



**autism, anxiety, sensory, motor, discomfort, physical, delay, trauma**

# L I F E G U A R D

## Improve skills when responding to swimmers with Autism, ADHD and Anxiety

### L- Look and Listen

- Seek subtle signs of special needs
  - Alert bracelets/ headphones/ excessive splashing/sounds/atypical movements

### I- Identify

- Observe behaviors that are common among swimmers with autism/ sensory disorders and become mindful about extra visual checks
- Notice signs of physical impairments (wheelchair, etc.) and offer help when appropriate.
- Forward thinking and taking action can avoid a risky situation.

### F- Fun or Frenzy

- If you see a swimmer's fun begin to escalate into overstimulation, decide how to approach.
- Notice signs of sensory discomfort, for example when you blow a whistle or yell, a swimmer might cover their ears. If this happens try a different approach to resolve the problem.
- Consider removing equipment that could cause a unsafe situation.

### E- Expected vs. Unexpected

- Recognize a swimmer's response to splashing or yelling and change your approach if needed.
- Prepare for noise (let them know you are going to blow a whistle).
- Let them know you are going to touch them. Expected touch is often more tolerable than unexpected. Approach from the side if necessary, to decrease fear.



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Aquatic Therapy  
education**

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## Improve skills when responding to swimmers with Autism, ADHD and Anxiety

### G- Give Time and Space

- Be patience and use varying methods to communicate your message
- Use gestures and give time for the person to respond on their own
- Keep in mind, some sensory swimmers avoid eye contact but are still listening
- If a swimmer runs away as you approach, try to bend down and ask them to come to you

### U- Understanding

- Make sure that a swimmer is understanding your directions. If they don't comply, perhaps they need you to show them in a different way what is expected.
- A pool is a very difficult space for those with auditory processing disorders because of all the excess background noise. Can they see your face or can you get closer and use gestures?
- Speak with few words and pause to allow time for them to respond
- Use "first, then" language (ex. First we jump in, then we climb out")

  
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your teaching  
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toolbox!**

### A- Ask

- Ask the parents "how can I help you?" & "What can I do for you?"

**Adaptive online training**

### R- Risk Management

- Extended underwater breath holding can be a risk for seekers who like the pressure. Watch and educate the parent and swimmer to set a time limit or alternate activity.
- Know how to use wheelchair lifts, other equipment & PRACTICE AT EACH FACILITY
- Know where to safely store walking & mobility devices

### D- Diversity and Inclusion

- Educate yourself! Check out Swim Angelfish's youtube playlist: Swim Whisperer stories.
- Aquatic centers are welcoming diverse groups of people, always be prepared.
- Be the agent of change by sharing these FREE RESOURCES.



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