

Aquatic Readiness – That Sinking Feeling

(Author unknown)

Steps to Submersion

Submersion must be initiated by the Child – A child's perspective

Submersion must be initiated by me, the child, and guided by you, the teacher/parent, using a progressive method and ensuring my safety.

Under the water can be an extremely frightening place for me to be.

By preparing me over time, I can learn what to expect. I can learn the water is fun and my fears are gradually eliminated.

Modifying games/songs/activities to suit my individual needs and readiness, help me to learn that you respect my needs and understand what I'm capable of.

Experience in the water, with your/mum/dad's guidance, teaches me to understand and deal with any minor mishaps.

Respond to the messages/cues I give you and you will learn to know when I'm ready.

Supervise and support me well, so I can feel safe and trust you and you can learn about me and my needs.

I cannot always find a way to verbalise my fears and unwillingness to do as you wish, so I may need to 'tell' you without words.

Open my eyes and expand my experiences in the wonderful, fun world of swimming by providing me with a range of activities where I can succeed and an environment I feel safe in.

No and other verbal and non verbal negative messages/cues of mine, must be listened to, respected and responded to.

Maybe if I just put my chin in the water this time; another time a cheek; then my chin and mouth, another time my chin, mouth and nose then...

Under water with my full face, then, my full head. These can come later, when I'm ready for the next step.

Show me how you go under, show me how the doll does it; show me how to deal with a mouth and/or nose full of water; show me that I'm still ok when that happens;

Trust. I need to be able to trust you to read my body language signs/cues of not being ready for the next progression. Talk to me. Tell me what you are going to do and what you want me to do.

Body language. I can't always say/find the words to tell you I do/don't want to.

Eyes. Keep low, at my eye level. My eyes will show you my fear (and my delight).

If I cry on your cue; scramble to get away from you/mum/dad; pull my body upright; tense my muscles; hold my arms in a defensive position then...

No!! I'm not ready!! Modify the skill to match my readiness. Distract and comfort me to put me at ease. Provide me with an activity/skill that I know I can do and can achieve.

Initially, I especially need your movements to be slow and predictable.

Trust. I need to know I can trust you to do as you say you will...Or as you say you won't.

I will-blink or close my eyes; dip my head; put my chin/face in the water; hold my breath; close my mouth; try to 'swim' toward you/mum/dad/the wall; put my arms out ready; kick my legs; move my arms; push my chin forward; lean my body forward; begin to blow bubbles; initiate the submersion – to indicate to you that I am ready to go!

Allow me to falter, make mistakes and occasionally regress. Adjust and modify for me to help me feel safe and successful again.

Time. Allow me time to gain confidence, receive the information you give me, classify it, then respond to it.

Expectations. Keep your expectations of me realistic. I am not the same as the others in my class.

Do cue me in with your words and actions, to the appropriate actions and valued behaviours. This teaches me how to respond. I will cue you in, to my readiness. Look at my face, hear my words, feel and look at my body language. When you know I'm ready, dip me in, forehead first.

Breath holding; blowing bubbles. They help to prevent water going into my mouth and nose. I may still lick, sip, suck or sniff the water in.

Yes! I've experienced going under. I saw you/mum/dad/my doll under there. I enjoyed that.

Teach my parents that I will progress at my rate, not because the other children are. Keep them informed of my progress and my achievements to help them understand my development.

Help me to learn my limitations and achievable skills.

Encourage me along the way. Provide me with the opportunities to regularly explore in the water. This will help me to understand the aquatic world and my place in it.

Continually devote time to analyse yourself, your program and your methods and keep up to date within your industry, so you keep learning and my development is fostered in the best possible way.

Happy memories make me and mum/dad look forward to returning.

Increase the challenges as I progress. I can do it myself.

Lifting me forward to get my face above water is helpful. Any water that is in my nose can drain out, rather than back down my throat.

Down under water is fun. Let's try diving from the poolside now!