

## S.A.F.E. Program Swim and Fitness Education

### Child's Water Play

In order to work with children in aquatic therapy, you must adapt a playful attitude. Following are some psychological advantages that are important in using play and a playful attitude when working with children in the aquatic environment.



A relaxed playful atmosphere increases both the child and parent's level of participation. Playfulness replaces the "serious concern" for direct skill performance. Both child and parent will be more relaxed, at ease and feel less pressure. Both are able to play for longer periods of activity than they are able to tolerate dull structured skill practice sessions.



When the child's attention is focused on the game rather than their direct acquisition and performance of skills, the child's feelings of self-consciousness are reduced. They participate readily. They play without reservation of those feelings which would inhibit their play.



A playful attitude diminishes the pressure for quality performance. A playful atmosphere allowing for repetition to occur naturally and pleasantly without pressure increases the child's and the parent's toleration of additional practice. Play reduces the pressure for success, therefore increases success.



Diminished pressure for quality performance can also be important in reducing a child's fears of failure to Perform. When a child is not afraid of failing a task, they are more likely to playfully attempt the task again and again.



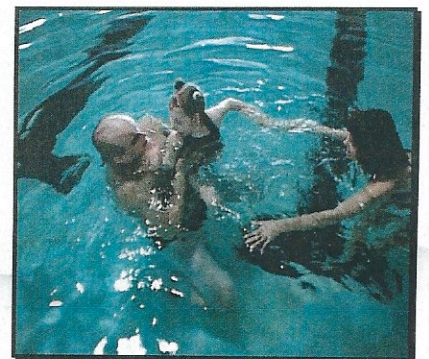
Play increases toleration of frustration. When playfulness replaces the serious concern for direct skill performance, both child and parent adopt a special playful attitude that allows them to approach a task again and again without feelings of frustration. Both child and parents are involved in the process.



Play is inventive. Play is creative for both the child and parent. Activities are put to use in play. Skills become as part of a game, a necessity.



Smile! Be Enthusiastic! Play Games!



*Creating Ripples Program* - The Water Experience



## The Water Journey – What is my role?

The instructor is to train the parent to be comfortable in the water with their child. Educate on the properties of water and how the water is a benefit for all of the people involved. Encourage and help the parent to learn how to play in the water.

The child is the lead person – follow the child leads – they will guide you to what they want to do and what they are comfortable doing

The parent – you are really in control, the child just does not know it – your job is to understand the properties of water and how the water plays a role with you and your child. Know what you want as goals – and design play to address what you want as outcomes. i.e.

1. If you want your child to talk and communicate, you will have to talk the whole time, using the words you want them to know. Sing songs, count, ABC's
2. If you want your child to walk, you will teach the movements that will strengthen the lower body and make games of the movements
3. If your child needs to develop upper body strength, you will learn the movements and make games of the movements
4. If you want your child to reduce their tone, you will teach the movements to relax your child so they can benefit
5. If you want to address all areas of development – learn as much as you can about the benefits of "Water Play"

USE THE KISS METHOD: Keep it Simple Sweetie

*Creating Ripples Program*  
*Guidelines for working with children with special needs*

**Adjustment to Water:** is more difficult for the disabled than the able-bodied. Asymmetry is distorted and balance is more difficult to achieve. Conditions that affect respiration, communication, comprehensive, inability to gain voluntary control and or achieve normal gross motor patterns will be additional factors that evoke natural anxiety and fear

**A. Mental adjustment is equally that of the parent/volunteer**

1. always demonstrate control and correct holding patterns
2. talk, hum, sing to the infant/child

**B. Relaxation is essential for water activity**

1. support of buoyancy
2. warmth
3. swaying, rhythmic swinging movement
4. good handling techniques
5. create an appropriate environment
6. relaxation is needed to attain breath control and balance

**C. Breath Control**

1. encourage breath control at all times "blow"
2. automatic breath control may be lacking due to disability (focus on mouth and nose closure)
3. blowing is also a prerequisite for head control as it brings the head forward

**D. Head Control**

1. most important skill to acquire balance, rotation and safety
2. results in eye-hand coordination, visual sharpness, gross and fine motor skill

**E. Balance Control**

1. ability to make appropriate adjustment to compensate for altered body, shape, tone and the resulting rotational patterns
2. start in stable shapes with minimal turbulence and slowly move to less stable shapes and/ or increase turbulence

**F. Body Image and Spatial Relationships**

1. water enables a child to learn body dimension and awareness
2. learn the extremes of posture and the resulting effects of their movement
3. water decreases tactile input

**To function - a small child needs, upper body strength, trunk rotation, flexibility and endurance.**

Water allows a person to develop in these area while the focus is on play. Playing, kicking, jumping, twisting, blowing, reaching, alternating arms. These moves increase strength, flexibility, and endurance. When the child improves in these areas it is a direct carry over to land functions.

Adapted from article published in Aquatic Therapy Journal  
 Splash by Susan J. Gross



## Water Learning & Aquatic Therapy

### What do you need?

#### Water sources

- Buckets
- Cups
- Bath tub
- Water table
- Pools (all sizes)

- Things that scoop
- Items that pour
- Things to wring out
- Things to squeeze
- Containers to fill and empty
- Objects that sink – float
- Colors – sizes – shapes
- Different but to match

#### Equipment

- Virtually anything (not harmful)

### YOU WILL GET WET!

#### Motor tasks

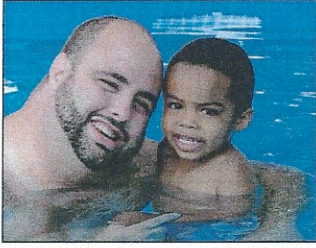
- |           |   |       |       |      |         |
|-----------|---|-------|-------|------|---------|
| • Grasp   | = | hold  | carry | put  | squeeze |
| • Release | = | pour  | throw | lift | raise   |
| • Squish  | = | push  | pound | pull | wipe    |
| • Paint   | = | scrub | rinse | wash | dry     |
| • SPLASH  |   |       |       |      |         |

#### Concepts developed while water learning

- |              |   |             |             |             |
|--------------|---|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| • A-like     | = | color       | numbers     | counting    |
| • Addition   | = | temperature | matching    | shape       |
| • Capacity   | = | weight      | texture     | subtraction |
| • Direction  | = | spatial     | orientation | body image  |
| • Balance    | = | direction   | dry         | sharing     |
| • Difference | = | size        | sequence    | wet         |
| • FUN        |   |             |             |             |

Physical fitness develops while interacting with water and the equipment.

## Water Play for Two = "Exercise



### Example of water routine

#### Warm Up Time:

Start on your own: Walk from ramp to lane – singing –talking (this could be in a circle) Songs

1. Vertical – forward – backward – side
2. Horizontal – tummy – back – side
3. Bouncing – Dance position – face to face

#### Wall Play

1. Humpty Dumpty – fall entries
2. Hand to hand – chasing your friend

#### Middle of pool

1. Ball Chasing – reaching out & up & pushing down or pushing out
2. Wave formations – for rollovers, submersion?, kicking

Ai Chi time – quiet time to say good bye

#### For the Parent – What's "Ah" Happening!

- ✓ Warm up allows for parent to release some stress, relax and enjoy your child
- ✓ Dancing Position – is some coordination, balance and rotational twists
- ✓ Spiderman – running backwards maintaining postural alignment
- ✓ Humpty Dumpty – forward running and upper body toning
- ✓ Wave formations – toning for hamstring/quad, inner and outer thigh
- ✓ Circle formation – core awareness, abdominal work, leg work
- ✓ Ball chase – encourages movement in general against the water's resistance
- ✓ Ball in Bucket- intensity of movements, jumping and it's modification
- ✓ Side steps with a squat– inner/outer thigh, glut work
- ✓ Ai Chi – energy work, core, range of motion - bonding