

Case Study 2 – Smith Family

Mother: Kathleen (25)

Father: John (22)

Children:

Jack (3)

Jill (2)

John Jnr (6 weeks)

Mum and Dad have been bringing Jack and Jill to swim classes for the last 10 weeks. According to the swim instructor, Amelia (17), Jack has been struggling to cope with the cold and the water. This has resulted in Jack being reluctant to get into the pool and then, subsequently affecting his desire to participate in the water activities. On this occasion, Mum has agreed to enter the pool with Jack in an endeavour to help him acclimatise to the water and aid his participation. At the commencement of the lesson, Jack was reluctant to get in the pool. Mum initially started to coax Jack however, as her patience wore thin, she jumped in, grabbed Jack and completely immersed him in the water without warning and then placed him roughly on the side of the pool, to await his turn. This approach only seemed to distress Jack further, which, in turn, hardened Mum's resolve for Jack to engage in the water activities. Jack continued to cry and complain, to which Mum responded with a resounding smack on the thigh uttering "now you have something to cry about". Jack sat quietly whimpering through the rest of the lesson and participated in the activities, albeit, it seemed, reluctantly. Amelia, averted her eyes and continued on with the lesson.

What is your initial reaction?

What should the Swim Instructor do?

Is there anything you would or should do or say?

What other roles could help, if at all?

What next?

Unknown background on the Smith Family

Kathleen and John have been together since they were 16. Kathleen was raised in foster care and met John through friends when she was 21 and he was 18. They decided to have children relatively quickly. John's parents have been supportive and have provided assistance however they are away at present. John is working as a labourer and Kathleen has never held a paid position. Kathleen and John have been committed to swimming lessons due to Kathleen losing a sibling in a drowning incident, which she witnessed but was unable to help. This unquestionably left Kathleen traumatised. Kathleen feels her mother was unfairly blamed for the drowning incident and believes this resulted in her being placed in care. Kathleen doesn't have any contact with her mother or other siblings now. Kathleen had multiple placements whilst in foster care and doesn't feel like she built any long term relationships to provide her with support.

John and Kathleen are living in a two bedroom unit with their three children. John Junior's pregnancy was not planned, it was a difficult pregnancy and the birth was long and arduous resulting in an emergency caesarean. Recently, the landlord gave them an eviction notice as they are behind in their rent and, as yet, they have not determined how they will afford to move and to where they will go. Their relationship is strained due to the financial challenges they are experiencing and coping with the three children.

The family can ill afford the swim lessons, but Kathleen is committed to the lessons. John isn't as committed as he is worried about the cost.