



Social Skills Development for Young Children with Autism

Presented by: **B.E.S.T.**

Behavioural Evaluation, Supervision & Training

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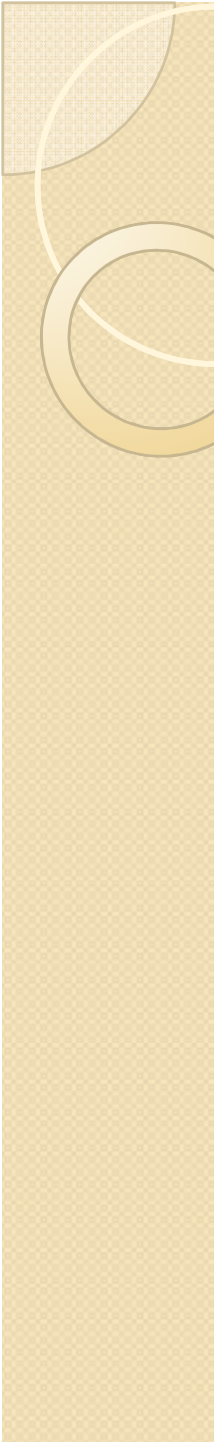
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How do typically developing children acquire social skills?

- 1
- 2
- 3



So why is it difficult for children with ASD to acquire social skills?

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5



Characteristic of ASD that make social skills acquisition extremely difficult

- Social withdrawal
- Unskilled initiations and responses
- Socially stiff, awkward, emotionally blunted, and/or self-centered
- Unable to understand social cues
- Inflexible, lacking in perspective-taking
- Emotionally vulnerable and easily stressed
- Easy targets for teasing and bullying



Characteristics of Effective Social Skills Interventions

- Interventions are based on individual assessment of the problem and are socially valid.
- Effective interventions are not based on the diagnosis
- The objectives of the intervention are clear and the behaviour is well defined
- Interventions are constantly monitored to demonstrate efficacy and are changed as needed



Characteristics of Effective Social Skills Interventions, cont'ed

- Direct teaching of social skills (merely placing a child in an inclusive class does not lead to social skills development)
- Use peer models and tutors, who have been TRAINED
- Criteria for achievement of objectives
- Objective & ongoing measures of progress
- Class-wide teaching at an appropriate developmental level for the class



Large Group Exercise

- Let's list some of the social skills challenges your child or a child with whom you work is experiencing.



Small Group Exercise

- Let's operationally define the target.
- E.g. What is "rude?"



Data Collection

- Research shows that effective interventions are based in an understanding of the baseline data.
- Ongoing data collection is important such that an ineffective intervention is not maintained, and so that an effective intervention is not prematurely discontinued.



Data Collection

- Now that we have defined our target, how can we track it?



Social Skills Interventions

1. Social Stories
2. Video modeling
3. Power Cards
4. Shaping/Desensitization
5. Tokens and other reinforcement systems
6. Rule cards
7. Modeling and Observational Learning
8. Role play and Scripting
9. Teaching Turn-taking
10. Teaching of specific age appropriate skills (e.g. to ride a bike, catch a ball, etc)



1. Social Stories*

- **Social Story Components:**
 - Descriptive sentences
 - Perspective sentences that describe the feelings and reactions of others
 - Directive sentences are statements about appropriate behavioural responses
 - Affirmative sentences (a shared value within a given culture)
- *http://www.thegraycenter.org/Social_Stories.htm

Social Story: *Not a good example*

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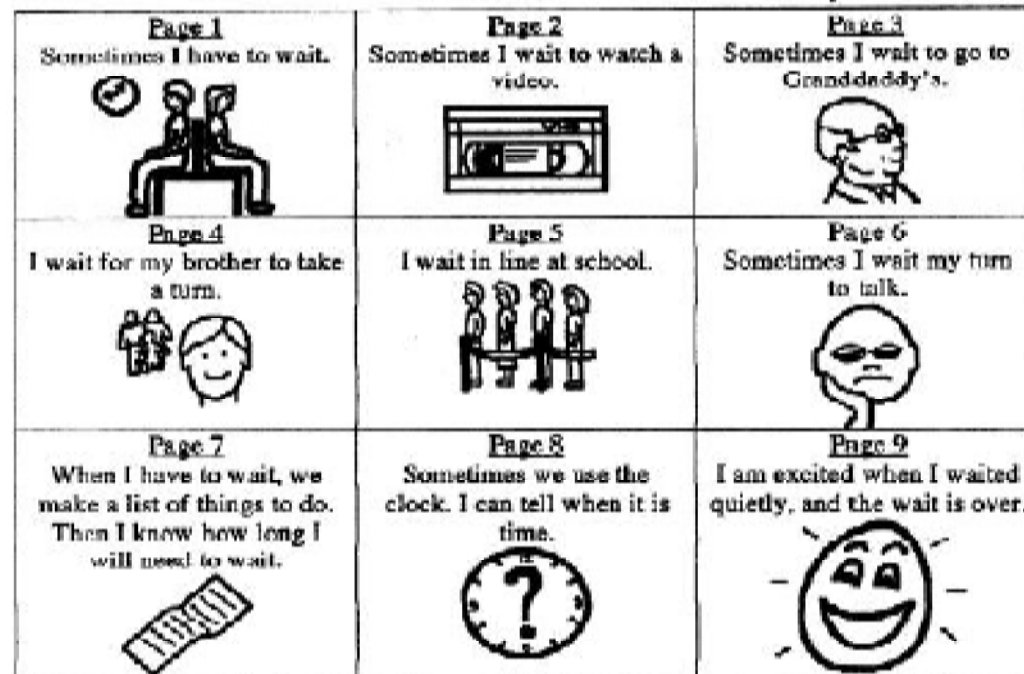


Figure 2. "Waiting" Social story.
Note: From *The Picture Communication Symbols Bank*, by R. Mayer-Johnson, 1981, Solano Beach, CA: Author. Copyright © 1981 by Mayer-Johnson. Used with permission.



Social Stories

- There are many commercially available social story products available, and for many children these are useful.
- Other children will benefit from a more personalized story that uses;
 - Actual photographs of the child, setting and significant others
 - Names of significant others
 - Personalized information about the child's highly individualized experience



2. Video Modeling

- Useful tool for indentifying appropriate behaviour in self and peers
- Allows child to see, in a non-anxiety provoking situation, the reinforcement and negative effects of appropriate and inappropriate behaviour respectively.
- Can stop and “dissect” the moment. (e.g. draw attention to a peer’s facial expression)



3. Power Cards

- The Power Card strategy connects an appropriate or desired behavior or social skill to an individual's area of special interest.
- Power Cards involve scenarios wherein a child's special interest, a hero, or a model connected to a special interest models a solution to a problem similar to the one experienced by the child.



The Power Puff Girls Play a Game

The Power Puff Girls like to play games. Sometimes they win the game. When they win games the Power Puff Girls feel happy. They might smile; give each other a “high five”, or say, “Yah”. Sometimes they lose the game. When they lose games the Power Puff Girls might not feel happy. They might take a deep breath; say “good job” to their friend; or say “maybe next time”. The Power Puff Girls want everyone to have fun playing games. They want you to remember these three things when playing games the Power Puff way:

- 1. Games should be fun for everyone.
- 2. If you win a game you can: Smile; give a “high five”, or say, “Yah”.
- 3. If you lose a game you can: take a deep breath; say “good job” to your friend; or say “maybe next time”.
- Play games the Power Puff way and your friends will have fun playing with you.



4. Shaping/Desensitization

- Refers to starting with a very small goal and only increasing the expectation when the child has achieved the small goal.
 - E.g. Sit in circle for 1 minute, for five days in a row before being expected to sit for 1.25 minutes.
 - Your baseline data will help determine what the initial goal should be and the ongoing collection of data tell you when to increase the goal/expectation



5. Tokens and Other Reinforcement Systems

- Social behaviour is typically maintained by social reinforcement which may not be overly important to a child with ASD.
- Additional contingencies, both positive and negative may be needed for the child with ASD long after his/her peers have begun to respond for social reinforcement.



6. Modeling and Observational Learning

- Requires appropriate peer models in a relevant social context.
- Child is taught to attend to the natural cues in the environment that should prompt a particular social behaviour.
 - Example: Instead of the EA saying, “Line up,” when she hears the school bell, she would say, “I hear the bell. Look, what are your friends doing?”
 - Additional prompting may initially be required, but the eventual goal is to bring the child’s behaviour under control of the naturally occurring stimulus



7. Role Play & Scripting

- Can be done with puppets or peers and can include the learner.
- It involves looking for cues, indentifying skills, and rectifying problems.
- Is most effective when carried out just prior to a real life situation in which the skill is needed.



9. Teaching Turn-taking

- Conversations are basically sophisticated turn-taking situations.
- Even non-verbal children can be taught turn-taking through simple play activities.
- Children must be able to attend in order to take turns.



10. Teaching Specific Age-appropriate skills

- Children will get left out of the peer group if they are unable to engage in the activities that the peer group enjoys (Peer group is not necessarily the same age group.)
- For children who have limited play interests or prefer solitary activities, we can employ the Premack Principle, in which access to the preferred activity is contingent upon a period of time learning the new skill (riding a bike, catching a ball etc.)



The Language of Social Skills

- Refers to a variety of verbal and non-verbal behaviours, including, but not limited to:
 - Getting and giving information
 - Maintaining (two-sided) conversation
 - Idioms and expressions
 - Telling and understanding jokes (double meanings)
 - Understanding and using gestures



The Language of Social Skills

- Unlike typically developing children who learn the Language of Social Skills through participating in the world, children with ASD usually need direct instruction in these areas as well as increased opportunities for practice.



Feedback & Questions

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Future Training Events

Please visit www.Kerrysplace.org
and/or www.BEST4Autism.ca for
future parent and professional learning
opportunities.

Thank you!