



PROMOTING SOCIAL COMPETENCE

What is Social Competence?



Social Competence refers to children's skills for influencing others and interpreting social situations. These skills are supported by children's executive functioning, language abilities (i.e., syntax, semantics, and pragmatics), and social cognitive processes (Timler et al., 2007). Social Competence "has also been conceptualized as a broader dimension comprised of not only social skills but also the neurological, temperamental, and environmental factors that both help and hinder social skill development and application" (Kennedy, 2018)

What Are Social Skills?

Social skills needed for social competence include:

- initiating conversation
- topic maintenance
- turn taking
- asking and answering questions
- perspective taking
- apologizing
- figurative language and sarcasm
- seeking assistance
- tone of voice and volume
- waiting
- making eye contact
- body language
- making inferences
- empathy
- manners
- personal space

Why Do Social Skills Matter?

.Social skills are foundational skills for developing friends and relationships. They are needed for emotional and social adjustment and are linked to future academic success (Kennedy, 2018). They are linked to problem-solving skills, self-regulation, and persisting through social challenges (Kennedy, 2018)

How To Promote Social Skills

At Home:

Model the social behaviours you wish your child to use. Read stories together and talk about the emotions of characters and how the characters problem solve. Play games! Practice taking turns and identifying emotions as they come up.

At School:

Build social scripts such as greetings, manners, and requests into class lessons and routines where possible. Find opportunities to discuss emotions and how to manage them. Where appropriate, model for the student the social responses you wish for them to use.

References

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SOCIAL SKILL ACTIVITIES FOR SLPS

TEACHING GREETINGS



- Greetings can be targeted through explicit instruction.
- Video Models of Greetings are an Effective Tool. Try Using Meredith Harrah's Youtube Videos. (1) (2)
- Story Books are also a great way to teach and model greetings.
- Some great books to use are: Hello School by Priscilla Burris, Say Hello Like This by Mary Murphy, and The Hello Goodbye Window by Norton Juster and Chris Raschka
- Encourage Parents, Teachers, and Peers to Build Greetings into Everyday Routines For More Practice and Generalization (3)

IDENTIFYING FEELINGS

- Identification of emotions is a foundation for self-regulation and for responding appropriately to others
- 1. Start by teaching emotional vocabulary and the associated feeling.
- 2. Practice labelling emotions. Videos such as Pixar's Inside Out and Youtube's Orma the Pig are two examples of multiple emotions. Stories are also a good way to go through and label emotions. Check out Doinggoodtogether.org for their list of pictures books for emotional awareness for some great book ideas



READING BODY LANGUAGE

- Reading Body Language is an important social skill to know how to respond to others by interpreting social cues (4)
- 1. Model a body movement that matches a message (E.g. shrug, make a fist, smile, fidget) then talk about what your body movement was saying
- 2. Identify the body language that goes with the emotions (Try Inside Out or Ormie the Pig)
- 3. Try body language charades
- The goal is to have multiple models of body language to improve the child's identification skills

TEACHING EMPATHY

- Try a "Put Yourself in My Shoes" Role Play Activity. (5)
- E.g. Have the child wear an arm sling and have them try to go about some daily activities like pouring cereal or writing a note, As the child experiences challenges, have them identify the problem and label how they are feeling. After the activity is done, ask them how they could respond to someone else who was in the same situation (offer to help, acknowledge that it is difficult etc.)
- The literal experience can help to build a better awareness of other people's feelings and teach how to respond appropriately and empathetically



APOLOGIES



- In order to repair relationships and maintain friends, it is important to know how to properly apologize
- Once the child can identify that they have hurt someone's feelings or made a mistake using their ability to identify other's emotions and feelings, it is important for a child to know how to formulate an apology
- Apologies can be taught explicitly using the 4 steps
- 1. I am sorry for ____
- 2. It was wrong because ____
- 3. Next time I will ____
- 4. Can I do anything to make it better?
- Using these 4 steps, practice role playing scenarios where a mistake was made and go through how to apologize
- It is also important to discuss why apologies are important for keeping friends
- Involve parents, teachers, friends, and siblings where possible to help learn the 4 steps to an apology so that it is being used at home and at school to promote generalization. (3) Parents and teachers can help the child to know when to apologize as well.
- Teach recipients of the apology to thank the child when they do to encourage this response.

BASIC MANNERS

- Like apologies, basic manners can be taught explicitly and will help to improve relationships
- It is important to take culture into consideration as manners differ from culture to culture
- 1. Discuss why good manners help improve relationships
- 2. Discuss what manners they know of and when to use those manners
- 3. Use videos models to help show when, where, and how to use manners. On Youtube try "Manners Matter" by The Wiggles Tales or Meredith Harrah's videos
- 4. Role play and use interactive games! Try www.simplyoutrageousyouth.com for a list of fun games to teach manners from please and thank you to covering their mouth when they cough
- Keep parents and peers involved and have them replicate the practice at home and at school (6)

THANKYOU

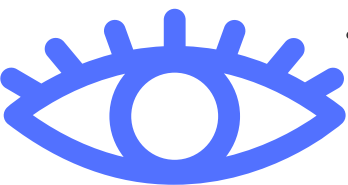
CHECK OUT PART 3 FOR MORE SOCIAL SKILL IDEAS!

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SOCIAL SKILL ACTIVITIES FOR SLPS

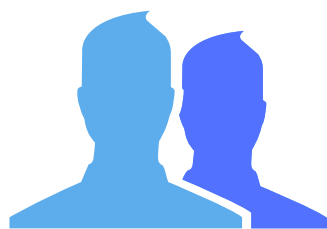
EYE CONTACT



- Eye contact is an important part of communication and can be difficult for some children
- Youtube's "Everyday Speech" has a great interactive video on eye contact that talks about why it is important, models an interaction both with and without eye contact and shares what the speaker feels when there isn't eye contact. It comes with a free worksheet to use with the video too! (7)
- There are also some games you can play to encourage the use of eye contact such as role play, "pass the smile", mirror your partner's expression (8)
- SLPs can also give tokens to the child for everytime they use eye contact and then eventually fade out the tokens.

TURN TAKING

- Videos can be a great way to show how to take turns in a conversation and express why it is important to take turns. On YouTube TDSocial Skills has a great video demonstrating turn taking with explanations included. (9)
- After reviewing videos, practice taking turns in a conversation and give out tokens for each person taking a turn.
- Have peers or family members involved and have them practice turn taking with them to promote generalization. (3)
- Another strategy to build some foundations for turn taking is using sentence completion tasks like "Now that we are finished painting we need to let it ____" (10)



ASKING AND ANSWERING QUESTIONS



- Being able to ask and answer questions is very important skills for school but also for conversation
- For children who have a hard time asking social questions, try using Footprints Behavioural Intervention's YouTube video on Asking Social Questions. This video models what not to do, what to do, and how to come up with questions to keep your conversation partner engaged. (11)
- Meredith Harrah also has a good YouTube video on asking good questions that teaches how to decide on a good question to ask a friend (2)
- After reviewing video, do some role playing to practice coming up with questions and to talk about clues to use when asking questions. Discuss why or why not each question is appropriate.

WAITING

- Waiting is challenging for many people and involves being able to self-regulate
- Some strategies to help a child learn to wait is to play a turn taking game, and have them practice waiting for a few moments before taking their turn. When they are waiting, do an activity with them (play with a different toy, sing a song, have a small conversation) to help them learn strategies they can use in other situations when they need to wait. Slowly increase the amount of time they have to wait until it is no longer a challenge for them to wait. (12)
- A good visual that can be used is a stop light. Explain that red is wait, yellow is almost there, and green is go. This can help the child to understand expectations. (12)
- Finally, it is important to also teach the language associated with waiting such as "hang on a minute", "hold on", "one minute please" (13)
- Then try this strategy with other partners and in other contexts if possible (3)
- Make sure to provide lots of positive reinforcement as this is a challenging task!



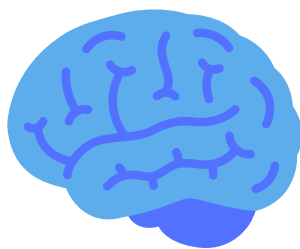
TOPIC MAINTENANCE



- Staying on topic can be very difficult for some individuals but is an important skill to ensure your conversation partner can follow the conversation
- A simple activity to promote topic maintenance is the "Topic Maintenance Railroad". This involves a visual of a train with multiple carts being pulled behind it on a railroad track. The number of carts represent the number of things the child needs to say about the topic. If the child says something that is off topic, a cart "falls" off the railroad. The idea is to keep all your carts on the track. As the child has more success with this game, topics that are of less interest to the child are chosen. (14)
- After success with this game, it can be applied to conversations with others to promote generalization (3)
- On YouTube, Tasha SLT Specialist has several videos about making connected comments, as well as on-topic and off-topic videos that can be used to help model and explain the importance of topic maintenance (15)

SARCASM

- Sarcasm is a challenging social skill as it involves understanding the other person is meaning the opposite of what they are saying.
- Some clues that can be used to teach someone to identify if someone is being sarcastic are: (16)
- 1. Facial expression: disgust, irritation, apathy
- 2. Context: sarcastic statements often contradict the general topic of the rest of the conversation.
- 3. Vocal Cues: "thanks" in english this will be said in a nasal tone
- elongated words "well excuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuse me!"
- saying exciting things without intonation of affect "wow." "great"
- inverse pitch intrusion "the speaker pitches the stressed syllable lower than the other words in the sentence to indicate sarcasm" eg. "GREAT weather" (said in low pitch)
- After these clues are taught, use videos to practice identifying sarcasm. On YouTube Five Star English has a great Sarcasm video to practice identifying sarcasm (17)
- Then try role playing sarcasm and the child has to guess if the person is sincere or sarcastic



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