

## INTRODUCTION

**A** *GGGGHHHH!* Flynn screams as her parents struggle to get her into a bathing suit; for Flynn a trip to the ocean is torturous. When her sister and brothers frolic in the water that slips along the shore, Flynn plants herself on a towel, knees drawn to her chest, arms tucked to her side. Walking in sand makes her legs flop and ankles wobble.

Flynn's fear of water worries her parents; they live only moments away from the ocean. So, when Flynn is five her mother speaks with Nancy, a recreation therapist with a specialty in adapted aquatics. Upon hearing Nancy's approach - following a student's lead - she enrolls Flynn in *Choose to Swim*.

During their first several classes Flynn bounces on her toes, flails her arms, and screams "No" or sits, curled in a ball, sulking. Despite the fearful cries, she and Nancy cope by tackling basic tasks - washing their toes, feet and legs; or dangling their fingers, hands and arms in the water. Simple as these activities may seem, each one is a milestone; Autism causes Flynn to be hyper-sensitive to sensation. Yet despite her anguish, many minor achievements do bind together during that first year, forming a well worn path toward composure and self-assurance.

Then, two years after her initial class, at age seven, Flynn climbs into the pool that once terrified her and, with unwavering confidence, teaches Nancy to surf!