Social Skills & How They Relate to My Child
Cigna Autism Awareness Education Series
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Facts About Autism from the Autism Society

- About 1 percent of the world population has autism spectrum disorder. (CDC, 2014)
- Prevalence in the United States is estimated at 1 in 68 births. (CDC, 2014)
- More than 3.5 million Americans live with an autism spectrum disorder. (Buescher et al., 2014)
- Prevalence of autism in U.S. children increased by 119.4 percent from 2000 (1 in 150) to 2010 (1 in 68). (CDC, 2014) Autism is the fastest-growing developmental disability. (CDC, 2008)
- Prevalence has increased by 6-15 percent each year from 2002 to 2010. (Based on biennial numbers from the CDC)
- Autism services cost U.S. citizens $236-262 billion annually. (Buescher et al., 2014)
- A majority of costs in the U.S. are in adult services – $175-196 billion, compared to $61-66 billion for children. (Buescher et al., 2014)
- Cost of lifelong care can be reduced by 2/3 with early diagnosis and intervention. (Autism. 2007 Sep;11(5):453-63; The economic consequences of autistic spectrum disorder among children in a Swedish municipality. Järbrink K1.)
- 1 percent of the adult population of the United Kingdom has autism spectrum disorder. (Brugha T.S. et al., 2011)
- The U.S. cost of autism over the lifespan is about $2.4 million for a person with an intellectual disability, or $1.4 million for a person without intellectual disability. (Buescher et al., 2014)
- 35 percent of young adults (ages 19-23) with autism have not had a job or received postgraduate education after leaving high school. (Shattuck et al., 2012)
- It costs more than $8,600 extra per year to educate a student with autism. (Lavelle et al., 2014) (The average cost of educating a student is about $12,000 – NCES, 2014)
- In June 2014, only 19.3 percent of people with disabilities in the U.S. were participating in the labor force – working or seeking work. Of those, 12.9 percent were unemployed, meaning only 16.8 percent of the population with disabilities was employed. (By contrast, 69.3 percent of people without disabilities were in the labor force, and 65 percent of the population without disabilities was employed.) (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2014)

- Last updated: August 26, 2015
- Autism Society | 4340 East-West Hwy, Suite 350 | Bethesda, Maryland 20814 | 1(800) 328-8476
- The Autism Society improves the lives of all affected by autism through education, advocacy, services, research and support.
Autism is a Developmental Disorder Characterized by:

1. Deficits in social communication and interaction.

2. The presence of restricted/repetitive patterns of behaviors, interests or activities.

3. Onset occurs during early childhood and is lifelong.

4. Symptoms limit and impair everyday functioning

(Boutot, Myles, Gonzalez, and Cassel, 2011)
Common Socialization Deficits in Autism

Impaired Use of Non-Verbal Behaviors/ Communication

• Eye to eye gaze
• Facial expression
• Body/ posture/ gestures

Failure to Develop Peer Relationships
• Social Initiation Skills
• Social Cognition

Lack of Spontaneous Seeking to Share

• Enjoyment
• Interests
• Achievements
• By pointing, bringing or showing items

Lack of Social or Emotional Reciprocity

(Gonzalez, Cassel, Boutot, Myles 2011)
Prerequisite Skills for Appropriate Social Interaction

- Language
- Compliance

- Play Skills
- Motor Skills

(LRC, 2015)
Examples of Skills

To Teach Social Communication Skills
Using gestures
Responding to others
Talking about how you feel with someone
Speaking with someone and maintaining the topic
Making friends
Keeping friends
Taking turns
Examples of Skills

Social Initiation Skills
Greetings:
  - Meeting a peer at the door
  - Looking at a peer
  - Greeting a peer
  - Inviting a peer inside
  - Offering a peer the choice of activities

Good – Bye:
  - Walking a peer to the door
  - Looking at a peer
  - Saying “Good Bye”, etc....
Examples of Skills

Social Reciprocity Skills
Conversation skills:
- Being able to converse with an individual and go back and forth in a conversation.
- Showing an interest in interacting with another individual.
Examples of Skills

**Social Cognition Skills**
- Executive Functioning Skills:
  - Organization skills
  - Being able to plan things
  - Problem solving skills

**Joint Attention Skills:**
- Being able to share a common focus with someone
- Shared gaze at something

**Emotional Regulation Skills:**
- Doing things in a timely fashion
- Controlling aggression
- Controlling anxiety
Eye Contact

• In response to a teacher or therapist’s request
• In response to name being called
• In response to a peer’s vocalization
• When speaking to an individual
• When pointing to items
• When someone else points to something
Imitating and Following

• When an individual learns to imitate an individual, they will learn from that individual.

• Prompt (verbally or visually) for the individual to copy:
  - Actions with objects
  - Actions with their body
  - Words
  - Gestures
  - Facial Expressions

(Photography by Nancy Harris-Kroll, 2011)
Play Skills -

- Parallel (e.g., playing next to each other)
- Interactive (e.g., playing ball together)
- Pretend Play (e.g., “kitchen” or dressing up)
- Figure/Doll Play
- Organized Game Play (e.g., board games, UNO, kickball, etc...)
Routines and Transition Times

1. Independence in following teacher / therapist directions
2. Lining up at school
3. Retrieving and putting materials where they belong – clean up
4. Moving between activities smoothly
Conversation

Topic Based (Non-perseverative)

Exiting a conversation
Initiating a conversation
Transitioning in a conversation
Maintaining a conversation
FLEXIBILITY – Theory of Mind

- Playing a game that a peer chooses
- Talking about a peer’s preferred topic
  - Accepting another’s ideas
What can we do?

I’ve tried everything!
I’m not sure what to do next.
Should I ….
If this sounds familiar there are a few ideas….
Nothing is fast.
Everything takes time and practice…lots of practice…with different people in different places.
Not everything works the same with everybody.
Find what motivates your child.

How do we reach you? Teach you to communicate?

(Graphic – clip art Microsoft Office, 2010)
Some Things That Might Help…
Establish Reinforcement as a Social Scenario

- Establish something that both the student and peer both want to earn
- Establish the target skill that must be performed in order to earn reinforcement
- Set up a token economy system for both individuals
- Both individuals receive reinforcement for performance of the target skill

(LRC, 2015)
Prompting a Student

SYSTEM OF LEAST PROMPTS – Sequencing help from independent to more assistance.
Prompt the student as discretely as possible. Use a quiet voice and whisper to the student. Use indirect prompts, nonverbal, when possible.

SYSTEM OF MOST PROMPTS – Prompting a student with maximum assistance and removing the prompts as they progress. We are always striving for independence.
Do not sit between the student and a peer. Sit behind the student. Prompt the student to observe their peer. Use pivotal phrases such as, “I really like the way _____ is sitting quietly.”

(2017, Microsoft)
Prompting a Peer

- Sometimes the peer may not respond to the student’s ideas.
- Use a natural verbal prompt to re-direct the peer so the student will receive reinforcement.

“Wow, Michael had a great idea!”

(LRC, 2015)
Guidelines for Parents & Teachers to Facilitate Peer Participation

- Minimize verbalization to the child
- Redirect the child or the peer to respond to each other
- Minimize reinforcing the child
- Redirect the child and the peer to reinforce each other
- Be sure to watch and listen for the child
- Prompt the child, as needed, to watch and listen to the peer in order to maintain the play situation
- Make sure you have the child and peer engage in fun games and conversations that promote social behavior

(LRC, 2015)
What are Social Skills and How do We Get Them?
Social Skills

Social skills are a way of communicating with one another. The communication can be made up of our words, gestures, our body language, our tone of voice, and our volume.

(2017, Microsoft, Office)
There are many different methods to teach social skills...

A few of them are:

- Prompting
- Natural Environment Teaching
- Antecedent Based Interventions
- Time Delay
- Video Self-Modeling
- Self Management
- Discrete Trial Teaching
- Naturalistic Interventions
- Social Scripting
- Social Problem Solving
- Social Stories
- Video Modeling
- Differential Reinforcement
- Task Analysis
- Peer Mediated Intervention
  (Hall, 2013)

Pivotal Response Training
Functional Communication Training

For this presentation our focus will be on the following three methods listing pros and cons to each: **Social Scripting, Video Modeling and Social Problem Solving.**
Social Scripting

**PROS**

• Can be used to help individuals with autism know what to say in social situations such as playing or talking to others.
• Parent or teacher writes a script, with pictures, that could be used to prompt a student when presented with that situation.
• Can reduce anxiety if the individual knows what to say or do first.
• Can teach specifics like: greetings, exiting a conversation, and starting a conversation.
• Research indicates, Hall 2013, that social scripting can lead to increases in social conversation.

**CONS**

• Can produce stilted conversation.
• Need to do a fading technique so that the skill will generalize.

( Loveland and Tunali, 1991)
Social Scripting – Examples

(Both examples below are downloaded from www.pinetrest.com)

When someone is hurting or annoying me I will:

1. Look at them.

2. Put my hand up in a 'stop' sign.

3. Say to the person, "Stop it, I don't like it."

4. If it doesn't work I will get help from a teacher.
Social Problem Solving - Example

What can I do?

- Walk away and let it go.
- Tell them to stop!
- Wait and cool off.
- Go to another activity.
- Ignore it.
- Rock, paper, scissors, go.
- Talk it out.
- I feel...
- Apologize
- Use an I message

(2015, Pinterest)
Video Modeling

**PROS**
- Involves a student watching a video of someone modeling a behavior or a social skill.
- Student observes video then is taught to imitate the behavior seen in the video.
- Video Self Monitoring is when the child watches himself in a video.
- Combines visual with the verbal.
- Can be used to teach a wide variety of skills such as social skills, communication skills, appropriate behavior, and self help skills.
- Video modeling has been shown to generalize across environments and across situations over time.

**CONS**
- Need to be proficient at technology.
  
  (Bellini and Akullian, 2007)

**Video Modeling Example**

Example of child using video modeling to help him learn how to tie his shoes.

(2015, Pinterest.)
Social Problem Solving

PROS –
• Can be used with individuals with autism to help them figure out social situations and social problems.
• Involves visuals and words or just visuals.
• The teacher or parent teaches the skill.

CONS -
• The student needs to recognize there is a problem and decide on a strategy to use.
• This strategy has not been shown to generalize to other situations. (McClure et al., 1978)
Parents & Teachers Can Use Proactive Strategies to Support Social Interaction

- Anticipate antecedent events and use proactive strategies to set the stage for success and reinforce that success.
- Have reinforcers readily available.
- Use a token economy system
- Allow child control at first (sit in choice chair, etc.)
- Child can earn breaks for desired behavior

(LRC, 2015)
• Use structured teaching to teach specific social skills through: modeling, role play, and verbal prompting.

• Set up “play dates” within the classroom or neighborhood for child to practice what you have taught them.

• Develop or find a peer mentoring program.

• Set up situations in which the child has to interact with others.

Ways Parents & Teachers Can Initiate Social Interaction
References

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Photographs:

Graphic: