

“He Doesn’t Have Any Friends!”: Providing Social Skills in a Way that Actually Works

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Amygdala is part of a network called the **social brain** and it is involved in making sense of other people's actions and interpreting other people's expressions of emotion.



Decreased neurons in Amygdala result in:

- ***Frustration in typical social endeavors***
- ***Difficulty with play interactions***
- ***Difficulty interpreting facial expressions***
- ***Difficulty understanding the perspective of others***
- ***Difficulty in making friends with same aged peers***
- ***Lack of eye contact***
- ***Behavioral difficulties***

What do we need to do to help students with autism make social connections and friendships?



Teach social skills/pragmatic language skills for all deficit areas

Autism Social Skills Profile Scott Bellini

Never N	Sometimes S	Often O	Very often V	
How Often				Brief Description
N 1	S 2	O 3	V 4	Invites Peers to Join Him/Her in Activities
N 1	S 2	O 3	V 4	Joins in Activities With Peers
N 1	S 2	O 3	V 4	Takes Turns During Games and Activities
N 1	S 2	O 3	V 4	Maintains Personal Hygiene
N 1	S 2	O 3	V 4	Interacts With Peers During Unstructured Activities
N 1	S 2	O 3	V 4	Interacts With Peers During Structured Activities

Social Skills Improvement System Rating Scale (SSISRS)



Social Stories™

The goal of a Social Story™ is to share accurate social information in a patient and reassuring manner that is easily understood by the person using it.

Use a specific structure and four kinds of sentences

- **Descriptive** - provide information about what can be seen, validate feelings
- **Perspective** - provide information about how others think
- **Directive** - provide information about options
- **Affirmative** - provide information about values to enhance meaning























Structure of Social Stories™

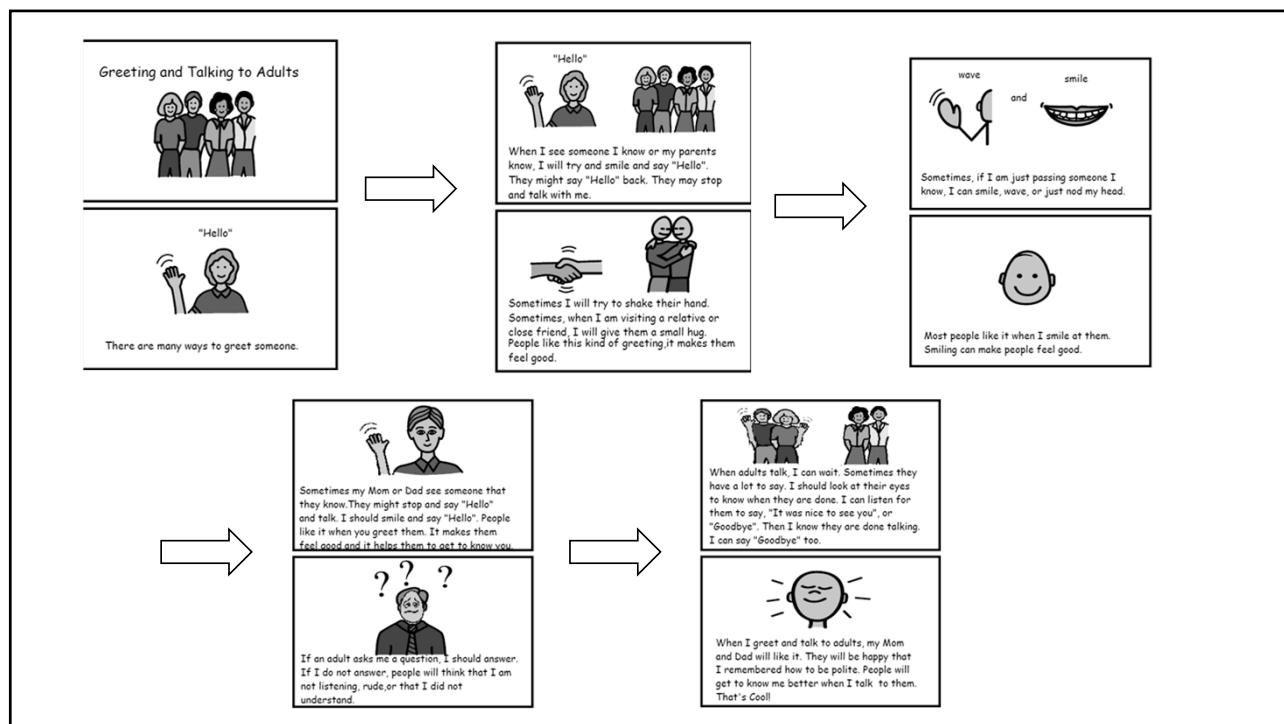
Descriptive Sentence - Sometimes I get scared, and I want to run away

Perspective - If I run away I they could get hurt, I could get lost, I could get in trouble and lose privileges, and people may not want to hang out with me.

Directive - When I get scared, I could ask for help, ask for a hug, wrap my arms around my body and squeeze, or take 5 deep breaths.

Affirmative - If I choose to ask for help or a hug, run to an adult, wrap my arms around my body and squeeze, or take 5 deep breaths then I will not get hurt, I won't get lost, I won't get in trouble, and people may want to hang out with me.

 Asking Politely by: Sasha Hallagan <small>Communication Symbols Mayer-Johnson LLC. All Rights Reserved. Used with Boardmaker™ is a trademark of Mayer-Johnson LLC.</small>	 Being a Good Listener by: Sasha Hallagan <small>Communication Symbols Mayer-Johnson LLC. All Rights Reserved. Used with Boardmaker™ is a trademark of Mayer-Johnson LLC.</small>
 	 
When I want something, sometimes I forget to ask nicely.	My friends are happy when I am a good listener.
	
I say things like, "give me that" and reach out for what I want.	Sometimes I forget to be a good listener and don't pay attention.
 	  
It is rude to act like that. People will not want to help me if I don't ask nicely. I need to ask politely so people will answer me.	Being a good listener means looking like I am listening. I sit facing towards my friend. I look at his face. I don't look all around.
  	 
I can ask nicely like, "Excuse me, can you please give me that." Then I wait for them to answer before I reach for something.	I nod my head while they are talking and say things like "okay" or "yeah." I ask questions about what they were talking about.
 	 
When I am polite, people will want to help me and I will be happy.	If I have good listening behavior, people will like talking to me more.



How to Greet Someone at School

There are many ways to greet someone at school.

- When I see someone I know, I will try to smile and say "hi" or "hello". They may say "hi" or "hello" back to me. I can ask someone "How are you today?" They may stop and talk with me.
- In the morning, I will try to say "good morning!" to someone. At dismissal time, I will try to say "good-bye" or "see you tomorrow!"
- Sometimes, if I am just passing someone I know, I can smile, wave, or just nod my head. Most people like it when I smile at them. Smiling can make people feel good.
- When I say "hi" or "good-bye" to someone, it makes them feel happy. People like to feel happy.

Power Card

A visual that uses a student's interest as motivation to teach a skill or encourage a behavior.

- A brief scenario or character sketch describing how the hero solves the problem.
- The POWER CARD recaps how the child can use the same strategy to solve a similar problem.

My Power Card:

Picture of my favorite character

Wonder Woman knows how important it is to feel good about going to training.

Sometimes, the examples in the training are of a different functioning, grade level, or type of student than I directly work with.

This can be frustrating sometimes.

Wonder Woman wants you to remember that it will be your job to apply the underlying principle of the example to your specific situation.

Wonder Woman is flexible and wants you to try to be flexible also.

Remember that you can:

1. Ask a friend to help make a connection.
2. Use the examples in the handouts to think about your specific student.
3. Email the presenter with your specific question after the training.



Power Cards

Flash Gordon gets all his work done before he plays video games.



Just like Dora!!

Dora wants me to remember these 3 things:

1. Keep my hands down
2. Use my words with a quiet voice
3. Keep working hard.



Power Card



Dolphin wants you to remember:

- Share your toys
- Friends share their toys even if it is your favorite toy
- Friends share!

Adapted from Gagnon, 2001

Power Card Example 2



Sponge Bob says... Picking your fingers is not cool.
When Sponge Bob wants to pick his fingers he:
1. Takes a deep breath (in and out)
2. Picks up his pencil
3. Pays attention to his teachers
4. Tries very hard not to think about picking his fingers.

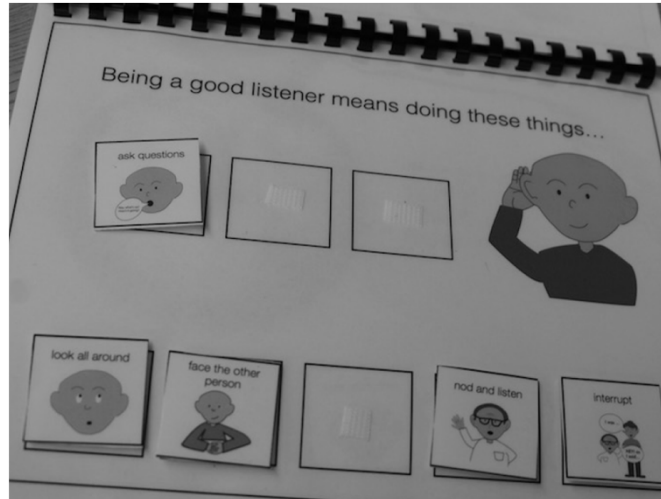
1. Follow a bedtime routine.
Fireman Steve takes a bath, brushes his teeth, and reads for 15 minutes before turning off the light.

2. Close your eyes and try to lie still.

3. Stay in bed after the lights are out.

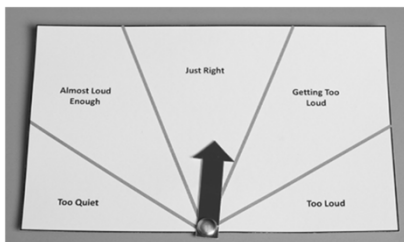
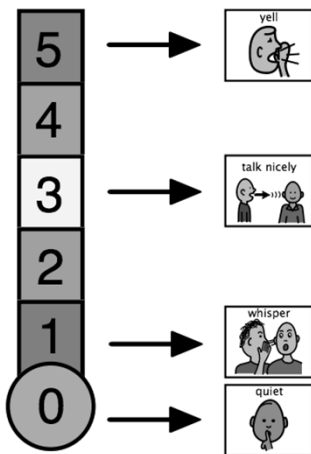


Visual Supports/Pictures



Voice Volume Meter

A visual reference to help students understand appropriate voice levels in different settings or social situations.

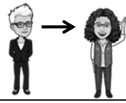


5-Point Scale (Voice Control)

5	When I am hurt or unsafe and need my mom or dad's help.
4	When I am outside on the swings or trampoline.
3	When my brother and I are playing in the family room or in our bedroom.
2	When the family is watching TV or a movie together.
1	When mom or dad is on the phone and I am in the same room.

Adapted from Burton & Curtis, 2003

Conversation Rules



Look

Look at the person talking.



Listen

Listen to the person talking.



Take Turns

Let the other person speak.



Topic

Stay on Topic

Talk about the same topic as the other person.

??



Use Questions

Ask questions about the other person. Answer questions when you are asked.

Turn-Taking Card

A cue card that has a “my turn” visual.



My Turn

Students with autism have Difficulty with Emotions

The Ability to

- ❖ **Identify**
- ❖ **Modulate**
- ❖ **Regulate**, or

Deal with their **Feelings & Emotions**



The Five Point Scale

Rating	Looks Like, Sounds Like	Feels Like	What can I do?
5			
4			
3			
2			
1			

Feelings Chart

	How I feel	What I can do
5	 I need some help!	<input type="checkbox"/> Make a cartoon
4	 I'm really upset.	<input type="checkbox"/> Talk with someone
3	 I've got a problem.	<input type="checkbox"/> Color
2	 Things are pretty good.	<input type="checkbox"/> Think about the ocean
1	 Feeling great!	<input type="checkbox"/> Listen to music
		<input type="checkbox"/> Breathe
		<input type="checkbox"/> Get a drink of water
		<input type="checkbox"/> Take a walk

5-Point Scale (Anxiety)

	Feels Like	What I can do
5	I'm going to breakdown (cry, begin pacing and bang my head).	I can leave the room with permission and go to home base.
4	My stomach is starting to hurt and I'm having difficulty concentrating.	I can ask to talk privately to an adult. I can listen to my iPod with calming music (headphones).
3	I'm feeling uneasy and I'm starting to sweat.	I can refer to my coping cards and use deep breathing.
2	I feel ok. I can handle the situation.	Self-talk and reassure myself that I can do it!
1	I feel great. No problem!	

Adapted from Buron & Curtis, 2003

5-Point Scale (On the Job)

5	Over the edge- I'm ready to go off. I could lose my job at this point so I need to use my "help" card and ask my supervisor for assistance.
4	Close to breaking point- I can feel myself starting to lose control. I can leave and take a walk.
3	Rumbling- I'm feeling overwhelmed and having difficulty concentrating. I can ask my boss for a break.
2	Uneasy- I know something is not right. I can Self-Talk (Stay Calm!) and do deep breathing.
1	Awesome- I feel good and feel confident with doing my assigned tasks.

Adapted from Buron & Curtis, 2003

Teach Perspective and Problem Solving

Shows Respect

Looks Like

Keep my hands and feet to myself

Use a nice facial expression



Keep my materials in my space

Sounds Like

Use a nice tone of voice

Use an indoor voice

Ask for help when needed

<div style="text-align: center;"> <p>What I was Thinking:</p>  </div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 100%; height: 100%; margin-top: 10px;"></div> <div style="text-align: center;"> <p>How I Felt:</p> </div>	<div style="text-align: center;"> <p>What they were Thinking:</p>  </div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 100%; height: 100%; margin-top: 10px;"></div> <div style="text-align: center;"> <p>How they Felt:</p> </div>
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Choosing Friends Quiz

Choosing people to become friends with is very important. You need to make sure that the people you are associating with are kind and really want to be a friend to you. To help you decide if someone has the potential to be a good friend, take this quiz.

1. The person often will start a conversation with you.

☐ Yes ☐ No

2. The person looks at you and listens while you are talking to them.

☐ Yes ☐ No

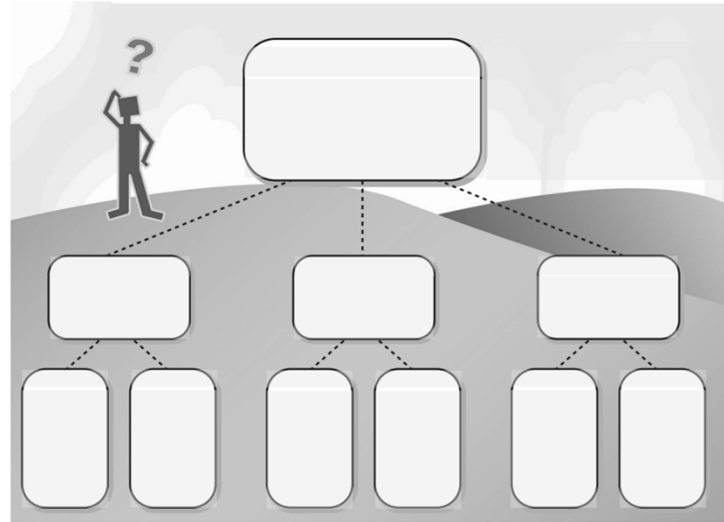
3. The person asks you questions to learn more about your feelings and interests.

☐ Yes ☐ No

4. The person invites you to participate in activities with them (sit with them at lunch, talk on the phone, play video games, etc.)

☐ Yes ☐ No

If you answered "yes" to at least 3 of the 4 questions, the person is showing a genuine interest in you and more than likely would make a good friend.



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Issue:

Determining if someone is a good friend

Decision Making Guide



Option 1:

Kelly

Option 2:

Joe

Option 3:

Seth

Pros:
talks to me alot
smiles
invited me to sit with her

Cons:
none

Pros:
talks to me in class
has same interests

Cons:
ignores me when others are around

Pros:
talks to me
Wants to sit by me in class

Cons:
says hell call and doesn't
laughs at me sometimes

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Topics of Conversation



Person	It is appropriate to discuss these topics with...	It is inappropriate to discuss these topics with...
Family Member		
Acquaintance		
Stranger		
Authority Figure		
Friend		

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Sample Form:

Topics of Conversation

Person	It is appropriate to discuss these topics with...	It is inappropriate to discuss these topics with...
Family Member	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - school - friends - chores 	I can discuss anything with my family
Acquaintance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - weather - something they have interest in 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - family or personal information - religion or politics
Stranger	* I am not allow to talk to any strangers for any reason *	
Authority Figure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - rules - local activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - religion - politics - money
Friend	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - interests - games - sports 	- money

Structured Play

- Structured play is **when an adult provides resources, starts play or joins in with student's play** to offer some direction or guidelines.
- Free play is unplanned play that just happens, depending on what students are interested in at the time.
- Structured play activities usually give students clear guidelines about **what to do** and **when to do it**.

Social Skills! Social Skills! Social Skills!

- How to initiate a conversation/Taking turns in conversation
- Talking about a variety of topics, not just restricted personal interests
- Understanding unwritten social rules
- Learning not to take language too literally
- Understanding and using a variety of intonations
- Studying body language and facial expressions
- Understanding personal space
- Perspective - what other people are thinking and feeling
- Solving social problems

Teach Social Skills - Nonverbal Behavior

- Help students learn to **notice** facial expressions and body posture
- **Role-play** to help practice recognition of meaning conveyed in posturing and vocal intonations.
- Teach students to recognize common hand signs
- Watch short videoclips of a television show with the sound off
- Play charades or pantomimes

Practice Social Skills/Implement additional supports

- Drama classes
- Cafeteria/during lunch
- Recess/free time/PE
- Passing time and before/after school
- Group work/activities

Students may need additional support with.....

- Self-esteem
- Compliance
- Increase Interests
- Monitor instructional discourse
- Sharing Space
- Communication (subtle nuances)

Texas Statewide Leadership for Autism Training



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