Starting a Social Skills Group

Laura Ferguson, M.Ed., BCBA
“Qualitative impairment in Social Interaction, as manifested by at least two of the following”:

- Impairment in nonverbal communication (gestures, eye gaze, etc.)
- Failure in developing peer relationships
- Lack of spontaneous sharing of enjoyment, interests, etc.
- Lack of social or emotional reciprocity
Today we will....

Look at why focusing on social skills instruction is important

What a social skills group should include

Some examples of strategies
Focusing on social skills

• If we do not focus on developing social skills
  Individuals with autism may....
  * have difficulty developing friendships
  * feel alone or isolated
  * demonstrate trouble in school
Focusing on social skills

• By outlining social skills instruction we insure that all students have explicit instruction on the skill deficits

• Individuals with autism can focus on deficits in one on one settings then generalize skills to the natural environment.
Today we are going to focus on

Developing social skills groups for individuals on the autism spectrum.
Teaching social skills

• Individuals with autism display difficulties with engaging with same age peers.

» This includes:
  • Reciprocal exchanges
  • Imitation
Social skills groups

• Social skills groups are used to teach individuals with autism ways to appropriately interact with typically developing peers.

• Typically involve:
  » Small groups of 2 to 8 individuals with an adult facilitator

http://autismpdc.fpg.unc.edu/content/social-skills-groups
Social skills groups

Most social skill group meetings include:

Instruction
– role-playing or practice
– feedback to help learners

http://autismpdc.fpg.unc.edu/content/social-skills-groups
What do we target?
Social skills groups should target:

- perspective-taking
- conversation skills
- friendship skills
- problem-solving
- social competence
- emotional regulation
- theory of mind
- problem solving skills

http://autismmpdc.fpg.unc.edu/content/social-skills-groups
Specific skills to teach

Specific skills taught should include:

- initiation
- Responding
- Maintaining
- greeting
- giving/accepting compliments
- turn taking
- sharing
- asking for help

http://autismpdc.fpg.unc.edu/content/social-skills-groups
Specific skills

- Select individuals that need specific social skills instruction

- Make sure the individuals have similar deficits in similar areas of social interaction, so the areas of focus match their needs.
Where do we start?

Use assessment strategies that both teachers and parents can fill out to identify the individuals largest deficit areas.
Autism Social Skills Profile

Scott Bellini

Child’s Name: ___________________________ FIRST MIDDLE LAST
Birthdate: _______ Age: _____ Sex: □ Female □ Male Today’s Date: ___________ MO. DAY YEAR
School: __________________________________________________________ Grade: _____

Your Name: ___________________________ FIRST MIDDLE LAST
Relationship to Child: □ Mother □ Father □ Guardian □ Other ______________

Street Address: ________________________________________________________

City: ___________________________ State: _____ Zip: ______________

Phone: (_______) ________________

The following phrases describe skills or behaviors that your child might exhibit during social interactions or in social situations. Please rate HOW OFTEN your child exhibits each skill or behavior independently, without assistance from others (i.e., without reminders, cueing and/or prompting). You should base your judgment on your child’s behavior over the last 3 months.
# Autism Social Skills Profile

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skill Area</th>
<th>How Often</th>
<th>Brief Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Recognizes the Facial Expressions of Others</td>
<td>N 1 S 2 O 3 V 4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognizes the Nonverbal Cues, or “Body Language” of Others</td>
<td>N 1 S 2 O 3 V 4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Requests Assistance From Others</td>
<td>N 1 S 2 O 3 V 4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understands the Jokes or Humor of Others</td>
<td>N 1 S 2 O 3 V 4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintains Eye Contact During Conversations</td>
<td>N 1 S 2 O 3 V 4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
How do we start initiation?

*Pair peers with reinforcement*

Set up peers as the “giver of all things good”

Have peers hand out reinforcers for “free.”

Peers are then paired with reinforcement.
Next step: Develop a plan

- Now that you understand what skills all the individuals involved need to focus on.

- DEVELOP A PLAN!!!!
Developing a plan

• Now that we know the deficit areas we need to develop a plan of how to teach certain skills.

• Decide
  – How are you going to focus on certain skills?
  – What activities can help increase these skills?
  – What is the plan for generalizing these skills?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time of day</th>
<th>Target skill</th>
<th>Standard addressed</th>
<th>Progress Monitoring</th>
<th>Level of support</th>
<th>Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Study Skills</td>
<td>Engage in appropriate conversation</td>
<td>Standard 1 Speaking and listening</td>
<td>Behavior observation across settings</td>
<td>1:1 setting with generalization</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Let’s take a look at instruction

• Look at these specific activities.
• Decide what area they are focusing on
• How this could be taught
• How to generalize these skills
GROUP 1: BEGINNING SOCIAL SKILLS  
SKILL 4: Asking a Question

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STEPS</th>
<th>TRAINER NOTES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Decide what you’d like to know more about.</td>
<td>Ask about something you don’t understand, something you didn’t hear, or something confusing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Decide whom to ask.</td>
<td>Think about who has the best information on a topic; consider asking several people.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Think about different ways to ask your question and pick one way.</td>
<td>Think about wording; raise your hand; ask nonchalldingly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Pick the right time and place to ask your question.</td>
<td>Wait for a pause; wait for privacy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Ask your question</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
SUGGESTED CONTENT FOR MODELING DISPLAYS:

A. School or neighborhood: Main actor asks teacher to explain something he/she finds unclear.

B. Home: Main actor asks mother to explain new curfew decision.

C. Peer group: Main actor asks classmate about missed schoolwork.

COMMENTS:

Trainers are advised to model only single, answerable questions. In role play, trainees should be instructed to do likewise.
Now that we have practiced

- The previous slides demonstrate areas that need specific training and ways to work focus on these specific areas.
- Once we have focused on these specific areas we then need to role play to make sure these skills can be generalized.
Role Play

• This involves ‘acting out’ scenarios that focus on specific skills.

• Demonstrate
  • Several different scenarios
  • With several different peers and adults
  • In several different settings
Video Modeling

A form of observational learning in which desired behaviors are learned by watching a video demonstration and then imitating the behavior of the model.
Individuals observe themselves performing a behavior successfully on video, then imitate the targeted behavior.
Other-as-model Video Modeling

Individuals observe someone else, preferably same gender and age as themselves, performing a behavior successfully on video, then imitate the targeted behavior.
Generalization

• Now that the skills have been taught and focused on in small structured settings, make sure to generalize these skills to the natural environment.

• Focus on these skills that they would have to demonstrate these skills with peers and adults.
References


Thank you so much for coming!!

Questions??
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