



Gaining and Building Relationships & Safety Considerations for Individuals with Special Needs

Tahra Cessna, M.S., BCBA
Chief Operations Officer, Positive Behavior Supports Corp.

Cigna Autism Awareness Series

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Agenda

- + Overview of Relationships
- + Skills Needed to Gain and Sustain Relationships
- + Evidence-Based Strategies
- + Safety Considerations
- + Resources

Relationships



- + Relationships are about having respect for oneself and for others.
- + Respect includes understanding that everyone has rights such as:
 - + A right to dignity
 - + A right to participate in community
 - + A right to express oneself
 - + A right to say no in a situation that may be harmful
- + Helping your family member learn to recognize his or her own, as well as others' rights, will further enable him or her to participate safely in a variety of situations.

Relationships

- Familial (those we have with family members)
- Friendships
- Acquaintances
- Romantic
- Sexual
- Working

Skills Needed to Gain and Sustain Relationships

- **Play skills** - like taking turns, sharing, and cooperating
- **Conversation skills** - including body language and knowing what to say
- **Emotional skills** - like managing feelings and understanding how others feel
- **Problem-solving skills** - such as reading the context, dealing with disagreements, or making decisions in a social environment
- **Motivation** - not everyone wants to have a friend or a partner, and we need to recognize when this is the case and accept this decision until a time in which the individual changes their mind (if ever)

Behaviors that Impact Social Relationships

- + Narrowed Interests/ fixations on a specific topic
- + Lack of give and take
- + Ineffective communication or inability to identify one's needs and wants
- + Restrictive and repetitive behaviors
- + Interests that are not typical for one's age
- + Internal states such as anxiety or fear

Tips for Building and Maintaining Relationships

- + Establish relationship "rules"
- + Share interests, likes, and dislikes
- + Teaching others about autism or any other diagnosis that may impact relationships

Choose the right time to connect

Find shared interests

Create a ritual to build a relationship

Start small and recognize successes

Evidence-Based Strategies for Gaining Relationships

- + Structured social skills groups
- + Social Narratives
- + Comic Strip Conversations
- + Visual Supports
- + Modeling
- + Video Modeling

Social Narratives/ Story

- + Describe social situations in some detail
- + Social narratives are individualized

- Assists with:
 - explaining how others might behave or respond in a particular situation
 - promoting understanding of the perspective of a person with autism
 - Coping with changes to routine and unexpected distressing events

When You Can Give a Hug
by: theautismhelper.com

 
I like my friends. I want to give them a hug to show them.

 
But sometimes, it's not the right time to give a hug.

   
When we are at lunch, working at school, on the bus, and playing sports - it's not the right time for a hug.

  
When it's my friend's birthday, the first day of school, the last day of school, or my friend is hurt - I can ask him if he wants a hug.

  
If he says no, I say, "No problem" and if he says "Yes" we hug!

Visual Supports

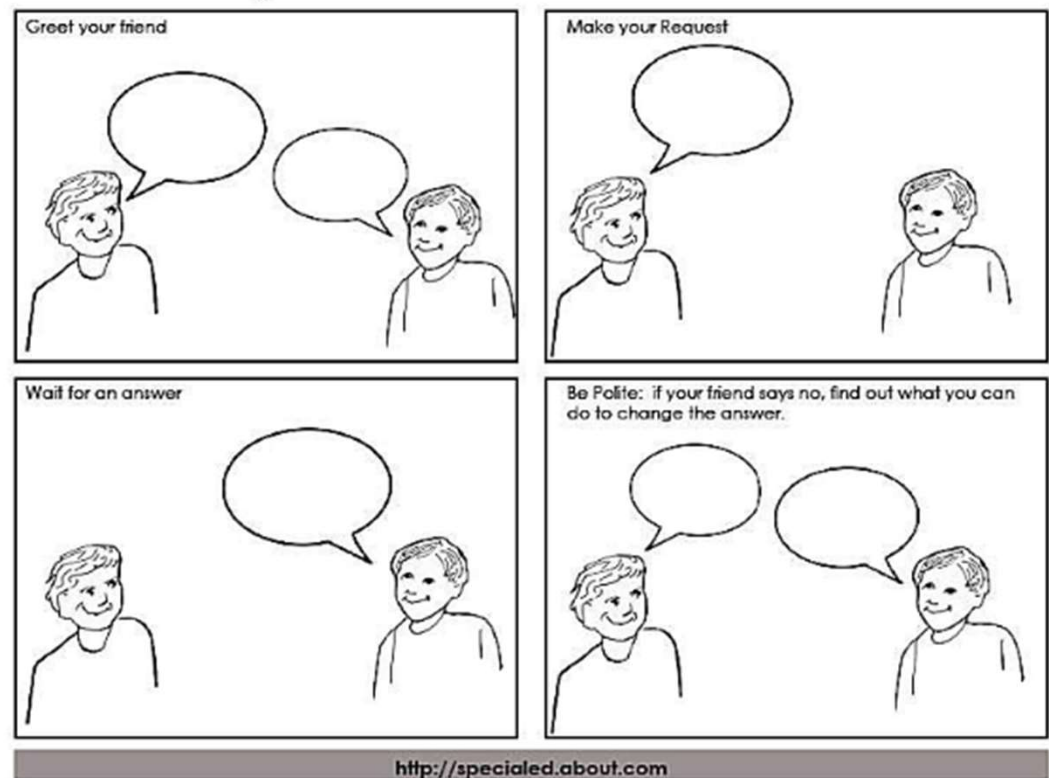
- + Visual supports encompass picture cards, tactile cards, photos, short videos, colored cards or stickers, scales, and line drawings

5	I AM GOING TO EXPLODE!!!
4	I AM GETTING ANGRY
3	I AM A LITTLE NERVOUS
2	FEELING OK
1	CALM AND RELAXED

Comic Strip Conversations

- + Visual representations of conversations
- + These drawings can show:
 - What has been said in a conversation
 - How people might be feeling
 - What people's intentions might be

Social Skills Cartoon: Request from a Friend



Modeling

- + A demonstration of a desired behavior (the way the behavior looks) by either a parent, professional, or peer that can result in the imitation of that behavior by the learner



Teaching Appropriate Social Interaction

The Circles Program



Did you know?

- + Children with disabilities are 3Xs more likely to be abused or neglected than their peers without disabilities (Jones et al., 2012), and they are more likely to be seriously injured or harmed by maltreatment (Sedlak et al., 2010).
- + The majority of abuse perpetrators are known by the person with special needs and can include parents, intimate partners, extended family members, teachers, transportation drivers, and paid service providers (Harrell, 2017; Stevens, 2012)

Safety Considerations

- + Internet Safety
- + Community surroundings and safety awareness
- + Harassment and the harassment of others

Categories of Online Risk

+ Content Risk

pornography, violent or hateful material

+ Contact Risk

sexual abuse, or meeting strangers offline

+ Conduct Risk

Internet addictions, spending money,
cyberbullying, or explicit photo sharing

Strategies Risks Opportunities

Conduct

Natural affinity for computers

Internet addiction
Illegal Behaviors

Set ground rules
Put visual cues near the computer

Contact

Easier to communicate online
Finding communities/
support networks

Scammers
Predators
Bullies

Talk to a trusted adult about online interactions

Content

Free and accessible learning content
Plethora of information on any topic

Distressing content
Inappropriate material
Radicalization

Filters
safe search settings
parental blocks

All Friends Network

<https://allfriendsnetwork.org/>

Our Vision

All Friends Network is my vision and dream which will help people that also have cerebral palsy, autism or other developmental disabilities find friendship....

My Story

Being born with cerebral palsy has come with a long list of challenges. I was fortunate to have a strong loving supporting family that cared and....

Our Mission

Our Mission is to help young adults with disabilities find friendship and enhance their quality of life or what we like to say the **3 F's** Friendship, Fulfillment & Fun...

A New Nonprofit Connects Young People with Disabilities

Sarasota Magazine featured Trevor Kelliher in an article published on April 5th, 2021.

Trevor Kelliher, who has cerebral palsy, created All Friends Network during the pandemic, a free app and social network for those with developmental disabilities who want to make friends.

Many of us were plunged into isolation at the start of the pandemic—working from home and discouraged from leaving our houses and seeing friends, with no end in sight.



Safety Awareness within the Community

- + Paying attention
- + Knowing community helpers and their roles
- + Navigating the community

Harassment

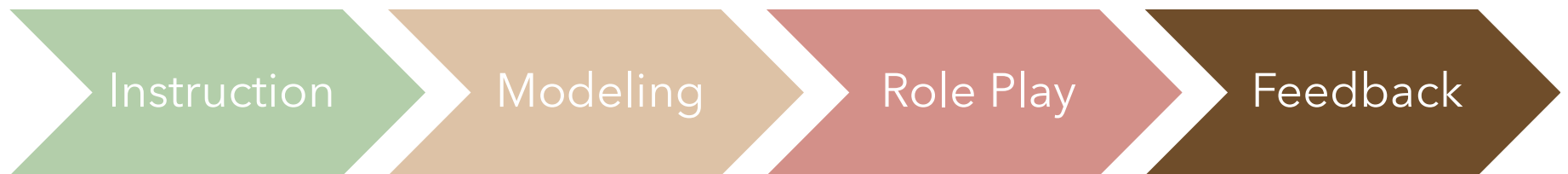
- + Any repeated behavior that makes someone feel stressed or threatened
- + Difficulty with understanding social norms, social cues, or the viewpoint of others make it challenging to avoid engaging in behaviors that may be interpreted as harassment

Safety Skills as Prevention

- + Behavioral Skills Training (BST)
- + Video Modeling
- + Role Playing

Behavioral Skills Training

- + Behavioral skills training is comprised of instruction, modeling, role-play, and feedback



Video Modeling

- + Video modeling is a mode of teaching that uses video recording and display equipment to provide a visual model of the targeted behaviors or skill.
- + In video self-modeling, individuals observe themselves performing a behavior successfully on video, and then imitate the targeted behavior.

Role Playing

- + Acting out and practicing how to behave and what to say in certain situations in a safe, comfortable environment to increase meaningful social interactions

Resources for Caregivers

- + <https://www.autismspeaks.org/social-skills-and-autism>
- + <https://allfriendsnetwork.org/>
- + <https://booksbeyondwords.co.uk/book-sets/relationships-mini-set>
- + <https://www.autismparentingmagazine.com/harassment-reduce-situations-people-autism/>

Thank you!! Questions?



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