder for them to adjust.

If you look and feel positive and happy about the situation, then your child will start to share your emotions.

How long will they will be upset?

This depends on the child, why they are unhappy and your reaction to the situation. Most children have shown significant improvement or stopped by their third or fourth lesson. Realistically though, there is no set time. Adaption to swimming lessons can be a slow gentle curve, an unexpected breakthrough, or somewhere in between. Your supervisor will help and guide you through the process.

“Adaption to swimming lessons can be a slow gentle curve, ...”



IN THE POOL - COPING WITH UNHAPPY LITTLE SWIMMERS

Some common reasons for children's anxiety

Brand new environment

Try to remember your first day at school and your feelings of insecurity and uncertainty. Imagine yourself in your child's position, they need support and encouragement and don't want to feel rushed. So arrive early give them time to settle in.

Fear of change

Some children don't like change, so we need to reassure them that change is important that's how we learn and grow. For example, you could talk to them about being nearly 3 years old and how they will have lots of changes coming up, like day care, Kinder, and school.

Separation from parents

This is a common major mile stone; that all children need to work through. Your teacher will discuss and try different techniques depending on the cues your child is giving them. For example; the teacher may just cuddle or play with toys, they may sit and watch the other children. Sometimes your child may just need to stand at the end of the lane until they are comfortable with where they are.

All techniques need time to work, and your teacher needs time to find what works best for your child. Initially they may do very little swimming, but developing confidence and feeling comfortable without their parent in the water is the first step.

Tips to Create Happy Little Swimmers

- Have contact with water every day especially when beginning lessons
- Make water fun, make bath time a playtime
- Have toys to play with in the bath, they forget about the water and play – try rain buckets
- Show how much fun it is by tipping water over your face, they'll love to copy you!
- Have fun splashing in the water with them - the more you laugh the more fun they will have
- Practice what they learn in class in the bath. Back floating, eyes in and kicking

Children who have come from our Tiny Tot's level, may not do anything they have learnt previously until they feel at ease in this new class and with their new teacher. Time is the answer to most problems. Every child will need a different amount, we as teachers and parents need to be patient.

Fear

You may notice your child's imagination is in overdrive. This can be positive or negative. Fantasy play can help them become more interested and involved, or it may contribute to developing unrealistic fears, such as believing a monster is lurking close in the water, or I will sink all the way to the bottom.

Tell the teacher their fears is they they will work through it. The older a child is when first learning to swim, the more challenging it will be to overcome those fears.

“Time is the answer to most problems”

