

AUTISM CONNECT 2026

April 7th

Thank You!



TO ALL OF OUR PLATINUM SPONSORS!



Online and In-Person Training



global leaders in adaptive aquatics

**Looking to strengthen your adaptive swim
training and water safety offerings?**

Who Are We?

- ❖ Starting 2000 Swim Angelfish: PT/OT/ Rec Therapy team
- ❖ 2009 Responding to the need for Adaptive Swim Training: Presenting this at USSSA 2010
- ❖ Adaptive Aquatic Education
- ❖ Professional Online Training, in person workshops, consulting, program development and FREE Autism and All Abilities water safety toolkit.





Session Objectives

Practical tools to enhance Learn to Swim programs for special needs

Water safety strategies for community education and immediate use!

Guidance to support swimmers with ADHD, Anxiety, Autism, Down Syndrome, Discomfort, Trauma, Physical and Sensory Challenges

ONLINE Global Access: Trained instructors in all state and 22 countries and growing

Every Community is Stronger with Kids of All Abilities Included



15%

Of all **public school students** received **special education services** in 2022-23, signifying a **growing trend**



1 in 31

Children have been identified with **Autism Spectrum Disorder**.



+3M

Children (4.3%) in the US have a disability and this **rate is growing**. The most common disability was **cognitive difficulty**.



1 in 6

Children aged 3-17 were diagnosed with a **developmental disability**.



Online and In-Person Training

Identified Prevalence of Autism Spectrum Disorder



There is a growing need for specially trained swim instructors who have adaptive skills to improve water safety for this growing population of children on the Autism Spectrum.





Special Needs & Adaptive Aquatics

- Anyone that learns differently due to motor, sensory, cognitive, emotional and behavioral issues.
- Neurodivergent vs Neurotypical
- Autism Spectrum Disorder
- Anxiety, Discomfort, Sensory Sensitivities
- Are we all already providing adaptive lessons?



Media Spotlight: Fox News Digital



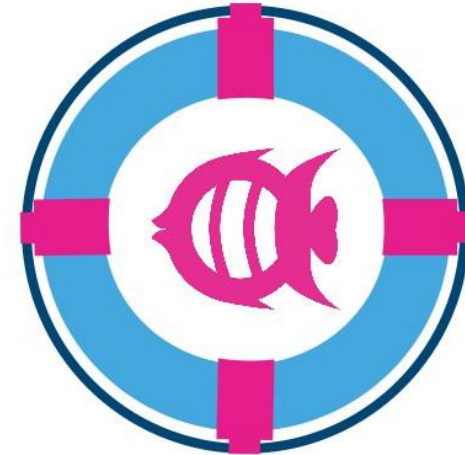
Adaptive Water Safety Toolkit



- **Ritual and Routine**
- **Monitor and Intervene**
- **Rescue Equipment**
- **Adaptive Swim Skills**

Adaptive Water Safety Toolkit

Extra Layers of Water Safety Practices and Tips for
Autism, Sensory, Physical and Special Education Needs



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Online and In-Person Training

Ritual and Routine



Ask at home for the bathtub

Teach swimmers to verbally ask or nonverbally gesture/point before entering a body of water. Generalize the ritual of asking to apply to all bodies of water. This will create a sufficient delay between asking and entering the water.

Take side and provide a prompt

Have your swimmer hold the wall, while repeating the sentence "the side is safe". Have them hold for 5 and count out loud. Never take your child off the wall. You can tap their shoulder and get them to look at you, then take a hand.

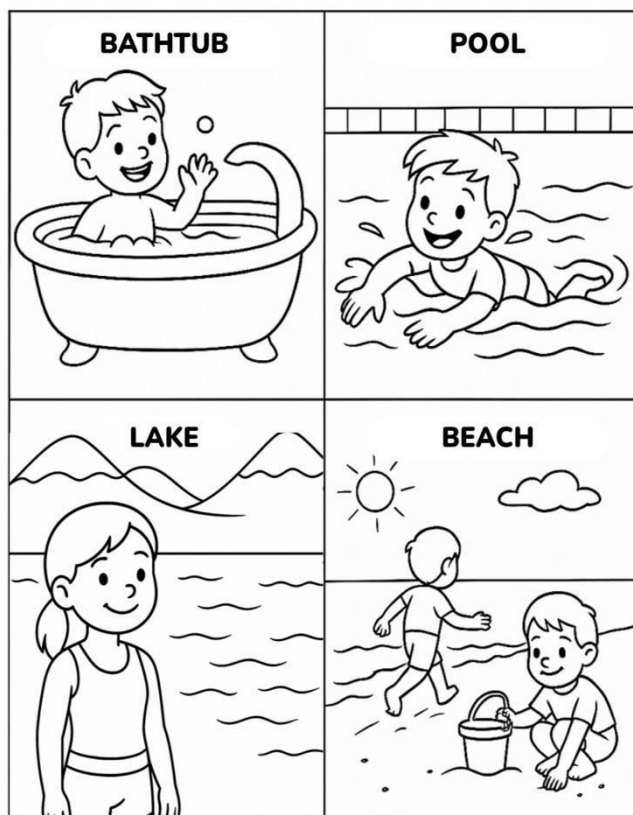
Parent Practice: Ritual and Routine





Activity Book to reinforce Ritual and Routine

ASK PERMISSION



SAFETY ROUTINE

EXAMPLE



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Monitor and Intervene



Reduce underwater breath holding

Some swimmers love being underwater due to the hydrostatic pressure (which increases with depth). The deeper you go the more pressure there is. Some swimmers repeatedly submerge with disregard for breathing. Visually monitor and physically intervene to ensure appropriate breaks for above-the-surface water play.

Lifeguard education

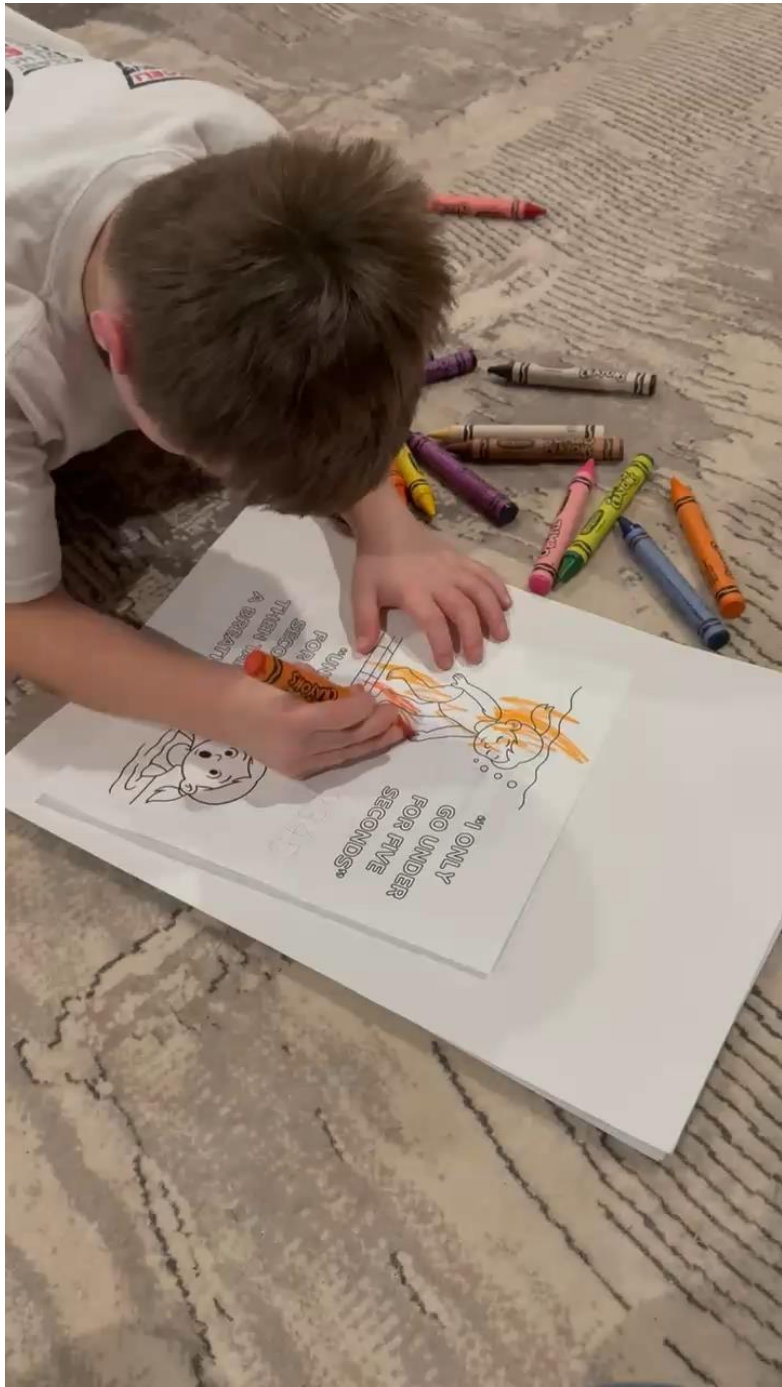
Lifeguards are trained professionals who prioritize aquatic safety, but understanding your child's unique needs is crucial. Inform the lifeguard about your child's specific challenges. Our FREE 'Adaptive Techniques For Lifeguards' mini-course will provide them with the tools and confidence to approach and assist swimmers who require adapted strategies.





Aquatic Inservice: Lifeguard Education





Rescue and Equipment



Life jackets

There are different types and styles of lifejackets, make sure you select the right one for your child's unique needs.

- Get your child comfortable in the bathtub wearing the lifejacket.
- Practice wearing the lifejackets at the pool to ensure it is effective.
- If the lifejacket is too buoyant and they can't control their body. Try improving body awareness by adding cotton pajamas.

Inform local aquatic facility

Communicate your child's needs with aquatic professionals:

- Provide a photo of your child and some ideas for keeping them safer.
- Introduce the aquatic director to your swimmer and explain how to best interact with your swimmer.
- If your child has a physical limitation and needs a lift, schedule a time to use the lift and improve poolside entry safety.



Case Study: Rescue and Equipment





Adaptive Swim Skills



Learn to submerge

Successful submerging will improve a safe rescue as the swimmer will be more comfortable holding their breath.

- Identify body parts "mouth, nose, eyes, hair." Practice immersing these body parts in order one at a time and say the word "under".
- Firm wiping of the face, with the chin down as they come out of the water, will help desensitize the face.

Reduce anxiety

- Buoyancy can be anxiety provoking because it feels unstable. A solution to counteract this, is to wear a long sleeve cotton shirt, pajamas, or cotton socks to provide increased body awareness.
- Show social stories and videos of successful and happy swimmers in the water.
- Teach the mantra that in the shallow we 'stand' and in the deep 'we just keep swimming'.





Case Study: Jackson at School



Swim-Float-Swim-Take Side







Water Safety Day Community Event

- In Response to a Drowning
- Police Dive Team
- District Attorneys Office
- Certified Adaptive Swim Whisperers



The poster features a light blue background with a grid pattern. At the top left, there is an illustration of a person swimming. To the right of the swimmer is a red and white life preserver. Below the swimmer is an orange life vest. The title 'Adaptive Water Safety Day' is written in large, bold, white letters. Below the title, there is a paragraph of text. At the bottom, there is a list of activities, a section for 'Free Entrance' with date, time, and location, and logos for the District Attorney, State Police, swim @ngelfish, and the Massachusetts State Police Dive Team. At the very bottom, there is a note about registration.

Adaptive Water Safety Day

Join us for a FREE water safety event designed specifically for children with Autism, ADHD and other special needs. Learn life-saving skills in a supportive environment. Brought to you by the Middlesex District Attorney's Office, Swim Angelfish and the Massachusetts State Police Dive Team.

- In-Water Safety Skills Workshop for ages 4-18
- Learn life-saving water skills
- Resources for parents

Free Entrance
August 14
10:00 AM - 12:00 PM
470 Worcester Road, Framingham

DISTRICT ATTORNEY MARIAN T. RYAN
MASSACHUSETTS STATE POLICE
swim @ngelfish
MASSACHUSETTS STATE POLICE DIVE TEAM

Due to limited space, **registration is required**. Please register by emailing Sarah.Lamson@Mass.gov. A parent or guardian must attend with child.



Water Safety Day Community Event

- Partner with local swim programs
- Coordinate volunteers from local University PT Program
- All inclusive
- Provide multisensory resources





Are you ready to make an impact?

- Partner with local, state or national organization for referrals, funding and community collaboration/outreach. Invite local representatives, reporters, legislators to increase exposure
- Find a Certified Adaptive Swim Whisperer and use the Resources for events to improve outcomes for Water Safety Events
- Plan your safety stations:
Lifejackets Rescue tube Ritual & Routine Swim Skill
- Follow up event such as: Sensory Swim, Family Swim or Safety Day.

What Else is there?



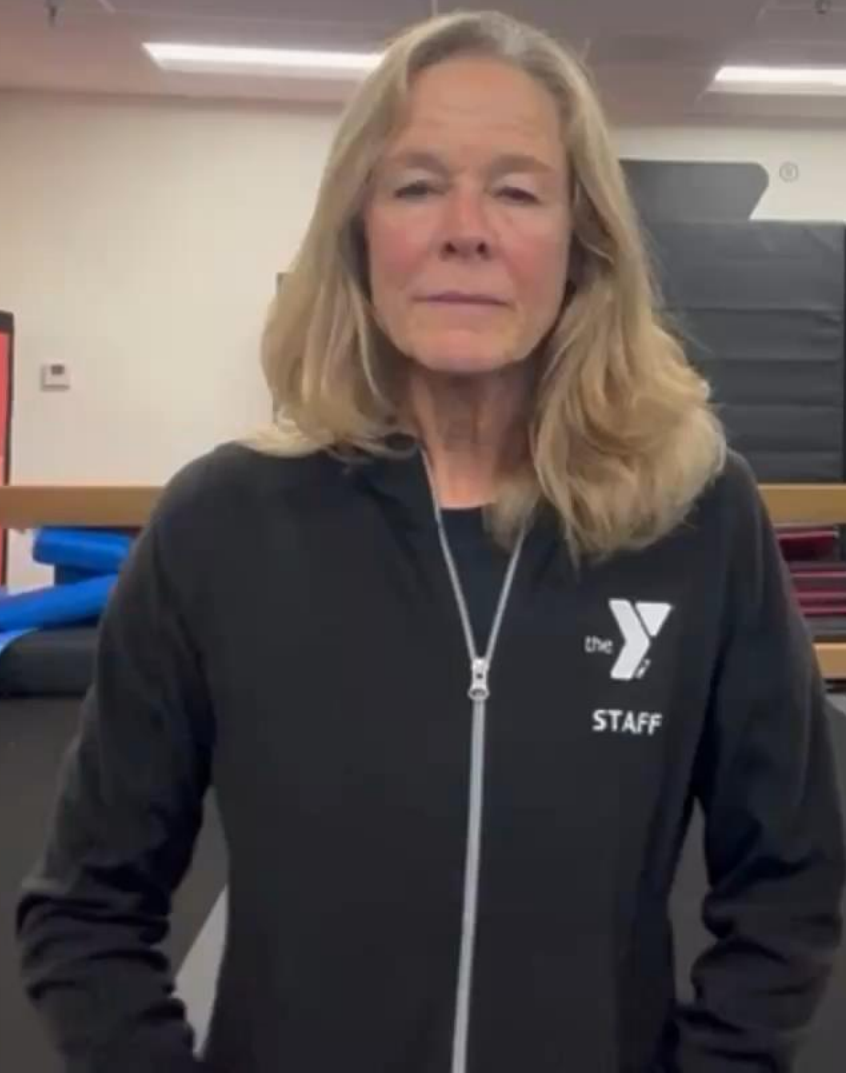
- Aquatic Water Safety Resources
- ONLINE Professional Training
- Consulting All Abilities Programs
- In Person Workshops
- Activity Book (coming soon)



Sign Up To Our Newsletter!
Get Inspired. Get Educated.



Online and In-Person Training



Professional **ONLINE** Training

- 14 hour-Adaptive Swim Whisperers Certification level 1,2,3 & 4
- 2 hour- All Abilities Training 10 Behaviors/Tip
- 1 hour-Parent Child Swim: Therapeutic Approaches
- 2 hour- Strategies for Inclusion Land based tips to promote participation
- Aquatic Therapist Training

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friday
sale**

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follow us on social!**

Subscribe to Youtube



**You are ready to implement adaptive water safety
in your community- GO FOR IT**

**Questions, Comments & Professional Training
with discount codes at our booth!**

Contact: Cert@swimangelfish.com

The bottom of the slide features a decorative graphic consisting of two overlapping wavy lines. The lower line is a solid dark blue, and the upper line is a vibrant magenta or pink, creating a modern, fluid design element.



swimangelfish.com

Navigating the Online Water Safety Toolkit



Case Study- Rescue & Equipment







Navigating the Online Water Safety Toolkit

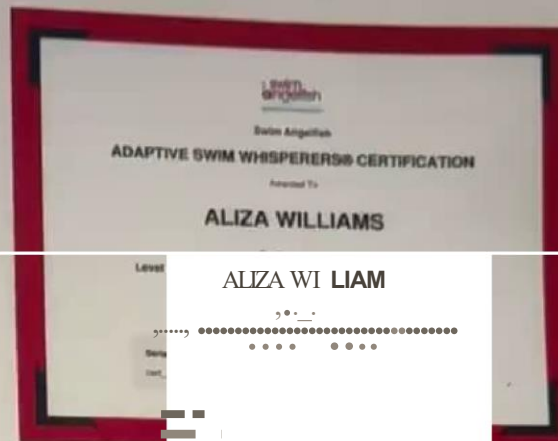
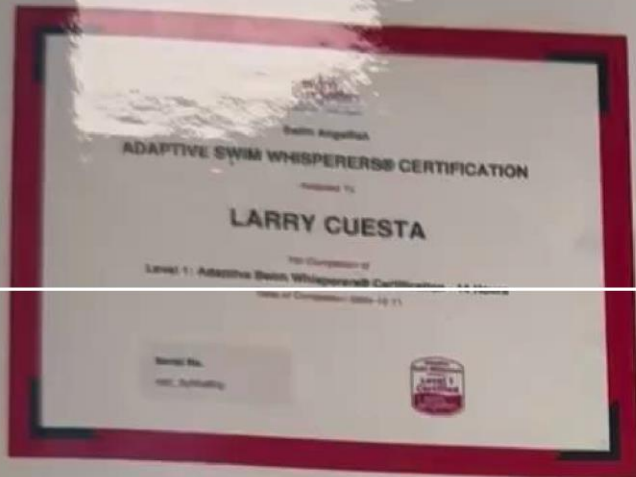


Swim Lesson Strategy for Seeking

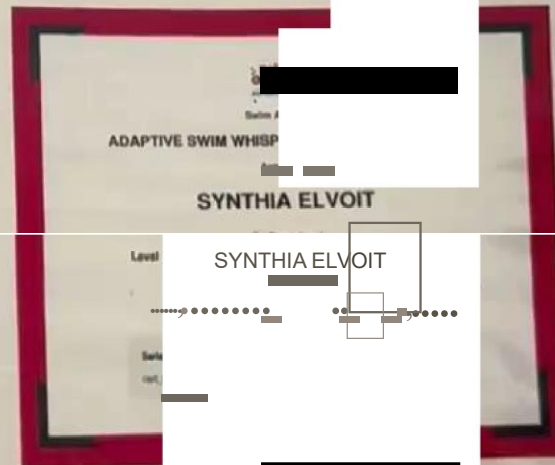
Swim Lesson Solution:
Adaptive Aquatic Training

Sneak Peak into a Certified
Adaptive Swim Whisperer
Swim session with a highly
sensory seeking swimmer





ALIZA WILLIAMS



SYNTHIA ELVOIT

Case Study: Using a Speller





EXIT →

NO DIVING

FEET 6 INCHES

4' - 6"

FEET 6 INCHES

Session Survey



Ballroom A 11:00-12:00