

Social Skills Tip Sheet

To help increase positive interaction between children, it is helpful to develop and increase in behavior such as eye contact and initiation, increase their ability to look to others for assistance, and increase their ability to engage in reciprocal play with others. The following are ideas to assist in development of interactive skills:

- Involve the child in turn taking activities that require shared space and materials. Provide structure and support to help the child remain engaged and wait his or her turn. Use familiar, short songs or counting activities in a predictable way.

- Encourage the child to join a peer who is using a favorite toy. Model and parallel talk appropriate ways for the child to join his peer (i.e. “First peer’s turn, then child’s turn”, or engage the child in a two person activity like building a marble works tower together). Use pictures to identify the play sequence or incorporate “your turn” “my turn” cards.

- Observe child’s cues for stress and over-stimulation. Help the child use coping strategies to remain involved in the interaction or reengage after a brief break.

- Incorporate motor component (i.e. rocking chair, ball, t-stool, or swing) to maintain interest and attention.

- Use sensory materials such as balloons and bubbles to increase eye contact, following, and vocalization with the adult.

- Engage the child in activities that are motivating for the child and involve proximity and contact with the adults (i.e. tickling, rocking on feet, gross motor activities).

In addition to the previous tips, social narratives may be beneficial to help describe appropriate social skills to children ahead of time. The following gives steps and examples of how to create such stories (some great web resources and book lists are provided in this packet also.)

Writing a social narrative:

1. Write a sentence about the topic of social narrative. For younger children it helps if it is written in first person.

Example: My name is Peggy and this is my story about doing chores.

2. Write a sentence defining or describing the topic of the story.

Example: Chores are things I do around the house to help the house stay clean and organized.

3. Write a sentence giving specific examples of what might be involved in the activity/event. (For some topics, this may require more than one sentence.)

Example: My mom and dad will write down the things I have to do so I can remember. Some chores that I will do are washing the dishes, making my bed, and feeding the dog.

4. Write a sentence explaining what the expectations are for the child in this situation.

Example: I will need to try and do my chores every day. I can choose to do them in the morning or at night. If I forget to do them, mom and dad will remind me and I need to listen to them.

5. Write a sentence explaining what the child can do in the situation if they are feeling nervous, scared, overwhelmed, confused, mad, sad, etc.

Example: If I am confused about what to do, I can check my list or ask mom and dad for help.

6. Write a sentence describing the outcome/reward/end result of the situation.

Example: Mom and dad will be very happy if I do my chores every day. If I do my chores everyday, I will get to choose an ice cream treat on Saturdays. I can do it!

Other Reminders:

- The story should answer all relevant “wh” questions;
- The story should be developmentally appropriate (use appropriate vocabulary, length, details, etc);
- Adding pictures with the words can support comprehension for younger children;
- Write the story in a positive tone;
- The story should help the child know what is coming and what to do;
- Avoid using absolutely language, such as: you will, you must, have to, etc.
- Try to use concrete but flexible language, such as you can, might, sometimes, etc.
- The exception to this rule may be with safety concepts such as: “I have to stay inside when I am not with mom and dad.”

Web Resources:

http://www.autismhelp.info/htm/printfiles_index.htm

www.thegraycenter.org

<http://www.autismweb.com/resources.htm>

www.socialstories.com

www.polyxo.com/socialstories

<http://www.sandbox-learning.com/>

<http://www.cccoe.net/social/skillslist.htm>

Articles about teaching social skills (Just a short list):

Coe, D. A., Matson, J. L., Craigie, C. J., & Gossen, M. A. (1991). Play skills of autistic children: Assessment and instruction. *Child & Family Behavior Therapy*, *13*, 13–40.

Garrison-Harrell, L., Kamps, D., & Kravits, T. (1997). The effects of peer networks on social-communicative behaviors for students with autism. *Focus on Autism & Other Developmental Disabilities*, *12*, 241–254.

Goldstein, H., & Cisar, C. L. (1992). Promoting interaction during sociodramatic play: Teaching scripts to typical preschoolers and classmates with disabilities. *Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis*, *25*, 265–280.

Gonzalez-Lopez, A., & Kamps, D. M. (1997). Social skills training to increase social interactions between children with autism and their typical peers. *Focus on Autism & Other Developmental Disabilities*, *12*, 2–14.

Gray, C. A., & Garand, J. D. (1993). Social stories: Improving responses of students with autism with accurate social information. *Focus on Autistic Behavior*, *8*, 1–10.

In addition to this short list of articles, here is a great website that has numerous articles on social skills training for teachers, but also can be used by parents.

<http://www.teachervision.fen.com/autism/resource/10154.html>

Book List:

McEvoy, M. A., Odom, S. L., & McConnell, S. R. (1992). Peer social competence intervention for young children with disabilities. In S. L. Odom, S. R. McConnell, & M. A. McEvoy (Eds.), *Social competence of young children with disabilities: Issues and strategies for intervention* (pp. 113–133). Baltimore, MD: Paul Brookes.

Gray, C. A. (1998). Social stories and comic strip conversations with students with Asperger syndrome and high-functioning autism. In E. Schopler & G. B. Mesibov (Eds.), *Asperger syndrome or high-functioning autism? Current issues in autism* (pp. 167–198). New York, NY: Plenum Press.

These were just a couple of books available. Rather than giving a comprehensive list, I am including a web address for a bookstore that has a lot of books on social skills as well as other topics. In addition, many of these books are housed in our library, so if parents see one they like, look for it in the resource library. Hope this is helpful!

<http://www.autismbookstore.com/Merchant2/merchant.mvc>