

# LEARNING PLATEAU



A **learning plateau** suggests a temporary saturation in the learning process, creating a standstill or pause in progress while a child assimilates and integrates previous learning and skill development. This transition is a natural part of life regardless when it occurs, in or out of the water.

A learning plateau is not uncommon to see in children who have attended ongoing swimming lessons since babies. Some children swim for years with just one plateau, while others may experience several. On the other hand, children beginning their swimming experience as toddlers or preschoolers, are entering into a new experience and their initial learning process may display similar behaviors of a learning plateau.

A learning plateau is not to be confused with behavioral problems resulting from trauma, mishap or other factors. Although our suggestions may help, separate issues and will need to be addressed accordingly.

## Me Do It My Way!

No! Not! Don't,  
Now stop!  
Let me do it my way  
Or I'll be a grot  
  
I don't want to do it  
So don't make me try  
I told you not to  
Now I'm going to cry  
  
I'll cry really loud  
And I'll sob in between  
And if it gets bad enough  
I might just scream  
  
Please be patient  
And let me be,  
I won't be like this forever,  
Now it's your turn  
to trust me  
  
I might not be swimming  
The way you think I should,  
But after this plateau,  
I'll be swimming really  
good!

## WHAT ARE THE SIGNS AND HOW LONG WILL IT LAST?

- A plateau may appear at any time, with the first often occurring around 11 to 15 months of age.
- A learning plateau can appear as a regression in a child's progress and attitude towards learning. Children may resist normal lesson structure and appear clingy and generally un-cooperative.
- There is usually resistance to going underwater.  
(However, they may be ok to go under with their parent)
- Changes can appear overnight for some and more gradually for others. Thankfully, children go in and out of plateaus at different times to each other, otherwise it could be very interesting!
- A learning plateau can last anywhere from a couple of weeks to a few months depending on the parent and child relationship and what strategies are put in place. Ask your teacher if you need help.

## WHAT TO AVOID

- This can be a frustrating time and pushing your child to participate only puts more pressure on an already fragile situation which can have a lasting negative effect.
- Refrain from speaking negatively in front of your child and this means talking about how frustrating it is for you, or how the situation is and especially with labels such as naughty, lazy, clingy, grumpy etc. Whether you voice your frustrations or just think them, your child will feel them! Over time, this can lead to *'If I do not try, I cannot fail'* and *'Pressure to achieve can lead to fear of failure'*.
- Comparing your child to others (those not in a learning plateau) negates your child's unique learning process.

## SUGGESTIONS

- You the parent, can be a positive force in creating a solution based on being fully present and patience with your child as they transit through this learning phase, so don't give up!
- Children of all ages will continue to learn through simply being in their class in a positive environment. Even if they watch others out the corner of their eye they will learn and in due course, will show they can perform skills just as good as their peers even after weeks of non-participation.
- If there is separation anxiety, help your child to feel safe by keeping close body contact, especially when going under water together. **Remember, do it with your child, not to them.**
- If there is protest about going underwater, even *with* you, submersion must stop for the time being.
- Let your child have as much independence as possible and remember there is a fine line between pushing your child and holding them back... find the balance.
- Recommended Waterbabies Information, sheets available at all venues: Dream talking, Unhappy Waterbabies; A parenting challenge, Play swimming guidelines (*extra swimming often helps*)
- Continue to be a positive role model for your child, being patient and giving lots of encouragement and positive feedback which all helps to prepare them for their next phase of learning.