

LESSONS FROM SPECTRUM SAILING

AUTISM & WATER SAFETY

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WHAT IS AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER (ASD)?



- Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is a developmental disability caused by differences in the brain.
- People with ASD may behave, communicate, interact, and learn in ways that are different from other people.
- All abilities vary significantly, and truly fall on a SPECTRUM

AUTISM & DROWNING

AUTISTIC CHILDREN ARE **160 TIMES** MORE LIKELY TO DROWN THAN THEIR NEUROTYPICAL PEERS,

DROWNING IS THE LEADING CAUSE OF DEATH FOR AUTISTIC CHILDREN.

DROWNING ACCOUNTS FOR **91%** OF DEATHS IN CHILDREN UNDER 14 WHO WANDER (AUTISM SOCIETY , 2024).



AUTISM & ELOPEMENT

Elopement: When an individual with autism leaves a safe area without supervision, posing safety risks. Common causes include sensory overload, seeking a preferred place, or lack of danger awareness (National Autism Association, CDC).

49% OF INDIVIDUALS WITH AUTISM WANDER FROM SAFE ENVIRONMENTS,

24% OF THOSE INDIVIDUALS HAVE EXPERIENCED A CLOSE CALL WITH DROWNING (AUTISM SOCIETY, 2024).

AUTISM ON THE WATER

Autistic individuals may be naturally drawn to water due to the sensory stimulation and the enjoyment it provides, including:

- **Sound:** Noise levels, echoes, or water splashing.
- **Feeling:** Temperature, texture, or movement in water.
- **Visual:** Reflections, waves, or changing light on water.
- **Buoyancy:** Floating sensation and body awareness in water.
- **Deep Pressure:** The calming effect of water resistance.



AUTISM ON THE WATER

AUTISTIC INDIVIDUALS MAY EXPERIENCE DIFFERENCES IN MUSCLE TONE, AFFECTING STRENGTH AND COORDINATION.



AUTISTIC INDIVIDUALS MAY BE SENSITIVE TO OR HAVE INCREASED INTERESTS IN SENSORY INPUTS FROM NOISE AND WATER.

AUTISTIC INDIVIDUALS MAY BE MORE LIKELY TO WANDER FROM SAFE ENVIRONMENTS, INCREASING WATER-RELATED RISKS.



OUR APPROACH

**8:10 Sailor
to Adult
Ratio**

**Community
Partnerships**

**Autism
Specific
Water Safety
Training**

**Empower
Local Sailing
Communities**

**Provide Free
Life Jackets
for Sailors**

**Online
Training
Modules**

**Child-Led
Opportunities**

8:10 SAILOR RATIO

- Supervision is a key factor in preventing drowning.
- Eight trained adults supervise every ten sailors = constant supervision and immediate response if needed.
- Our team is trained in elopement prevention and uses clear boundaries, visual cues, and immediate response strategies to keep sailors safe.



CHILD-LED OPPORTUNITIES



We follow the child's lead with no pressure or expectations, allowing them to explore at their own comfort level while building confidence on the water through their interests and natural curiosity.

LIFE JACKETS

- **Life Jackets Save Lives:** 87% of drowning deaths in boating accidents occurred without a life jacket (U.S. Coast Guard, 2023)
- Community Partnership: We partner with **[Partner Organization Name]** to provide properly fitted life jackets for all sailors.
- Supporting Sailors: Through this initiative, Spectrum Sailing has donated **[#]** life jackets, ensuring every sailor has access to essential safety gear.



LEARN MORE

spectrumsailing.org



GET INVOLVED

Sponsorships

Partner with Us

Volunteer at a Camp

Spread the Word!

THANK YOU!



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