

# It Couldn't Happen To Me!

Drowning is the largest single cause of accidental death in children under 4 years of age. We lose more little ones in Florida to drowning than to home or road accidents. It is an appalling statistic, and no way includes the number of children that are near drowning and are permanently horrendously handicapped by a near drowning accident. The causes and the blame are often multiple, and in many cases misunderstood by both parents and caregivers.

I believe that all the following precautions must be taken as a matter of course. Vigilance near water at all times. Locks on doors, barriers around our pools, alarms wherever possible. No large toys around the pool itself. And finally, survival swimming skills. These precautions absolutely must take place, but I also believe that the basic cause of most accidents around water is due to much deeper rooted problems than failing to take all the above actions.

I believe that mostly they are caused by the belief that, and I quote many a parent/caregiver "I love my children therefore it "could never happen to me." I believe that not teaching them survival swimming skills is not laziness, nor connected to finances, but it is purely a belief that "it cannot happen to me!" I believe that, yes, they have busy schedules, and early swimming lessons may involve a adult getting wet, or an evening or weekend commitment but again, the true reason is the belief that, of course, "it couldn't happen to me!"

Well sadly, it can and does happen to children of wonderful caring intelligent parents/caregivers, who absolutely adore their children. It happens to children of the very rich, the very poor, and all in-between. It happens to an only child and one in a large family, all with parents/caregivers who believe that "It cannot happen to me!" I am certain that the belief "that it could never happen to me" is the basic cause of nearly all the drownings or near drownings. Yet unfortunately, it happens because we are human, and humans make mistakes. The gardener/pool guy who may leave a gate open is human. The Grandparent/Aunt/ Uncle who does not completely lock a door are human. The Dad who thinks that Mom is watching and vice versa is human. The older sibling, playing with a friend is human. All of the above care, they are just human, and indeed, it can happen to any parent/caregiver, we are all human too!

I believe that the solutions are many. We must all be vigilant and follow the rules of safety, but I believe that when someone leaves a door open, a lock unlocked, has a lapse of vigilance, the most important skill that could actually save that child is being able to float on it's back and call for help. Today this is a skill that can be accomplished as young as one year old and as soon as we realize that "it CAN happen to us" the sooner we will seek a swim program that teaches these skills. Little ones should be taught these skills in a good fun loving program, and it should be a year round exercise.

So I strongly encourage all parents/caregivers to not believe that it "cannot happen to me, I love my children". You need to be great, and take your little one to survival swim classes, so that if you too are human, and it does happen to you, your child will be floating on its back, maybe crying, but thankfully not another dreadful statistic, and you will most definitely be eternally thankful that you were "good parent/caregiver" and it did NOT happen to you!