

SOCIAL SKILLS

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What Are Social Skills?

- Social skills are a complex system of behaviors that are central to communication between individuals
- These skills include giving, receiving, and interpreting messages, as well as include both verbal and nonverbal behavior.
- Most social skills are **learned**, not instinctive.
- Skills increase with social reinforcement from others.
- When the child experiences social isolation or a developmental disability is impacting on their social skills, they **need** feedback from others in order to develop those skills.

Hierarchy of Social Skills

- Basic Interactions
- Communication Skills
- Conflict Resolution
- Team Building Skills

Basic Interaction

- Make eye contact
- Use each other's names
- Share material
- Form groups naturally when needed in classroom setting
- Follow role assignments in group or game setting

Communication Skills

- Use appropriate volume when speaking
- Listens to speaker
- Makes sure everyone can speak
- Waits until speaker is finished before speaking
- Takes turns

Monitoring the way you talk

- Affects the meaning of what is said and how it is received.
- I never said you were stupid.
 - *meaning: someone else did*
- I never **said** you were stupid.
 - *meaning: it was implied*
- I never said **YOU** were stupid.
 - *meaning: someone else is*
- I never said you were **stupid**.
 - *meaning: I said something else*

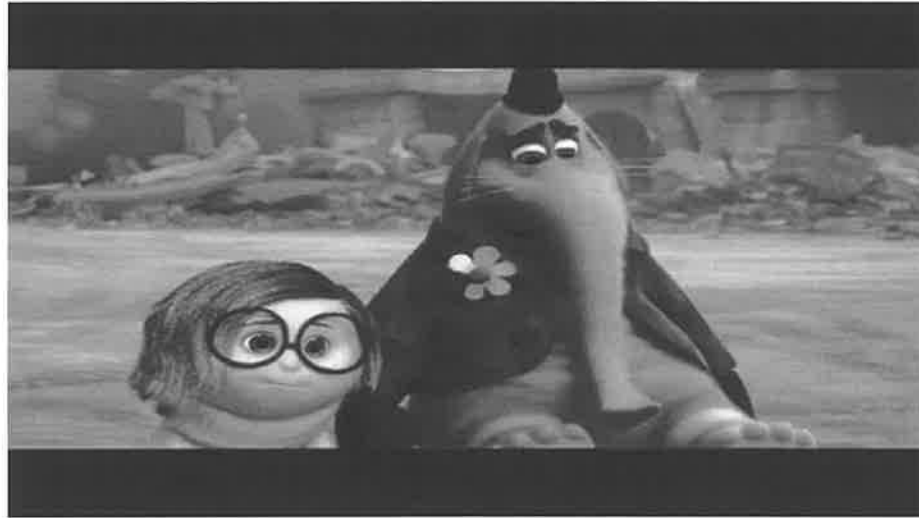
Conflict Resolution

- Reach consensus
- Respect opinion of others
- Compromises
- Capable of negotiating
- Explore points of view
- Can share independent thought

Team Building Skills

- Can encourage peers
- Offers help
- Checks for understanding
- Disagrees with idea, not person

Acknowledging the Feeling



DISCUSSION

Validate the Emotion

"I can see how you would feel that way."
 "That must be really hard."
 "I feel the same way."
 "How frustrating!"
 "I bet you're frustrated."
 "I'm here for you."

Emotionally Validating Statements

Wow... I'm truly sorry to hear that.
Do you need anything? How can I help?
I can understand why you feel lost.
You must feel devastated...
Even though you feel lost, know that I'm here for you.
We can talk about this for as long as you need.

Invalidating Statements

"What's the big deal?"
 "You should feel lucky."
 "You are too sensitive."
 "Don't be such a wimp."
 "If you hadn't done that it wouldn't have happened."
 "I don't want to hear it."

Special Considerations

Body Language: Keep your posture open and comfortable.
 Express empathy
 Ask questions
 Avoid blaming

Activity Examples

■ Turn-taking

- *Team drawing*
- *Build a tower as a team*
- *Go Fish*
- *Candyland*
- *Sorry*
- *Uno*

- *See handout for more ideas*

Strategies

■ Modeling/Practice

■ Opportunity

- *Allow mistakes to happen and guide them towards appropriate turn taking.*
- *Practice having them say "my turn" and "your turn"*

■ Reminders

- *Verbal reminders: "it's Tommy's turn to roll the dice"*
- *Auditory cues: use a timer (sand or sound) to give an auditory cue. For example "when the timer goes off, it's Tommy's turn to play the video game"*
- *Visual reminders*

Non Verbal Communication from Parents

- These are very important as they send a message without using words.
- They strengthen verbal messages.
- Examples:
 - *Stopping and giving your child full attention when you ask how his/her day at school was. This sends him the message that you're very interested, it also shows how to give full attention to someone including peers and teachers.*
 - *Using a flat tone of voice or a frown when you're doing something fun together might send the message that you don't really want to be there. Children may feel rejected or let down if this happens consistently. This can translate to activities in the classroom as well.*

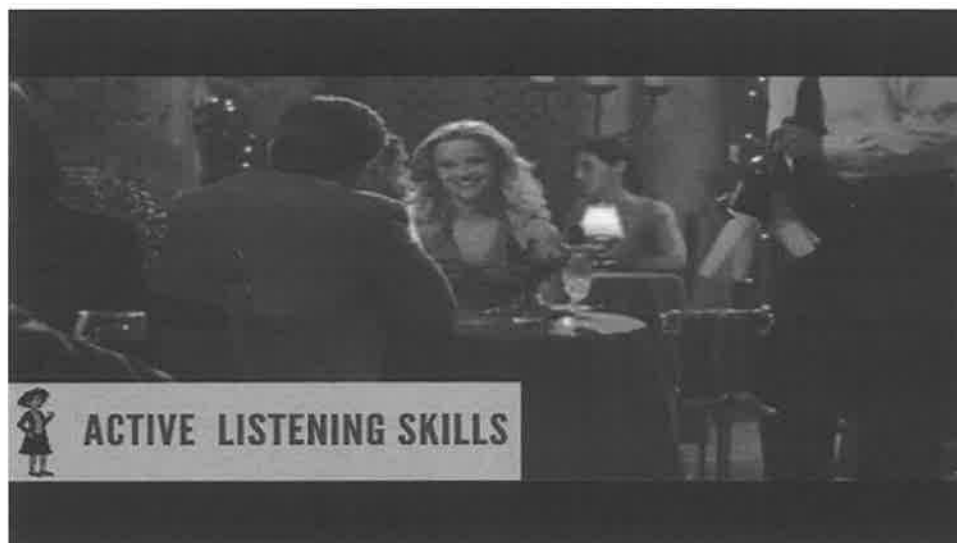
Ways to practice non-verbal communication with your child

- Touch your child's arm to let your child know you're interested and care about what she's saying or doing.
- Turn to face your child and use consistent eye contact.
- Try to avoid looking at your phone when they are sharing something with you.
- Bend or crouch down to your child's level. This shows you want to be close and helps your child feel more secure. It also reinforces eye contact, especially for younger children.

Ways to practice non-verbal communication with your child

- **Reflect on what they are saying. If they are saying they were bothered by something that happened with their peers, you may want to say, "I understand that you were bothered.."**
 - ***This teaches active listening.***
- **Use a pleasant tone of voice with a relaxed body posture and facial expression when you talk with your child. This makes it easy for your child to tell the difference when you are disciplining them as your body language and tone will be different.**

Active Listening



Things to note...

- Have realistic expectations in regards to length of time it will take to see progress and development of skills
- Help your child to understand and express their feelings in a healthy way by mirroring healthy communication and social skills.
- Recognize and praise small accomplishments and efforts.
- Plan for transitions.
- Create a safe place for them to practice, not make them feel like they are being measured or observed.
- Model social skills, especially eye contact and being present in a conversation (i.e looking up from your phone).

Social Skills to Practice

Eye Contact

- Direct Instruction and Reinforcement. When they are speaking and not making eye contact, you can mention things like or "look at the person you want to be listening to," and redirecting their eyes to yours using your fingers.
 - *Example: "If you're looking at me, I know you are talking to me and not the person sitting next to me."*
 - *"We always look into the eyes of the person who is talking."*
 - *"Keep looking into your friend's eyes until he is finished talking, so he knows you're paying attention to him.". If you don't want to look into someone's eyes, try looking at their forehead.*
- This skill teaches active listening and improves confidence as they age and speak to larger crowds.
 - *"When it's your turn to talk, the other kids will look at you!"*

Listening Skills



Social Skills to Practice

Practice giving & receiving compliments

- This skill teaches kids to encourage one another, rather than compare and compete with their peers.
- This skill can lead students to become leaders and confident, as they learn how to be a part of a team, rather than constantly comparing themselves to their siblings or peers.
- Observe their accomplishments and interests and commend them for it!
- Have them practice giving each person in the family a compliment about things that aren't about their appearance, i.e. "Dad dinner was really good, thank you" or "Thanks for sharing with me."
 - Also give them a compliment and teach them how to reciprocate, by either saying "thank you" or by returning a compliment.

Social Skills to Practice

Holding a Conversation

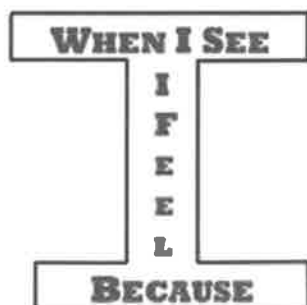
- Ask them open ended questions. For example, instead of asking "did you have a good day," you can ask,
 - *"How was your day," and follow up with more open ended questions like,*
 - *"What did you learn about,"*
 - *"How were your friends."*
 - *If there is a challenge with them, you can ask "tell me three things about your day"*
- Eye contact, eye contact, eye contact!

Social Skills to Practice

Holding a Conversation

- Instead of telling them things such as whatever is for dinner, or what the schedule is for the evening, have them ask!
- **Play the question game, where you ask a question, and they answer and then ask another question in return. This game will lead to development of conversation skill and you can elaborate on *their answers and ask related questions.***

Social Skills to Practice



I-Messages

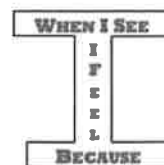
- I-Messages are important for your child to learn, but is a helpful tool for parents as well.
- It is a clear and effective way to share with your child how you're feeling and why you are feeling that way. This is a useful tool in disciplining, as it does not shame or blame them when you are frustrated or upset with them.
- Using an "I" Message is a way to express your own needs, expectations, problems, feelings or concerns in a way that does not attack them, but helps them understand the effect their

I-Messages

Three parts to an I-Message (you don't have to use all three, nor in this order, although it is usually the most effective)

1. Describe the specific behavior
 - *"When I see you do..."*
2. Describe how it makes you feel
 - *"...it makes me feel..."*
3. Describe the specific effect it is having on you
 - *"because..."*

Ex. "When I see you not doing your homework after I've asked you to, it makes me feel upset because I feel like you are ignoring me. If you would like help with it, you can ask me and we can do it together."



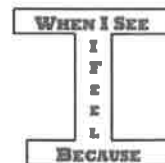
DISCUSSION

Can you give an example of an I-Message?
Can you give an example of the same message
but not in I-Message form?

I-Messages

They can also be used positively!

- "I am so proud of you for helping your sister clean up her toys. I love seeing what a kind and helpful brother you are."
- These I-Messages can show what you value and expect from your child, and they will understand what brings them positive praise versus corrective I-Messages.
- These combat "Because I said so" attitudes.
- **Can you give an example of a positive I-Message?**



Remember....

1. Keep your voice and tone consistent with the intensity of your feelings.
2. Only address the present problem, do not the past into the I-Message (ex. I am upset because you **never** do..."
3. Do not use overtly strong feelings such as "I feel like you don't love me because"
4. Only use I-Messages when appropriate, if overused, it might seem like your feelings are the only ones that matter.

Social Skills to Practice

Role Playing

- **Create scenarios that they can act out with you, as you model appropriate behavior and responses.**
 - *Example: "Jay and Sandy are playing outside in the park. Jay's friends from karate also were at the park and invited him to play with them. What should he do?"*
 - *You can either act them out or think of "what would you do scenarios"*
 - *These can teach your child empathy, giving encouragement, apologizing, and being inclusive.*

Social Skills to Practice

Role Playing

■ "Two ways to solve a problem"

- This activity is similar to the role playing, except your child has to think of two responses to the scenarios, and identify which one they would pick.
- For example, with the previous scenario, one option would be to include Jay's friend and ask for all of them to play together (leadership), another option would be to continue playing with the original friend. A poor choice would be to run off with his karate friends "because he likes them better."
- This activity teaches flexibility, kindness, empathy, and to improve conflict resolution skills.

Social Skills Activities

■ "Emotion Charades"

- *For younger kids*
- *One player acts out a certain emotion and the other players must guess which feeling is being portrayed*
- *Can help young children think about and discuss emotions*

■ Drills that help kids read facial expressions

- *When you can anticipate facial expressions, you can better anticipate what others will do*
- *Considered more "prosocial" or helpful towards others*

■ Checker Stack: A game for keeping up a two-way conversation

- *Can be helpful for children who are diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder or those who have difficulty maintaining a conversation with peers*
- *This two-player game requires kids to stay on topic and take turns*
- *Use a set of stackable tokens or checkers. Player one sets down a token and says something to initiate a conversation. Player two will respond with an appropriate utterance and places another checker on top of the first one. The game continues until the flow is broken or a player makes an irrelevant or off-topic remark.*

Social Skills Activities Part 2

- Community Gardening
 - *Can help hone social skills and improve social competence when engaged in a community or school-based activity*
- Party Games that encourage perspective-taking
 - *Some social skills games come across too "preachy"*
 - *Use a more subtle approach that embeds a social message into a fun and light-hearted game*
 - *Resonym Awkward Moment Card Game – requires players to choose solutions to tricky social problems (11 and up)*
 - *Buffalo The Name Dropping Game (14 and up) – asks players to think of real fictional examples of people who fit a random combination of descriptors (misunderstood vampire, tattooed grandparent, etc). Can help increase motivation to recognize and check their social biases*

Remember....

1. This isn't something to "fix," but a cultivation and development of skills.
2. Practice, practice, practice!
3. Social skills are **learned**, rather than something that is instinctual.
4. Don't give up!

Apps that are helpful for children



ConversationBuilder



ConversationBuilderTeen



Daniel Tiger's Grr-ific Feelings

Questions?

Resources

- <https://synapse.org.au/information-services/social-skills-deficits-fact-sheet.aspx>
- http://www.phschool.com/eteach/professional_development/teaching_the_social_skills/essay.html
- <https://raisingchildren.net.au/toddlers/connecting-communicating/communicating/nonverbal-communication>
- <http://thesocialexpress.com/improving-childs-social-skills-making-eye-contact/>
- <https://centerforparentingeducation.org/library-of-articles/healthy-communication/the-skill-of-i-messages-what-to-say-when-we-are-upset/>