

SOCIAL SKILLS THE DESIRE TO HAVE FRIENDS

Children who present with Autistic Spectrum Disorder, ADHD, Central Auditory Processing Disorder, and language and learning disabilities tend to have issues with social skills (pragmatic language). They want to interact, join in, play, converse, and have friends. However, many times they are isolated and ostracized by their peers because they miss social cues. They may not use eye contact appropriately or nod their head to show understanding or interest. Choosing appropriate questions for a topic and maintaining the conversation may be very difficult and cause for social anxiety. The topics they do initiate can be limited with either excessive verbiage or limited output, and their peers find it odd. Imagine the ramifications in a classroom when these students answer completely off topic in oral and written language. Their peers may laugh, and the teacher may become angry because it is thought to be poor behavior. These children do best when given direct assistance in knowing the social rules. Once they understand “social thinking” they begin to make progress. Imagine the child who runs up to her friends at recess to play. She comes into the circle and stands too close to them. They become uncomfortable and the social group disperses, leaving her behind. When she understands “proximity” and how people feel about entering their personal space, she can be successful in her stance the next time. Imagine the boy who is so excited when a peer comes up to him and tells him that doughnuts are being sold in the girl’s bathroom. He is literal and does not believe that a ‘friend’ would lie, so he goes in and gets in trouble. Once he understands about rumors, he can make changes. Most children can navigate their playground at school and understand the subtle, implied rules. Children with pragmatic language delay (social language issues) make progress when they are given these rules directly.

SOCIAL SKILLS TIPS

- Discuss a social situation before it occurs. Problem solve what can occur and how it can be handled.
- Role play greetings and manners.
- Talk about how to respond when being teased. You can ignore or answer back, "you wish" or "wow that was mean." Do not get upset. It is the teaser's bad day. Role play how to say a response with the right tone of voice.
- Talk about rumors. You may not know if it is true. You may be tricked. Do not pass the rumor. It can be hurtful.
- Play turn taking games such as rolling a ball back and forth. Whoever has the ball; it is their turn to talk.
- Play charades to help with body language. Watch TV with the sound off to observe, label, interpret, and imitate actors’ body language.
- Use mirrors to look at facial expressions. Say an emotion and make your face match the emotion.
- Make a scrapbook using magazine pictures and discuss the feeling shown by posture, gesture, and facial expressions.

- Structure play dates; decide ahead what activities will be played. Make play dates full of fun for social success.
- Play on/off games such as state a topic and decide if the sentence is on or off the topic.
- Teach that when asking to play, the child may say no. The child may not be in the mood that day. Say, “okay” and walk away.
- Talk about negotiating at school. When playing tag, if you are told to be “it” 3 times in a row, you can say, “I was it last time; it is someone else’s turn to be it.”

Susan Diamond is a licensed speech and language pathologist with a private practice in Alameda, California and has over twenty five years experience in diagnosis and treatment of children with language disorders. She is the author of “Language Lessons In The Classroom” and co-author of “Webs For Language”, ECL Publications. She has also produced the professional DVD “Diamond Social Skills” which provides information, strategies, and games for social language success. Her new book called “100 Social Rules For Kids” will be out this fall. Please visit Susan’s website for more information on social skills at <http://www.diamondlanguage.com>.