

If someone with autism is missing, always search water first.



About Autism & Wandering

Wandering/elopement is the tendency for an individual to leave the safety of a responsible person's care or safe area, which may result in potential harm or injury. This might include running off from adults at school or in the community, leaving the classroom without permission, or exiting the house when the family is not aware. This behavior is considered common and short-lived in toddlers but may persist or re-emerge in those with autism. **According to research, nearly half of children with autism are at risk for wandering away from a safe setting.**

Because people with autism are vulnerable to dangerous situations including drowning, traffic incidents, becoming trapped hot cars, etc., it's important to take critical precautions. **Be aware that drowning fatalities remain a leading cause of death, along with traffic injury.**

Wandering/elopement is typically a form of communication, often occurring to get to something of interest or away from something bothersome, usually noise, commotion, fears/phobias, and demands. These impulses and incidents can increase with added anxiety and stress, especially if the individual has challenges with coping, calming, or regulating their emotions. **Early signs of exit-seeking behavior can start in toddler-hood. They include social/demand avoidance, moving to a different area of building or home unnoticed, bolting when upset, and seeking out water or other quiet places.**



Prevention Checklist:

- ✓ Secure home, outdoor gates, garage door
- ✓ Identify & Address Triggers
- ✓ Teach Safety/Coping & Pursue Forms of Communication
- ✓ Enroll in swimming lessons
- ✓ Secure wearable identification and/or locative technology
- ✓ Alert relatives, school & neighbors
- ✓ Alert local first responders
- ✓ Speak with your loved one's doctor
- ✓ Create Emergency Plan
- ✓ Stay extra vigilant during transitions, parties, vacations, new moves, visits, & noise/stress/commotion

If Your Loved One is Missing:

- ✓ Remain Calm
- ✓ Call 911
- ✓ Search Nearby Water First

Safety Toolbox

