

On Sunday, a father and son from Irvine had a close encounter with a humpback whale near Catalina Island as the son was nearly swallowed by the whale.

The boy, 15-year-old Greg Greenfield, was kayaking with his father, George Greenfield. While out on their yellow boats, a whale suddenly breached right under Greg with its mouth open.

Greg was briefly swallowed by the whale but was spat out after about 10 seconds.

“I thought I was dead. . . I thought it had eaten me,” Greg told Coast Guard Sgt. John Grecko, who picked up the kayakers shortly after the incident.

“When I came up and started floating, I was scared that something might happen to my father too, that we wouldn’t reach the shore in time, or that I would get hypothermia,” Greg said.

Greenfield was 10 yards away and was already taking a video of his son when the whale swallowed Greg.

“It just happened so fast, I had no time to react until Greg was already spit out” Greenfield said.

Greenfield’s video went viral. The video impressed people because of Greenfield’s calm reassurance of his son.

“It was scary, but I didn’t want Greg to panic, so I focused on that,” Greenfield explained.

Greenfield took Greg to an urgent care clinic in Irvine later that day. Greg had no physical injuries from the whale encounter.

Catalina is 22 miles off the southern California coast and a popular tourist destination. Whale attacks on humans are extremely rare in California waters.