

## Teacher Guide

### How to survive in cold water

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In any situation your first consideration must be to reduce heat loss. If you are alone, by adopting the H.E.L.P. position (Heat, Escape, Lessening, Position), you can increase your survival time by about 40%. Wearing a personal flotation device (PFD), lifejacket or buoyancy vest may help.

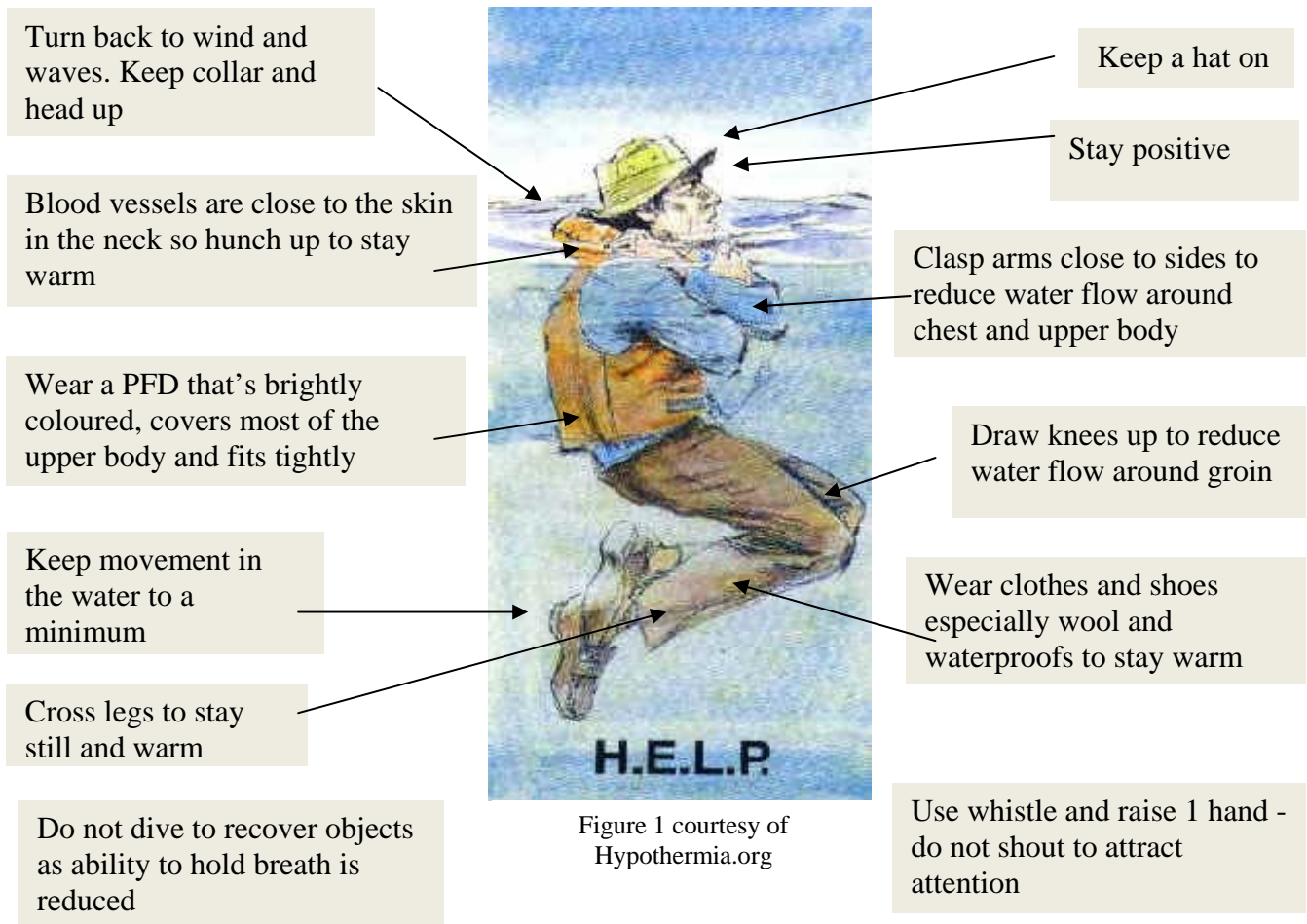


Figure 1 courtesy of Hypothermia.org

It is easier to adopt the H.E.L.P. position wearing a standard lifejacket rather than with a buoyancy aid. The life jacket has a collar (good for neck and head protection) but also floats the person with a higher centre of buoyancy, see opposite. Drawing the knees up when wearing a buoyancy vest can cause instability (rotation) in the water. Splitting the knees slightly will prevent this.

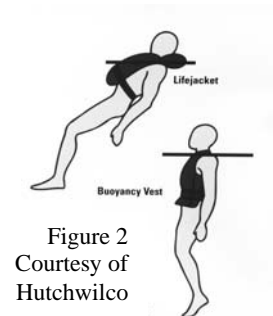


Figure 2  
Courtesy of Hutchwilco

## The huddle position

If you are in a group and in deep water then getting into the huddle position will help to increase your survival time. It is most effective when every one is close together, still and there is no open water in the middle. Being in a group will mean that you are more easily spotted from the air, or by another boat. There is no maximum number but smaller huddles with 5 people in would be more effective than a single big huddle with 10 people as it would be easier to stay still and very close, (three on the outside two in the middle)

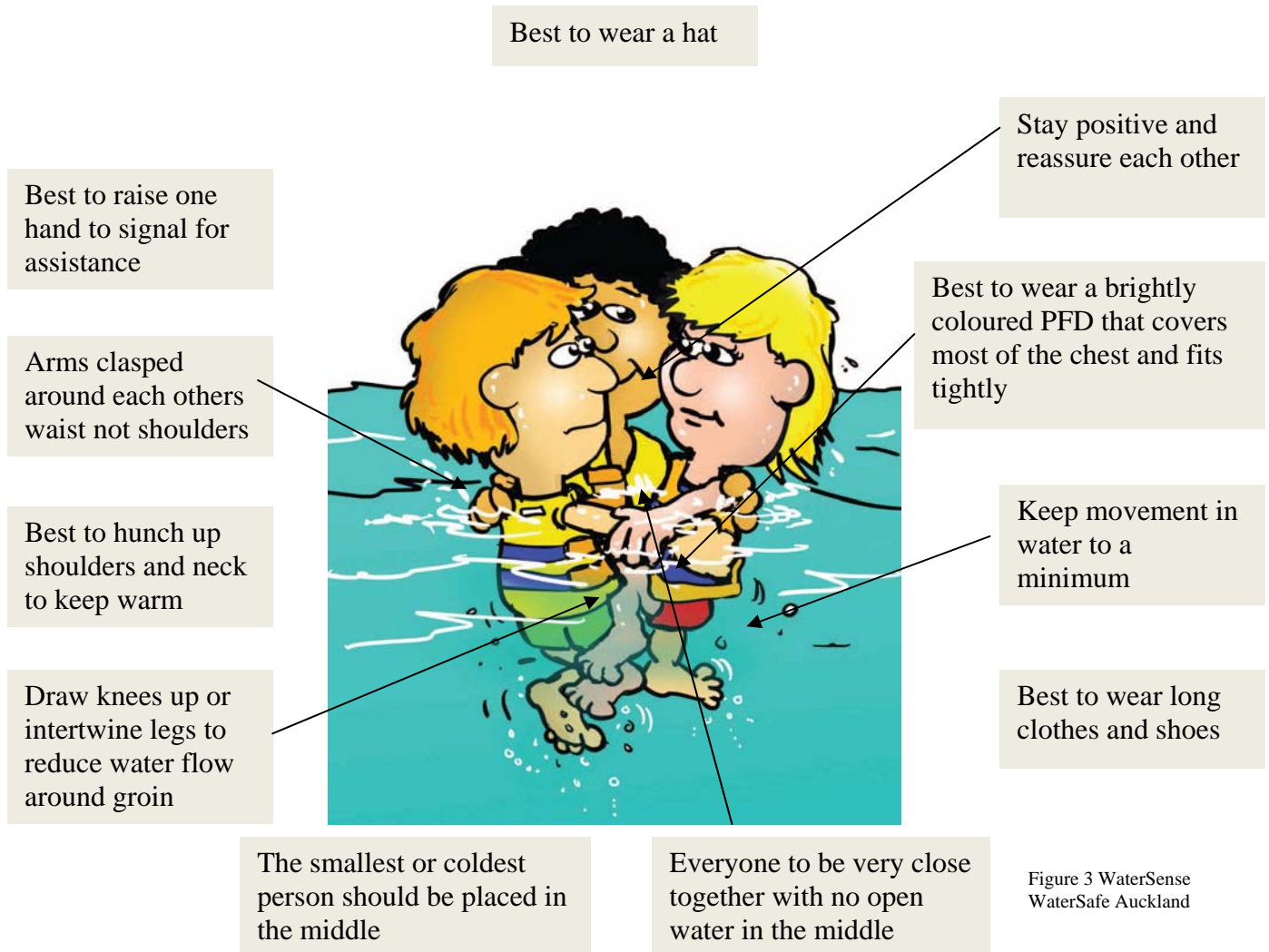


Figure 3 WaterSense  
WaterSafe Auckland

## How do I increase survival time?

In any situation the first consideration must be to reduce heat loss.

- If you are alone adopt the H.E.L.P. position or in a group adopt the huddle position. These positions can increase the predicted survival time by up to 40%.
- Wear a close fitting closed cell foam life jacket, wet suit or dry suit.
- If time permits put on extra clothes before entry. This includes waterproof gear and headgear. Do not discard clothing if you are wearing a life jacket or have floatation aids.
- A person loses heat more quickly when in water than in air of the same temperature. So get out of the water if possible, on top of the capsized boat for example. If this is not possible then keep your head and chest out of the water. A person may feel colder out of the water but this does delay the onset of hypothermia.

The second consideration must be to remain calm and not to panic. Panic can magnify the responses shown in the diagram over the page and thus reduce survival time. Think of family and friends.