Autism Training Parent Notes:

Why Kids With Autism Love Water:

1) They seek the pressure around their bodies (Hydrostatic Pressure) that gives sensory seekers comfort.
2) Breaking surface tension can be very rewarding because it gives them input into their muscles and joints. It's like getting a hard hug all over their body.
3) Some children enjoy the experience of water in their mouths.
4) The water has an overall calming effect on children who have Autism because it creates an environment with slow, soft and repetitive movement.
5) Being under water reduces the impact of the noises around them.

Tips for parents to prepare kids for lessons:

Prepare laminated visuals and/or social stories for kids about what they can expect at swimming lessons before they go to actual lessons. Share swimming lesson expectations and pool rules with them in this way as well.

See if the teacher will send a photo of themselves and the pool so that your child can adjust to what to expect.

Ask your instructor if they can meet with your child before lessons start, to help your child familiarize themselves with their teacher.

Ask your instructor if they would allow your child to take a tour of the pool before lessons to help ease this new experience.

People with autism often have poor generalization skills. They may exhibit swimming skills in one pool, but not in another. Have your child spend time in different swimming environments to be certain that they have enough skills to stay alive in the water.

Key Benefit of survival swim lessons for kids with Autism:

1) One on one instruction.
2) Short but consistent lessons.
3) Instructors are trained to work with kids who are on the spectrum.
4) Children do not graduate lessons until they can float unassisted with street clothes on. Since children with Autism are most likely to drown during a non swim time, this is of huge importance for them. Clothes can add up to 20 pounds of weight in the water!
5) These lessons provide progressive behavioral supports (similar to ABA in that they work based on “chaining of skills”) that help children on the spectrum be able to survive an unexpected fall into the water or finding themselves in the water alone.

Extra Water Safety Tips for Parents Who Have Kids with Autism:

1) Place alarms or chimes on doors, always be sure to lock access points around pools, and **place “Stop” signs on all doors and windows leading to the outside.**
2) Consider a locating device if your child is prone to wander and there is water nearby. Safety Turtle is a good option for being around water.
3) Alert your neighbors of your child’s tendency to wander so that they can have extra eyes out for your child and ask any with pools to please keep their gates closed and locked.
4) Create the routine of asking before entering any water.

Benefits of Swimming for Children with Autism:

1) Besides drowning prevention and water safety, parents report other side effects from learning how to swim, including improved speech and cognitive processing.

2) According to the Autism Spectrum Disorder Foundation (ASDF), swimming can help children on the autism spectrum improve coordination, social skills and self-esteem.
3) Swimming provides an excellent opportunity for parallel play and for a child to be in the play environment but to interact at a level that is comfortable for them.
4) Swimming can reduce stress and anxiety in children with Autism.