

LESSONS FROM SPECTRUM SAILING

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# AUTISM & WATER SAFETY

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Spectrum Sailing

# 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

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**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](https://spectrumsailing.org)



# GET INVOLVED

Sponsorships

Partner with Us

Volunteer at a Camp

Spread the Word!

# THANK YOU!



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