

INCREASING SOCIALIZATION IN CHILDREN WITH ASD

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Overview

- ◉ Facilitating Social Interactions
- ◉ Teaching Social Conversation Skills

Global Social Objectives

- ◉ Increase length of time engaged with peers
- ◉ Increase variety of activities engaged with peers
- ◉ Increase responsivity toward peers
- ◉ Increase initiations toward peers
- ◉ Increase frequency and variety of communicative behaviors (e.g., behavior regulation, social interaction, joint attention)
- ◉ Generalization
- ◉ Fluency

Why Targeting Socialization in Inclusive Settings is Critical

- ◉ Social impairments are a defining characteristic of children with ASD (American Psychiatric Association, 2000)
 - Rarely engage in reciprocal social interactions with peers (Koegel et al., 2001; Hauck et al., 1990; Lord & Magill-Evans, 1990)
- ◉ Kids with ASD at risk for social isolation, poor quality friendships, loneliness, and depression (Strain & Schwartz, 2001; Bauminger & Kasari, 2000; Stewart, et. al., 2006)
- ◉ Up to 38% of individuals with ASD develop comorbid diagnosis in depression in comparison to only 6.7% of the general population (Stewart, et. al., 2006; NIMH.nih.gov/health/publications)

Strategies to Target Socialization with Peers

- ◉ Buddy System
- ◉ Sharing & Seeking Assistance
- ◉ Priming
- ◉ Cooperative Arrangements

Buddy System

- ◉ Prompting child to engage with a buddy
 - Getting in line
 - Reading a story
 - Working on a project
 - Eating a snack
 - Transitioning
- ◉ Beneficial for children with autism and typically developing peers
- ◉ Group/class wide norm

Sharing & Seeking Assistance

- Encourage children to share preferred items with peers
 - Bringing extra treats for lunch can allow for mutually reinforcing exchanges
- Prompt children to ask each other instead of a supervising adult for assistance during activities
 - Lunch, snack, tying shoes, zippers
 - Redirect to peers
 - Confidence builder

Priming

- Introduce materials before they are presented in class or on the playground
 - Practicing greetings
 - Playing handball
 - Play connect four
- Helps increase ability to pay attention and be successful
- Helps increase child's expertise in the activity
- Works as a great tool for playdates

Cooperative Arrangements

- Toys/games/activities with multiple pieces
 - Create interdependency
 - Divide pieces between kids
 - Place pieces in container and take turns
- Sharing & turn taking
- Necessary for shared control and natural reinforcement

General Guidelines

- Child with ASD should be familiar with game/activity
- Limit to 2-3 peers
- Create cooperative arrangement
- Explain rules to kids (e.g., "We're going to practice playing nicely and take turns asking each other for pieces")
- Be sure child with ASD has opportunities to respond as well as initiate
- Give feedback to all the kids
- Have typical peers also practice responding and initiating to each other

General Guidelines Continued

- Initially focus on opportunities for requesting then intersperse some opportunities for commenting, complimenting, etc.
- Be sure to have kids respond to each other immediately as well as immediately deliver reinforcer (prompt if necessary)
- Practice both "telling" and "asking"
- Systematically fade prompting
 - Initially may need to prompt both child with ASD and peers
 - Initially start with model-prompt for entire utterance
 - Quickly fade to partial verbal prompts, gestural prompts, questions
- Make it short if initially necessary

Cooperative Arrangements

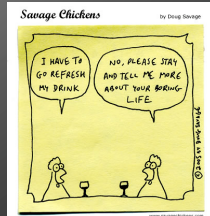
Summary:

Structure an activity in such a way that the participation of each individual is critical to developing a positive outcome

• Additional Examples:

- Playground-
 - catch with a ball, pushing friends on a swing, sandbox toys, follow the leader
- Art-
 - establish the "ask a friend rule"
- Lunch-
 - bring in lunch time games and puzzles

TEACHING SOCIAL CONVERSATION



Why Social Conversation Skills are Important:

- ◉ Integral part of typical social-communicative development
- ◉ Hallmark of social competence
- ◉ Mechanism for quality of life
 - Friendship
 - Dating/Marriage
 - Employment



Social Conversation in ASD

- ◉ Limited quantity
- ◉ Limited quality/variety
- ◉ Marked by select, perseverative topics
- ◉ Limited complexity

Social Skills Literature: Conversation Interventions

- ◉ Script-fading procedures
 - Written
 - Audio
- ◉ Video-modeling
- ◉ Social skills curriculums
- ◉ Few self-management studies

What Needs To Be Taught?

- 1) On-topic question-asking*
- 2) On-topic commenting*
- 3) Transitions
- 4) Checking-in

Procedures

- ◉ Self-management
 - Teach kids to monitor own behavior
 - Particularly helpful with perseverative topics
- ◉ Motivational techniques
 - Initial skills
 - Easily embedded into play

Self-Management

1. Identify self-management strategy
 - a. Materials
 - b. Length
 - c. Reinforcement
2. Identify skill
 - a. On-topic question-asking
 - b. On-topic commenting
3. Teach what skill is and *is not*
4. Teach how to self-manage

Motivational Techniques

- Embed into preferred activities
- Intersperse within preferred topics
- Model then provide opportunity for independence
 - Model-prompt
 - Time-delay

On-Topic Question-Asking

- Goal:
 - Learn to ask on-topic questions in response to leading statements about preferred and neutral subjects
- WH-questions
 - What, Where, Who, When, Why, How
- Length
 - Ask in a complete sentence
 - Repair strategy

On-Topic Question-Asking: Procedure

- Parent/adult/peer provides leading statement
 - "I did something fun last night."
 - "I saw my favorite friend today."
 - "I'm going on a cool trip Tuesday."
- Child with autism prompted to ask on-topic question
 - "What did you do?"
 - "Who?"
 - "Where are you going?"
- Make leading statement very clear!
- Fade prompting for independence **

On-Topic Commenting

- Goal:
 - Learn to make on-topic comments in response to leading statements about preferred and neutral subjects
- Examples:
 - Relate to own experience
 - Empathize with communicative partner

On-Topic Commenting: Procedure

- Parent/adult/peer provides leading statement
 - "I saw Shrek 2 last night."
 - "I got a ticket for speeding."
- Child prompted to make on-topic comment
 - "I've seen that before"
 - "You probably weren't too happy."
- Fade prompting for independence **

Thank you!! 😊