



Help, Hope, Solutions
Helping Our Clients Make Sense of the World

Teaching Social Skills to Children with Social Deficits

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Social Skills Defined

- It's a matter of dealing with the people around you
- A set of skills that allow us to communicate, relate and socialize with others
- The personal skills needed for successful social communication and interaction
- Social skills include both verbal and nonverbal forms of communication.
- Social skills are the way others determine our status, consider us as potential friends or mates, and consider us for employment or promotions in the workplace



Social Skills – Defined Differently

- Looked at differently depending on age group
 - Early ages – look at engagement
 - Toddlers/Preschool – look at play skills – main avenue to assess how kids interact with each other (usually goes beyond sharing and turn taking)
 - School age – Social thinking



Social Skills – Defined Differently

ENGAGEMENT

- Eye contact
- Engage in back and forth exchanges
- Referencing

SOCIAL SKILLS

- Sharing
- Turn taking
- PLAY!!!!

SOCIAL THINKING

- Being part of group
- Perspective taking
- Other people have thoughts



Social Skills – Imbedded in all developmental areas

Language

Social

Cognition



Engagement

Relationship with another person

Starts early

First sign is EYE CONTACT

EYE CONTACT – should be your first goal!!

Do not “work” on eye contact by instructing the child to “Look”

Strategies:

Engagement is not only about TALKING!!!

Position yourself face to face with your child as much as possible

Every instance of EC should be considered an initiation (no language should be required at first!!)

Imitate what your child is doing (No matter how silly)

Label what your child is doing



Social Skills

- Sharing - use, occupy, or enjoy (something) jointly with another or others
- Turn Taking – back and forth exchange

Play - Play is the universal language of childhood.

It is through play that children understand each other and make sense of the world around them.



Play

Play levels:

- Sensory/gross motor play
- Cause and effect play
- Toy play
- Pretend play – thematic
- Pretend play – dramatic



Play and ASD

- Object oriented
- In isolation
- Ritualistic
- Non functional
- Repetitive
- Limited interests
- Rigid



Play and ASD

Objectives

- Watching others
- Imitation
- Increase repertoire of actions/actions with language
- Increase initiations
- Increase reciprocations
- Increase # of exchanges
- Decrease rigidity



Social Thinking

Social thinking is what we do when we interact with people: we think about them. And how we think about people affects how we behave, which in turn affects how others respond to us, which in turn affects our own emotions.

But for many individuals, this process is anything but natural. And this often has nothing to do with conventional measures of intelligence.

In fact, many people score high on IQ and standardized tests, yet do not intuitively learn the nuances of social communication and interaction.



Social Thinking

- ✦ Social thinking requires perspective taking skills
- ✦ Perspective taking
 - Perceiving physical, social, or emotional situations from a point of view other than one's own
 - Putting yourself in someone else's shoes
- ✦ Perspective taking levels
 - Level I – Severely Impaired Perspective Taker (SIPT)
 - Level II – Emerging Perspective Taker (EPT)
 - Level III – Impaired Interactive Perspective Taker (IIPT)



Severely Impaired Perspective Taker

- ❖ Inability to take the perspective of others – not able to read people's intentions, motives, thoughts
- ❖ Limited development of spoken language – mostly requesting
- ❖ No understanding of abstract language
- ❖ Limited attention span
- ❖ Limited understanding of conceptual world – create own structures that include their personal pleasures and routines (lots of self stimulatory behaviors)
- ❖ Little to no awareness of others – require a lot of adult participation to keep the child engaged
- ❖ Significant sensory challenges
- ❖ Difficulties with transitions
- ❖ Limited problem solving
- ❖ Limited social motivation to engage



Emerging Perspective Taker

- ✿ Inability to efficiently take the perspective of others – consider thoughts, motives
- ✿ Learning disabilities – manifest as weakness in reading comprehension and, written expression, math word problems and organizational skills
- ✿ Language difficulties – are verbal but have expressive and receptive language delays, don't initially share their thoughts about the word spontaneously; limited in original thoughts
- ✿ Lack of abstract language understanding
- ✿ Lack of cognitive verb understanding – think, know, guess, decide, consider
- ✿ Limited attention span –distractibility
- ✿ Sensory challenges
- ✿ Transition challenges
- ✿ Lack of critical thinking skills
- ✿ Behavioral problems
- ✿ Quirkiness
- ✿ Social interaction initiation – impaired



Impaired Interaction Perspective Taker

- ✳ Fluid verbal language skills – often using expanded vocabulary
- ✳ Have difficulty following the “hidden rules” (free time in the classroom, recess)
- ✳ Struggle with complex interpretation of social academics – reading comprehension especially writings where many different people’s points of view are presented
- ✳ Difficulties with organizational skills
- ✳ Weakness in developing friendships and working as part of the group
- ✳ Difficulties simultaneously reading the social cues of the face, body, voice, spoken language and environmental context.
- ✳ Excessive competitiveness – insist on winning all the games, may become upset if don’t
- ✳ May not be in touch of own /other’s emotions – limited in recognizing own emotions and making decisions based on interpreting other people’s emotional states.
- ✳ May not initiate language to problem solve or seek attention from others
- ✳ Sensory issues



Social Thinking Curriculum

Prerequisites

- More complex language skills – include:
 - Requesting that goes beyond basic needs
 - Commenting
 - Answering Wh questions (novel)
 - Answering simple and complex Why Questions
 - Answering How questions
- Understanding and ability to explain simple and complex cause and effect relationships (presented with visual cues and without/verbally)
- Making predictions with and without visual supports
- Ability to accurately recall information




Being Part of a Group

Skills Required

- Keep your body in the group / establish and maintain physical presence / sit with the group
- Keep your brain in the group / “listen with your ears”
- Listen with your whole body
 - keep your hands and feet quiet,
 - orient your chest toward the person who is talking;
 - keep your brain in the group by thinking about what other people are saying;
 - listen with your eyes by looking at people’s faces and eyes when they are talking to you;
 - listen with your mouth by keeping quiet when is not your turn to talk



Being Part of a Group Strategies

- Use mats to teach children about personal space and being part of a group 
- Use pictures or figurines to show specific examples of not being part of the group 
- Use tokens systems to teach and reinforce expected target behaviors 

Token board



Tokens:



Verbal and Nonverbal Communication

- Verbal Communication
 - Commenting – reciprocal and contingent
 - Answering questions
 - Asking questions
- Nonverbal Communication
 - Eye contact
 - Facial expressions
 - Gestures
- Fluency – the ability to use both forms of communication fast



Verbal and Nonverbal Communication Strategies

- Verbal Communication
 - Teaching needs to concentrate on contingent contextual commenting and questioning
- Nonverbal Communication
 - Eye contact – teaching the meaning of eye contact and practicing through the “Eye game” and other nonverbal games
 - Facial expressions – concentrate on isolating the facial features that make up a specific facial expression
 - Gestures – isolate and teach the meaning of gestures. Have kids try to convey messages by using body language only
- Fluency – practice through games like hot potato on specific topics



Regulating Emotions

- High emotional alertness – leads to difficulties regulating emotions
- Use emotion meter (see attached handout)
- Develop “Taking charge of my emotions” with each child (see attached handout)



EMOTION METER

5

I Lost Control!

4

I'm Mad!

3

I'm really nervous
* almost mad *

2

Feeling OK

1

Feeling GREAT!
* I can handle this! *

0

I Don't Care!
* I show no emotion *

TAKING CHARGE OF MY EMOTIONS

-STRATEGIES FOR _____ -

Emotion Meter	My behavior	What do my friends think/do	Things I can do
5 I lost control!			
4 I'm mad			
3 Nervous Almost mad			
2 Feeling OK			
1 Feeling Great!			
0 Don't care! No emotion			

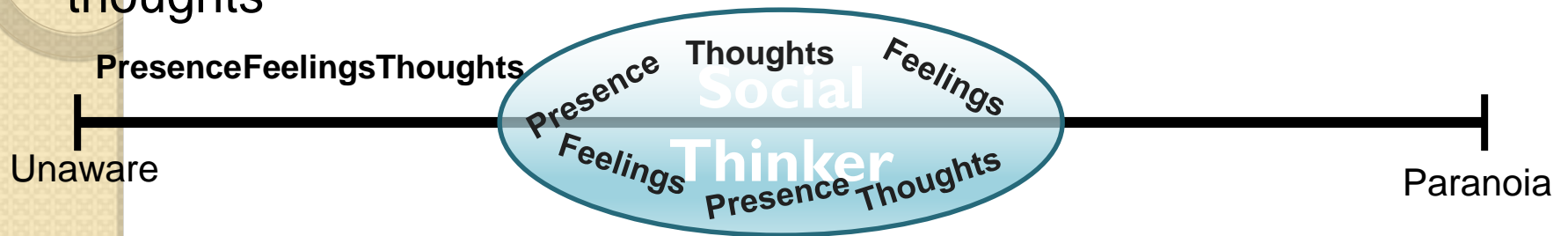
TAKING CHARGE OF MY EMOTIONS

-STRATEGIES FOR SAM-

Emotion Meter	My behavior	What do my friends think/do	Things I can do
5 I lost control!	I show my emotions with my whole body <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I show a mad face • I cry • I kick my legs • I hit • I scream • I throw myself on floor 	They have "don't want to be around you" thoughts - thoughts that people get when they don't want to be around other people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask for a break • Get out of the room • Squeeze my hands together • Talk myself through this
4 I'm mad	I show my emotions with my voice & face <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I scream • I show a mad face • I cry 	They may get "don't want to be around you" thoughts - thoughts that people get when they don't want to be around other people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Close my mouth and hum • Take long, deep breaths • Get a glass of water • Think of something that makes me happy
3 Nervous Almost mad	I show my emotions with my words <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I protest • I talk about how I feel • I cry 	They may be scared They may want to move away They may offer to help me They may ignore me	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Count to 10 • Take deep breaths • Think of something that makes me happy • Try to negotiate
2 Feeling OK	I show my emotions with my whole body <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I show a neutral face • I participate in games and conversations • I use my nice voice 	They may have "I do want to be around you thoughts". They are happy to play with me They want to share with me	I'm good - I need to keep it up!
1 Feeling Great!	I show my emotions with my whole body <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I show a happy face • I participate and/or initiate games and conversations • I use my happy voice 	They have "I want to be around you thoughts" They are happy to play with me They respond to my ideas and They play games with me	I'm great! - I love feeling like this!
0 Don't care! No emotion	I don't spend any time here I like showing others how I feel		


Social Thinking Obstacles

- ❖ Limited awareness of other people's presence, feelings and thoughts



- ❖ Limited ability to understand how what I do now influences the way you behave towards me now and LATER;
 - consequences we apply may not teach the relevant behaviors/ways to react (teaching a kid to say “sorry” after he hurt someone/took something from other child – teaches him that “sorry” fixes everything; this makes us feel better but does not show our AS child how the other person feels - intervention needs to use strategies that helps our child experience same emotion as peer/sibling)

Thinking & Remembering About Others - People Files

 Obstacle – remembering and using information about others – for successful interaction

 Solution – create people files

- Use easy to manipulate / accessible materials (envelopes, CD cases, small boxes, etc)

- Create one “file” for each of your child’s friends

- Use red color / paper to state dislikes

- Use green color / paper to state likes


- Recall information

- Place them all in the person’s file

- Use that information to help your child make educated guesses about others - pick presents for a particular friend or activities that they can do together


Others Thinking About You

Good / Green vs. Weird / Red Thoughts

 When we interact with other people we have thoughts about them and they have thoughts about us. Children with ASD – better able to label/define their thoughts but not other people's thoughts

 2 types of thoughts: good thoughts & weird thoughts

- Good thoughts – thoughts generated by positive behaviors; can replace language with green thoughts
- Weird Thoughts = thoughts generated by negative behaviors – can replace language with red thoughts/don't want to be around you thoughts

 Children with ASD have a difficult time understanding how thoughts “stick” with a person and influence the way that person may react towards them in the future

- Teach children that behaviors are more important than words

 Demonstration

Social Behavior Mapping

Expected vs. Unexpected





- ❖ Social Behavior Mapping
 - teach individuals about specific relationships between their behaviors, other's perspectives, other's actions (consequences) and the student's own emotions.
 - Teaches individuals how their behavior influences the way other people act towards them → how that makes them feel, etc
- ❖ Great tool to use at home, in a community, at school
- ❖ Can be used for one or more behaviors
- ❖ Can write it out or use pictures for children who can't/don't like to read
- ❖ Start with unexpected and move to expected
- ❖ For each unexpected behavior listed you **MUST** have an expected behavior!!

Social Behavior Mapping

Unexpected

Social Behavior Mapping

Behaviors That Are UNEXPECTED for: Ethan

<i>Unexpected Behaviors</i>	<i>How They Make Others Feel</i>	<i>Consequences You Experience</i>	<i>How does that make you feel</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hitting friends 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scared 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They don't want to play with me anymore • They move away • They cry 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sad • Disappointed • Upset 

Social Behavior Mapping

Expected

Social Behavior Mapping

Behaviors That Are EXPECTED for: Ethan

<i>Expected Behaviors</i>	<i>How They Make Others Feel</i>	<i>Consequences You Experience</i>	<i>How does that make you feel</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask for or give High 5 • Ask for or give fist bump 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Happy • Excited 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Return High 5/fist bump • Play with me • Stay close to me • They are happy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Happy • Excited • Successful 

Managing Behaviors

- Be proactive – remind your students what the rules are (can be verbal, visual or textual reminders)
- Use “Social Behavior Mapping” to teach how “unexpected behaviors” make other people feel and how they can be replaced with “expected behaviors)

