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Autism Agenda



Linn Benton Lincoln ESD-Cascade Regional Autism Program

Social Skills and Autism

by Autism Speaks

Open the Doors to Your Community!

Participation in the community can be enhanced through improvement in the social skills of individuals with autism. Individuals with autism have to learn the social skills that come much more naturally to their peers. How do we help our family members with autism benefit from community participation and social interactions?

This month's Community Connections newsletter provides up-to-date information on social skills, including information from experts, teachers, and families, along with useful resources to help enhance your family member's opportunities to be part of the community.

Expert Interview: Michelle Garcia Winner, Social Thinking

Michelle Garcia Winner is a Congressional-award winning speech-language pathologist who specializes in using Social Thinking treatment to help students who are experiencing social and communication challenges. Michelle's goal is to help educators and parents appreciate how crucial developing Social Thinking and related social skills is to a student's success and growth throughout life.



Click the following link to read an interview with Michelle and learn more about Social Thinking treatment.

http://www.autismspeaks.org/sites/default/files/documents/family-services/interview_with_michelle_garcia.pdf

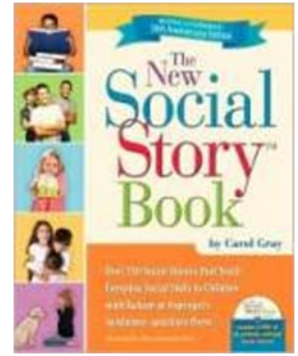
Continued on page 2.

SOCIAL SKILLS AND AUTISM CONTINUED...

The New Social Story Book, Revised and Expanded 10th Anniversary Edition: Over 150 Social Stories that Teach Everyday Social Skills to Children with Autism or Asperger's Syndrome, and their Peers

by Carol Gray

The Gray Center For Social Learning and Understanding is a non-profit, 501(c)(3) organization dedicated to individuals with autism spectrum disorders (ASD) and those who work alongside them to improve mutual understanding. We approach the social impairment in ASD as a shared impairment. We work to improve social understanding on both sides of the social equation, helping both persons with ASD and those who interact with them to be able to communicate more effectively.



Go to <http://www.thegraycenter.org/social-stories/how-to-write-social-stories> for the Gray Center's tips on How to Write Social Stories

Go to <http://www.polyxo.com/socialstories/> for sample Social Stories from polyxo.com.

Family Tips

We asked families in the Autism Speaks Facebook Group for tips and ideas regarding socialization for their family members with autism. One parent said:

I always make my son pay and talk to the cashier. It is always a forced conversation for him but he has to talk to a stranger almost every day.

Go to http://www.autismspeaks.org/sites/default/files/documents/family-services/experience_speaks_ss.pdf for more social skills improvement ideas from families affected by autism.

Social Skills Groups

Social skills groups offer an opportunity for individuals with autism to practice their social skills with each other and/or typical peers on a regular basis.



Although research on social skills groups is fairly limited at this time, a review of five studies on social skills groups by researchers at the University of Utah and the U.C. Davis MIND Institute attempted to identify what made an effective social skills group.

Go to http://www.autismspeaks.org/sites/default/files/documents/family-services/social_skills_groups.pdf to review their findings!

For Socialization and School Integration Ideas, visit Talk About Curing Autism's page www.talkaboutcuringautism.org/learning/socialization.htm.

Computers and Technology

There are many tools and interventions out there that involve using videos, software or virtual-reality programs to teach complex social skills, such as recognition of emotions in facial expressions and tone of voice.

Examples include:

Model Me Kids: Videos for Modeling Social Skills
www.modelmekids.com

Social Skill Builder: Quality Learning Tools
socialskillbuilder.com

Continued on page 3.

SOCIAL SKILLS AND AUTISM CONTINUED...

Computers and Technology continued.

Watch Me Learn: Visual Teaching, Video Modeling, and an iPhone app!
www.watchmelearn.com

Go to <http://www.autismspeaks.org/family-services/resource-library/toys-games> to visit the Autism Speaks Resource Library page of other Developmental and Educational Tools for families.

Go to <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=99732203> to listen to a National Public Radio podcast about The Transporters, a video program that teaches children with autism spectrum disorders to "read" emotion featuring Simon Baron-Cohen, an autism researcher from Cambridge University.

You can find this entire article with the hyperlinks at <http://www.autismspeaks.org/family-services/community-connections/social-skills-and-autism>



FIVE POINT SCALE

CHECK IN

5	
4	
3	
2	
1	

The Incredible 5-Point Scale

by Kari Dunn Buron and Mitzi Curtis

"The objective of the 5-point Scale is to teach social and emotional information in a concrete, systematic, and non-judging way. Students who have poor skills in the areas of social thinking or emotional regulation often exhibit challenging behaviors, particularly when facing difficult social situations. In the scale, teachers and parents have a simple, yet effective way to teach social rules and expectations and, along with the individual with ASD, problem-solve behavioral responses of others, troubleshoot past and future social scenarios, and create plans for self-management."

Customer Review on The Incredible 5-Point Scale outlines a remarkable strategy geared toward higher-functioning children in a variety of situations. Buron and Curtis were struck with the idea to write the book while working with a five year old boy with Asperger's Disorder who, when speaking, always used a loud voice. Together, they taught him to equate his voice with a number scale. Over time, he learned that his loudest voice was a "5", being quiet was a "1" and that using a "2 or 3" level voice was most appropriate.

The 1-5 scale system is applicable for a variety of behaviors and responses to behaviors, including feelings of anxiety, obsessions, concepts of personal space and feelings of anger. The book includes stories suitable to be read to a child, visual scales and tips on how to implement the particular scale. I found the book to be a very comprehensive teaching tool.



Missing Objects Game

This is an easy, fun and very useful social skills game to help kids on the autism spectrum to learn how to encourage others. Children on the autism spectrum often need help learning to use kind and encouraging words. This is a "game within a game." The object is to remember what object is missing when it is removed when the player is not looking. The underlying game is to "score" lots of encouraging remarks to the other player when they are playing and it is not your turn.

- Assemble a collection of eight to twelve very small objects (very small toys, or even just assorted items out of a desk drawer).
- Print out the "encouragement" word prompts

- Tell the kids:

"We are going to play the Missing Objects Game. This is a memory game that works like this. I will place on the table these small objects. When it is your turn, you will get one half a minute to look at the objects and try to remember them. Then, we will ask you to step out of the room for a few seconds. While you are out, we will take away just one of the objects. Then, you must try to figure out which object is missing! This can be hard! While you are trying to remember what object is missing, the other kids have an important job. They have to try their best to say nice things to you, to encourage you and to make you feel okay if you can't figure out which object is missing. I will keep track of who is being the nicest, and I will decide then who is first, second and third place at being nice and "encouraging" to the person who is playing."

- Hold up the various encouraging phrase prompts to help the kids know what to say to players who are trying, winning or struggling with the memory task.

Reference: I found this game in a terrific social skills book called Superskills, by Judith Coucouvanis.



Joel Shaul, LCSW

Joel Shaul provides workshops nationwide on the topic of social skills and emotional regulation for children on the autism spectrum. To learn more: <http://bit.ly/zGDQCi>

Autism Teaching Strategies 

Continued on page 5.

SOCIAL SKILLS GAME CONTINUED.....

Game Cards:

You can do it!	Keep Trying!	You'll Get it!	Don't worry!
You did it!	Way To Go!	Con- grats!	Nice Job!
Nice Try!	Better Luck Next Time!	You Tried Hard!	

Social Skill Builder Full & Lite App

Social Skill Builder learning tools are appropriate to use with any children or adolescents who require assistance understanding social skills that are so important to function in their environment. This includes children with:

- Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)
- Learning Disabled
- Hearing Impairments/Deafness
- Traumatic or Acquired Brain Injury
- Other Varieties of Syndromes, Language Delays and Disorders
- Emotional Disabilities

Our programs are a wonderful way to target social skills as part of a home program supporting your child's other therapy. Parents can easily navigate the user-friendly technology and guide their child through the questions in order to gain better social understanding. Because the software is multi level it can grow with your child's progress over time and demonstrate different environments such as school, playground, community locations, and homes.



- See more at: <http://www.socialskillbuilder.com/autism-special-needs-software/parents-use-our-learning-tools/#sthash.Ngmxyzcn.dpuf>

For additional resources please check out the Social Skills Section of our LBL ASD Website:

http://www.lblesd.k12.or.us/prog_serv/cascade_regional/autism_teacher_resources.php

There are resources under Social Skills Communication Printable Resources and Websites that include:

Social Stories
Video Modeling
Social Skill Building Tools and Lessons

Social Skills in Young Children

By The National Autistic Society

How can he be so clever but not know when to stop talking?

How can he be so selfish when he is playing? He is the first to tell others off for being so.

Is she really rude or does she just not understand?

You may have asked yourself these questions while watching your young child with an autism spectrum disorder (ASD) try to interact with their peers. Many parents struggle to justify this imbalance in skill level and wonder what it is that makes their children lack basic social skills when they can have extraordinary skills in other areas.

Three areas of difficulty

It has always been recognized that social interaction is an area of difficulty for children diagnosed with an ASD but in the seventies Dr Lorna Wing and Dr Judith Gould defined the key areas by introducing the triad of impairments:

- **social interaction** (difficulty with social relationships, for example appearing aloof and indifferent to other people)
- **social communication** (difficulty with verbal and non-verbal communication, for example not fully understanding the meaning of common gestures, facial expressions or tone of voice)
- **social imagination** (difficulty in the development of interpersonal play and imagination, for example having a limited range of imaginative activities, possibly copied and pursued rigidly and repetitively).

It is not that children with an ASD will never be able to learn these skills, but more that they are going to need specific teaching in these areas. Most children learn social skills by watching their peers, experimenting in imitation and refining their skills as they go. Children with an ASD can find this difficult so they seem to miss many opportunities to practice these skills. Social skills and social situations need to be broken down, explained, and practiced so children with an ASD can absorb them at a level that makes sense to them. A young woman with Asperger syndrome explained:

It's as if everybody is playing some complicated game and I am the only one who hasn't been told the rules.

Sainsbury, 2000, p8

Many children with an ASD can be genuinely bewildered and overwhelmed in social situations. We hope that by the end of this information sheet you will have some practical ideas about ways you can help your child to develop their skills in this area so they can explore the social world with more confidence.

What do we mean by social skills?

We all use a variety of social skills any time we interact. A child who plays on their own is not being asked to use their social skills, which is why many children with an ASD retreat to solitary play - it is uncomplicated and they don't make mistakes.

By 'social skills' we generally mean any of the following:

- **conversational skills** (greetings, joining a conversation, verbal turn-taking, listening skills, talking about a particular topic, awareness of personal space, ending a conversation, etc)
- **play skills** (observational skills, joining play, turn-taking, sharing, compromising, conflict resolution, coping with 'no', coping with losing, reciprocal play, ending play, etc)
- **understanding emotions** (reading facial expressions, reading body language, voice quality - intonation, pitch, speed, awareness of own body language, having a large emotional vocabulary eg not just happy/sad, anger management and self-regulation skills)
- **dealing with conflict** (as above - anger management and self-regulation skills, theory of mind see section on pg. 7, communication skills such as the ability to ask for help, ability to walk away from a stressful situation, being assertive but not aggressive, dealing with bullying, etc)

Continued on page 8.

SOCIAL SKILLS CONTINUED.....

- **friendship skills** (many of the above but also things like knowing what a friend is, and being able to choose appropriate friends, recognize true friends from false friends, develop the ability to share a friend, deal with peer pressure, etc). The development of these skills in typically developing children starts early in life and happens over a number of years, generally without a lot of direct instruction. Children explore the environment around them using trial and error to work out problems. They observe other children, try to imitate them and attempt to join in. If they make a mistake, they learn from it and continue playing. Skills become more refined as they grow and they begin to absorb social trends. Children with an ASD do not seem to naturally develop social skills in the same way their peers do. This is why you need to try to digest social situations for your child and explain them in a way that will make sense .

We all know that every child with an ASD is different. Dr Lorna Wing has categorized the types of difficulties children with an ASD may have into four sub-groups:

- The 'aloof' child who may appear rather withdrawn and indifferent to other people, and may be difficult to comfort when distressed.
 - The 'passive' child who will not make spontaneous approaches to other people but will accept contact if initiated by others.
 - The 'active but odd' child who will approach other children spontaneously but this will often be in an odd or inappropriate manner. Often they may pay little attention to the responses of those they have approached.
 - The 'over formal, stilted group' often seen in teenagers and adults but could be seen in young children also. This group of people use overly formal language and behavior and are excessively polite. Can be very rule bound in social situations.
- It is possible for people to move through these groups as they grow and develop. A child who fits the 'aloof' category may learn skills to interact but may still be a little different or 'odd' in comparison to their peers.

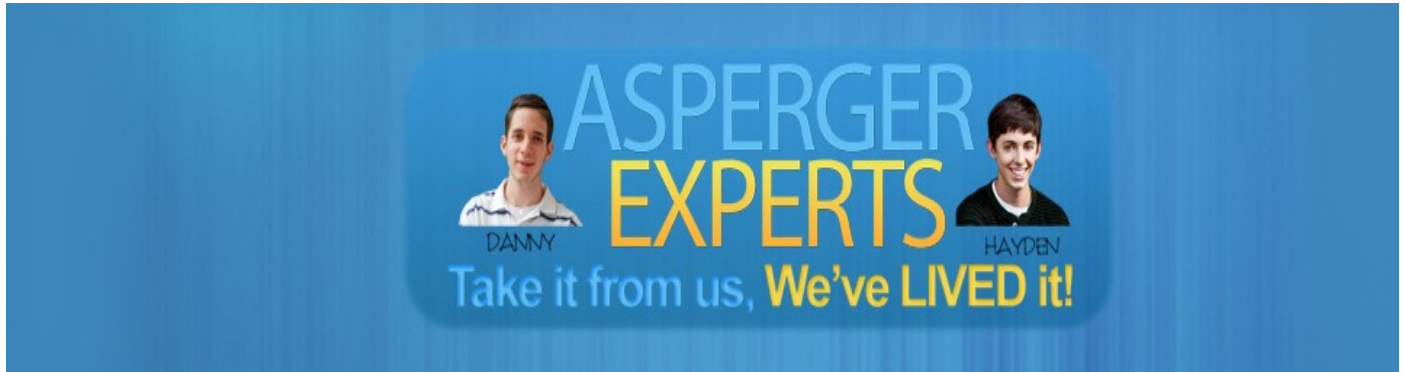
The article continues with wonderful information on social skills and ends with helpful tips on how to practice social skills at home. Here are some of the highlighted topics:

- What to teach
- When to teach
- Other important factors to consider
- Practical ideas for developing different social skills at home
 - Recognizing facial expressions
 - Recognizing body language
 - Emotions
 - Entering games/situations
 - Theory of mind
 - Conversational skills/ turn taking
 - Making mistakes/coping with losing/conflict resolution
 - Making mistakes

You can find a copy of the full article at

<http://www.autism.org.uk/living-with-autism/communicating-and-interacting/social-skills/social-skills-in-young-children.aspx>





WELCOME TO ASPERGER EXPERTS!

Welcome to Asperger Experts! Created by Danny Raede & Hayden Mears, both diagnosed with Asperger's themselves, Asperger Experts is designed to show you how to best assist people with Asperger's to achieve their highest potential in life.

People with Asperger's are amazing individuals, but without very specific, directed guidance, they can fall through the cracks and not get the help they need. Drawing on their own personal experience, as well as the best research into success, human potential, and the autistic spectrum, Danny & Hayden are changing the way the world not only looks at people with Autism, but how they treat these individuals as well.

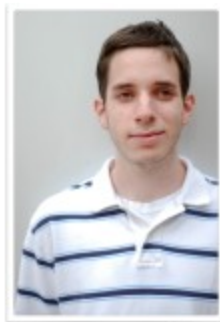
Through their DVDs, Audio Courses, Webinars, Coaching Sessions & Videos, as well as their flagship program, "[Asperger's 101: Breaking The Barriers](#)", they'll show you exactly what goes on in their mind, how to communicate to people with ASD, what to do to greatly reduce your daily frustrations, and most importantly, how to get people with ASD to fully experience all that life offers.

We invite you to explore around. Read the latest from the blog, watch our videos, and [sign up to our email list](#) to get exclusive invites to webinars, Q&A sessions, notifications of new videos & blog posts, as well as sneak previews of our new products.

We're always here if you need anything. Feel free to [contact us](#) at any time.

Email us: expert@aspergerexperts.com

[Visit us on Facebook](#)



Danny Raede



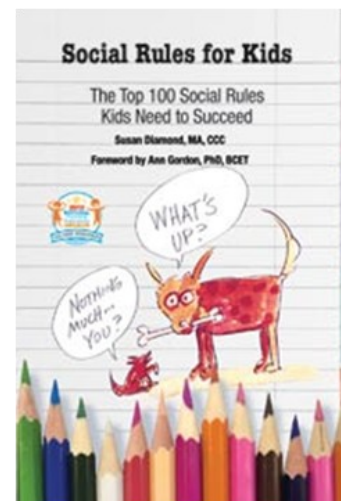
Hayden Mears

BOOK SUGGESTIONS

Social Rules for Kids: The Top 100 Social Rules Kids Need to Succeed

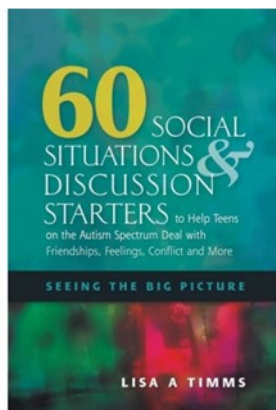
By Sue Diamond

Many parents are not sure of what to say and do to help their children improve their social interactions. **Social Rules for Kids: The Top 100 Social Rules Kids Need to Succeed** helps open the door of communication between parent and child by addressing 100 social rules for home, school, and the community. The language of this book is kid-friendly, positive, simple, and directive. Its format is easy to follow. There is one rule per page in bold print at the top. Then there is a simple justification for the rule, followed by concrete steps to implement it. The page ends with a "remember" statement restating why it is good for the child to apply the rule. Seven chapters address appropriate behavior in the following areas: Talking and Listening, Friends, School, Bullying, Feelings, Body Language, and Manners. The book targets youth ages 7-14, and is a useful tool for both parents and educators.



60 Social Situations and Discussion Starters to Help Teens on the Autism Spectrum Deal with Friendships, Feelings, Conflict and More

By Lisa A. Timms



Written with both parent and teen in mind, this book contains stories that outline real-life situations that young people on the autism spectrum are likely to encounter. Each scenario is followed by questions such as: What else might he have done? How do you think she felt? Why do you think they felt that way? There are also practical tips for adults on how to initiate constructive discussions. As teens reflect on the stories, they will begin to put themselves into someone else's shoes and think about how their actions and behavior affect those

around them. Packed with 60 stories exploring situations in school, home, the workplace and the community, this book can be an essential tool for parents, caregivers, teachers, and anyone else wishing to enable young people with ASD to acquire great social skills.



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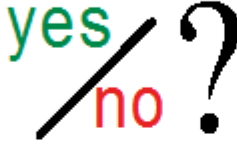
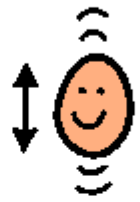








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SOCIAL SKILLS VISUALS

hello 	goodbye 	my turn 	your turn 
you're to close 	Ask me a yes/no question 	yes 	no 
help 	friends 	listen 	all done 
I'm ready 	I'm not ready 	not 	no one to play with 