

63<sup>RD</sup> CONFERENCE ON EXCEPTIONAL CHILDREN

# Believing In Achieving

SHERATON FOUR SEASONS | KOURY CONVENTION CENTER | GREENSBORO, NC



## Social and Behavioral Skill Development in Autism Spectrum Disorder

Joani Richardson, OTR/L

[www.joanirichardson.com](http://www.joanirichardson.com)

joanimrichardson@gmail.com



# Why focus on social and behavior?

We must *always* be working to prepare these kids to reach their academic potential, to live independently, AND to be gainfully employed.

They need:

Adequate Academic Skills

Independent Living Skills

"Appropriate"/Acceptable Social Behavior

# Prioritize and Write Goals

For every problem situation or skill deficit, there is a replacement skill, that must be taught

# Where do we start?

- Safety Issues for self and/or others
- Problem behaviors that interfere with the student's learning or the learning of other students.
- Skills that might help the student reach their current annual goals.
- Specific social skill deficits that need to be addressed for continued growth.

# Determine the Present Level of Performance

- Parent Interview &/or checklist
- Teacher(s) Interview
- Student Interview
- Rating Scales
- Naturalistic Observation
- Structured Observation
- Social Skills Checklists

- |  | almost never | seldom | sometimes | often | almost always |
|--|--------------|--------|-----------|-------|---------------|
| 3. <b>Having a Conversation:</b> Does the youngster talk to others about things of interest to both of them?<br>Problem situation:                     | 1            | 2      | 3         | 4     | 5             |
| 4. <b>Asking a Question:</b> Does the youngster decide what information is needed and ask the right person for that information?<br>Problem situation: | 1            | 2      | 3         | 4     | 5             |
| 5. <b>Saying Thank You:</b> Does the youngster let others know that he/she is grateful for favors, etc.?<br>Problem situation:                         | 1            | 2      | 3         | 4     | 5             |
| 6. <b>Introducing Yourself:</b> Does the youngster become acquainted with new people on his/her own initiative?<br>Problem situation:                  | 1            | 2      | 3         | 4     | 5             |
| 7. <b>Introducing Other People:</b> Does the youngster help others become acquainted with one another?<br>Problem situation:                           | 1            | 2      | 3         | 4     | 5             |

- |   | almost never | seldom | sometimes | often | almost always |
|---|--------------|--------|-----------|-------|---------------|
| 9. <b>Asking for Help:</b> Does the youngster request assistance when he/she is having difficulty?<br>Problem situation:  | 1            | 2      | 3         | 4     | 5             |
| 10. <b>Joining In:</b> Does the youngster decide on the best way to become part of an ongoing activity or group?<br>Problem situation:  | 1            | 2      | 3         | 4     | 5             |
| 11. <b>Giving Instructions:</b> Does the youngster clearly explain to others how they are to do a specific task?<br>Problem situation:  | 1            | 2      | 3         | 4     | 5             |
| 12. <b>Following Instructions:</b> Does the youngster pay attention to instructions, give his/her reactions, and carry the instructions out adequately?<br>Problem situation: | 1            | 2      | 3         | 4     | 5             |
| 13. <b>Apologizing:</b> Does the youngster tell others that he/she is sorry after doing something wrong?<br>Problem situation:  | 1            | 2      | 3         | 4     | 5             |

Skillstreaming (early childhood, elementary, adolescent)  
by Ellen McGinnis & Arnold Goldstein

# "Just the facts, Ma'am"

## Learn to be objective

Observe neurotypicals in a natural setting and write down exactly what you see in very brief time periods (< 3 minutes) on 3-4 different occasions. By different people?

# What do you want the student to do?

- State what they should do, not what they should not. (dead mans' test)
- Be specific and objective about what you want to see &/or hear
- Avoid vague, subjective terms such as polite, helpful, respectful, appropriate, attitude, etc.
- Make sure it's developmentally and peer appropriate.
- Goals should be written with enough clarity that a stranger would be able to identify the presence or absence of the behavior.
- Make it measurable within the designated setting:
  - Who will see it and how will it be measured?
  - Avoid "will improve" and percentages unless in specified timeframe

# Data Collection

Build it into your goal

How often?

By whom?

In what context?

How is it recorded?

How do we remember to get it done?

# Example One - Problem

Background: Ben is a 6<sup>th</sup> grade student. He has an adequate verbal vocabulary to express his wants and needs clearly. He tends to speak in phrases of 4-5 words. He seeks opportunities for peer interaction during class. His voice tends to be high volume and generally monotone. He is of average intelligence.

Problem : In the classroom environment, Ben verbally announces his need in a loud voice and then immediately follows through with whatever he finds necessary. i.e.: Ben stands and shouts "bathroom" and then promptly leaves the room, or loudly states "my pencil broke" and then goes to the pencil sharpener. Situations arise approximately one time of every two class periods throughout the day in his core academic classes.

# Example One - Goal

Goal: Ben will appropriately ask permission as defined on data collection sheet, to complete non-routine activities such as using the bathroom, sharpening his pencil, filling his water bottle, etc., with visual supports only, if needed (no staff prompts) in 90% of situations in one random week of data collection per 9 weeks.

## Data collection sheet:

Goal: Appropriately asking permission for non-routine tasks  
Ben raises his hand and waits quietly to be called on if teacher is instructing class, is with another student, or if class is participating in discussion. Ben quietly approaches the teacher if independent or small group work is being completed. In each situation he then asks the teacher if he may complete the necessary task and waits for a response from the teacher. He then completes the task. Note: teacher grants permission for him to complete the task when he asks.

# Example Two - Problem

Background: Brittany is a 7<sup>th</sup> grade student with a very high IQ and an advanced verbal vocabulary. She has limited to no interaction with peers and adults during the school day. She independently follows all routines and does not stand out as having overt problem behaviors that interfere with classroom instruction. She responds well to visual information. Academically she is on the A honor roll.

Problem: Brittany does not indicate in anyway that she needs help or instruction. She is noted to remain quietly sitting in her seat or standing in the current location. She tends to lower her chin slightly, but remains in an upright position. Her hands tend to be idle or she fidgets with an item on her desk or in her hand. When approached and asked if she needs help by staff she says either "no", "I don't know" or remains silent.

# Example Two - Goal

Goal: In a familiar environment, with contrived situation if necessary, when approached by familiar staff and asked in a direct manner if she needs help, Brittany will verbally respond, with use of a visual script if necessary, indicating what she needs help with, in 4 of 5 situations over no greater than a 5 day period. To be monitored 2 random weeks each 9 week period.

Data Collection sheet: On the back of each scripted index card. Four columns are labeled to record:

"date/time"

"Y/ N" for "yes"/ "no" indicating whether or not she completed the task as noted above.

"task" 1-3 word description of task which required help. i.e.

"math worksheet", "broken pencil lead", "misplaced item"

"Initials" staff member initials

# Example Three - Problem

Background: Alex is an 8<sup>th</sup> grade student. He gets average grades. He has a generally age appropriate vocabulary. He has relative strengths in the areas of math and science. He is good natured, and is not disruptive. He independently follows his school schedule. He appears to enjoy peer interaction and frequently sits with peers at lunch.

Problem: When working in small groups of 3-5 students, Alex appears attentive, looking from person to person and at the project. He smiles on occasion at generally appropriate times and completes specific tasks that he is told to do by another group member. However, he remains generally silent without asking questions nor commenting on the task at hand, or on "side" conversations. In general observation on 4 occasions when directly questioned by a peer he either remains silent (~ 25%) or accurately answers the question with a 1-2 word phrase (~75%). On occasion he directs his attention to the person next to him and tells a joke which he finds funny, but that is unrelated to the topic or task.

# Example Three - Goal

Goal: When working in a small group (3-5 students) on projects in his science class, using a visual cue card, Alex will respond on topic, using one of three conversational types of response, after being directly engaged by another student, in 5 of 5 opportunities over a 2 week period.

Response types:

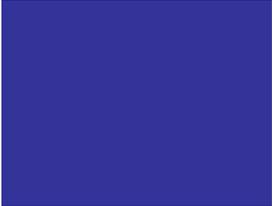
- 1.) responds to statement with a statement
- 2.) answers open ended question with at least 6 word sentence
- 3.) responds to a statement with a question

# Your Turn: Handling Frustration

Daniel is an 8<sup>th</sup> grade student. He has adequate verbal language to talk to peers, interact with teaching staff and get through his school day. When he gets angry or frustrated he stands up abruptly and then raises his voice and yells at the person or object of his anger. Approximately 8 out of 10 times in this situation he throws a book either down at the floor or across the room. On occasion he throws a pencil or other small object. He uses foul language toward the teaching staff if they address him. If he's asked to leave the room and he is not touched by anyone, he will follow a teacher or lead a teacher out of the room and into the hallway. Once outside the room it takes him approximately 5-10 minutes to get his anger under control before re-entering the room. He has never physically hit anyone, though the objects he throws have come quite close.

# Write a Goal

- You have 5 minutes
- Work with one partner if you wish
- Write a measurable goal for a replacement behavior for the throwing of objects and use of foul language when he's angry.
- Don't worry about the intervention process.
- Focus on describing the behavior you want to see.
- Make sure it meets these criteria:
  1. realistic goal – keep in mind, it may be a step in a progression, not the end goal
  2. dead man's test
  3. random observer



# Social Skill Intervention

Social and behavioral skills  
are taught using exactly the  
same principals we use  
to teach anything else.

But, they **MUST** be  
directly taught

# Teaching Social & Behavioral Skills

1. Write a meaningful and measurable goal
2. Break tasks down into small parts or steps
3. Present manageable amount to ensure success
4. Build on skills they've already acquired
5. Select specific teaching method(s)
6. Determine if best taught in group or individual
7. Make a lesson plan
8. Determine location/time/frequency
9. Involve peers

# 1. Break tasks down into small parts or steps

- If necessary, ask a related service provider for help (OTs took numerous courses in school on task analysis)
- Use reference material
  - Books
  - Social Skills Curriculums
  - Google
  - Autism related websites

# Books

Hundreds are available. A few I've found helpful are:

☐ Skillstreaming in Early Childhood (non AU specific) [List of skills](#)

Also versions for Elementary School Child and Adolescent

All by Ellen McGinnis & Arnold Goldstein

☐ A 5 Is Against the Law

By Kari Dunn Buron

☐ Unwritten Rules of Social Relationships

By Temple Grandin and Sean Barron

☐ Practical Social Skills for Autism Spectrum Disorders  
- Designing Child-Specific Interventions

By Kathleen Koenig

# Social Skills Curriculums

- Navigating the Social World  
by Jeanette McAfee, MD
- Think Social and/or
- Thinking About You Thinking About Me, 2<sup>nd</sup>Ed.  
By Michelle Garcia Winner
- Building Social Relationships  
By Scott Bellini Ph.D.
- Preparing for Life  
by Jed Baker

# Sample from Navigating the Social World

## Basic Conversational Responses

Answer yes/no questions

Answer simple questions with a one-two word reply

Respond to a statement with a statement

Answer open-ended questions

Respond to a statement with a question

Respond to a question with a brief statement and a reciprocal question

Respond to a statement with a statement followed by a question

## Greetings and Goodbyes

Recognizing and interpreting nonverbal and contextual clues in other people

## Initiating Conversations

Using non-verbal conversational skills

Recognizing and using tone of voice clues

## Conversational manners

Making introductions

Public versus Private information sharing and asking

Offering and asking for help

Giving and receiving compliments

Resolving conflicts; sharing negative feelings and opinions

# Google

"Basic conversational manners"  
10,800,000 results

"Teaching conversational skills  
to children with Autism"  
37,500 results

# Autism Related Websites

- <http://www.theautismprogram.org/autism-resources/sixty-in-sixty/>
- <http://www.autism.org.uk/>
- <http://www.autismspeaks.org/family-services/tool-kits> (Has an ASD Video Glossary)
- <http://www.autism.com>  
(Autism Research Institute)
- <http://www.nationalautismcenter.org/pdf/NAC%20Standards%20Report.pdf>  
[\(National Standards Project\) \(Page 32\)](#)

## **2. Present manageable amount to ensure success**

Will vary from student to student  
and task to task

## **3. Build on skills they've already acquired**

Basic Conversational Responses

Answer yes/no questions

Answer simple questions w/ a one-two word reply

Answer open-ended questions

# 4. Select teaching methods

- Social Stories™
- Comic Strip Conversations
- Power Cards
- Written information
- Student journal and discussion, letters, notes
- Contrived situations with peers
- Power Point
- Role-Play
- Mirror practice
- Pictures
- Videos of others: u-tube, movies, sit-coms, peers, etc.
- Videotape student

# Social Stories™

- Developed by Carol Gray.  
"The goal of a Social Story™ is to share relevant information... includes *where* and *when* a situation takes place, *who* is involved, *what* is occurring, and *why*."
- They can also:
  - Provide missing information about the perspectives of others.
  - Provide missing information about relevant social cues.

[Hallway Rules](#)

# For Information on Social Stories™

Revealing the Hidden Social Code Social Stories™ for People  
with Autistic Spectrum Disorders

by Marie Howley and Eileen Arnold

The New Social Story™ Book by Carol Grey

A Treasure Chest of Behavioral Strategies for Individuals with  
Autism

by Beth Fouse and Maria Wheeler

[www.thegreycenter.org/social-stories](http://www.thegreycenter.org/social-stories)

# Comic Strip Conversations

Also by Carol Grey

Tool used to visually illustrate the actions, feelings, thoughts and/or intentions of the various people involved in a "conflict", and to help students think of or understand, possible solutions.

- Artistic ability is not required. Use stick figures to represent the people involved. If student draws, may choose to draw more elaborately.
- Word bubbles show the words and/or thoughts of the participants from the drawer's perspective
- May also write words or thoughts in different colors to represent different emotions
- Student takes the lead in creating when possible, with adult assisting
- A series of "frames" can/should be used to show the sequence of events
  - Sequence of events that have already occurred
  - Sequence of events that are likely to occur
  - Sequence of events with different solutions

## Comic Strip Conversation: Example



Tom called me kid because he didn't know my name, but wanted to play with me. The next time Tom or someone calls me "kid," I'll tell them my name and that I don't like to be called "kid." I'll apologize to Tom and tell him my name is A.J. I will also tell him I don't like being called "kid," and please don't call me that again.

# Power Cards / Hero Stories

Developed by Elisa Gagnon

- Used as a reminder or for generalization, so no training is required
- Incorporates the student's (intense) special interest onto a single sheet or card that tells how this "hero" handles a particular situation that is currently of focus for this student.
- A short social story is also included to describe the situation more fully than can be put on the card.
- The student first reads the social story, then carries the card with him so that he can refer to the steps that his "hero" follows when he is in this situation.

# Power Card Example

## **Student Description:**

Aaron has been acting out in class and seeking attention from his peers by saying or blurting out inappropriate comments in class. He likes the attention he gets from his peers for doing this and he thinks he's being accepted when his peers laugh at him for doing this.

Aaron's special interest is Nascar and he especially likes Nascar driver, Jeff Gordon.

## **Power Card Story:**

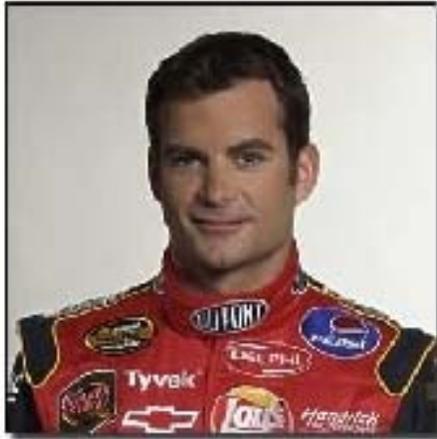
### **“Jeff Gordon and His Fans”**

Jeff Gordon loves being a race car driver, but sometimes it is difficult for him to think before he speaks. At the end of a long day sometimes all he wants to do is make others laugh. Sometimes Jeff blurts things out when his boss is talking. But Jeff has learned to think before he speaks. Jeff has learned it is important not to talk when his boss is talking and not to say things to try and make others laugh when his boss is trying to talk to his pit crew and teach them the latest NASCAR rules and regulations. Jeff has learned to stop and think about the comments he makes before speaking.

Just like Jeff, it is important for Aaron to think before he speaks. It would make Jeff proud to know that Aaron is like him and that he thinks before he speaks and doesn't interrupt his teachers in class. It is important for Aaron to remember to do the following:

1. Think before he speaks. Say it in your head first before saying it out loud. If it's not related to what the teacher is teaching then Aaron shouldn't say out loud in class.
2. If Aaron can't think of something to say about the teacher's lesson, it's better for him not to say anything at all.
3. Always follow the classroom rules and raise your hand before you speak.

# Power Card



1. Think before he speaks. Say it in your head first before saying it out loud. If it's not related to what the teacher is teaching then Aaron shouldn't say out loud in class.
2. If Aaron can't think of something to say about the teacher's lesson, it's better for him not to say anything at all.
3. Always follow the classroom rules and raise your hand before you speak.

# Written information

Prompts: wipe erase, cue cards, sticky notes, notebook page

Handouts: [Example: Rules for hello and good bye](#)

Scripts: role play, structured scenario, on desk, in practice, etc.

Charts: [Words to use for Hello](#) [Sample: Filled out](#)

[Conversation starters chart](#) [Privacy circles chart](#)

Other: [Anger thermometer](#) graphic organizers, etc.

# Student journal and discussion, letters, notes

- Journals

- For students who *enjoy* writing
- Specific scenario or feeling, typically not a daily journal
- Later may suggest continuing on own
- What happened, how he felt, what he thought
- Discuss outcomes and other options

- Letters and notes

- In conflictual situations or misunderstandings
- Addressed to person involved
- Express feelings, thoughts, apology(?) solution
- Share with trusted person to review before final draft

# Contrived situations with peers

- Be thoughtful in peer selection
- Must coach/teach peers
- Small and very structured for early skill development
- May be in "therapeutic" setting first
- May need scripts for all or some
- May be improvised within guidelines or with structure

# Power Point or other computerized visual media

- ❑ Make your own
- ❑ Assist the student in making one
- ❑ Use other peoples' : [www.slideshare.net](http://www.slideshare.net)
  - *Conversation Rules*

# Role Play

Role-playing: two or more people act out roles in a particular scenario.

- To help prepare for unfamiliar or difficult situations and/or rehearse for an upcoming situation. [Small child's upcoming visit to the dentist](#)
- To demonstrate problems or situations from different perspectives.

## Steps

Identify the situation.

Add details.

Assign roles.

Act out the scenario, with or without scripts

Discuss what you have learned.

# Role play: making plans by phone

- **Mary: Hello.**
- **Joe: Hey, Mary. This is Joe. How are you?**
- **Mary: I'm good. What's up?**
- **Joe : Me and some friends are going to the movies Friday night and I wondered if you want to go?**
- **Mary: Who's going?**
- **Joe: Tom, Brian and Natalie, I think.**
- **Mary: Sounds good. What movie?**
- **Joe: We haven't decided yet?**
- **Mary: OK, what time?**
- **Joe: Probably the 9:00 or 9:30 show. Is there any movie you want to see?**
- **Mary: I heard Epic is pretty good, but I don't really care. I just like the popcorn.**
- **Joe: Let's meet at the coffee shop at 8:45.**
- **Mary: Sounds good.**
- **Joe: Great. See you then.**
- **Mary: OK, See ya.**

# Mirror practice

- Great for teaching, practicing and critiquing:
  - Non-verbal communication
  - Pairing of verbal and non-verbal communication
- Without a model
- With a model
  - Imitate an adult
  - Imitate a peer
  - Imitate a picture
  - Imitate a video on pause or short clip

# Pictures

- Books, magazines, internet, photographs
- Use pictures intended for audience below student's language and age level for initial introductions to concepts, etc.
- Student searches for picture to illustrate an emotion
- Adult gives pictures and student identifies the emotion
- Used paired with other written information (prompts, handouts, scripts, etc.) as visual reminder/cue

# Videos of others: sit-coms, movies, u-tube, peers, etc.

- [Friends episode](#) (:10 :33 :50 :51)
- [Short Circuit Movie Clip](#) (:23 :55 1:18 1:59)
- [Foreign Film](#) (1:10)
- [Ellen](#) (2:45 3:59)

# Videotape student

## Video self modeling or "video feedforward"

- ❑ Used to facilitate skill development or language development
- ❑ Film clips are taken and then edited to show them doing a skill slightly beyond their ability level
- ❑ Labeled at the beginning and end
- ❑ With or without sound
- ❑ Student watches
- ❑ [Lillian's film](#) from Siskin Institute

## **5. Determine if best taught in group or individual (or both)**

### **■ Advantages of Individual**

- ✓ Allows you to more accurately assess student skill level
- ✓ Easier to plan when you're in unfamiliar territory
- ✓ Only one learning style to accommodate
- ✓ More room for "change of plans"
- ✓ Easier to schedule

### **■ Advantages of Group**

- ✓ More realistic
- ✓ Serve more students at one time
- ✓ Different options for intervention strategies

## **6. Make a lesson plan**

- Plan 3-4 sessions in advance
- Be specific, but without lots of invested time
- Pick 2-3 teaching methods per session (may not use all)

# 7. Determine location/time/frequency

## Location

Attend to sensory issues

What's available?

What materials, resources, equipment is necessary?

How much room for movement is needed?

## Time

Is a specific environment necessary (i.e. cafeteria, quiet space, hallway, etc)?

30 minutes probably maximum per session in school setting

How much time is required for the intervention strategy?

## Frequency and duration

1-2 times per week if individual

1-3 times per week if group

Rate of skill development varies significantly; 2-3 sessions verses 2-3 months

# 8. Peer involvement is critical

- ❑ Understanding Friends
  - ❑ Catherine Faherty – Asheville TEACCH Center
  - ❑ <http://teacch.com/educational-approaches/understanding-friends>
- ❑ Included in specific teaching methods
- ❑ Peer Buddies
- ❑ Lunch Buddies
- ❑ Life Skills Group
- ❑ Interest Groups!

# Don't forget the rest of "the team"

- The person with Autism is not the only person you will be teaching.
- Teachers, parents and other staff much be taught what their expected behavior is too, or it will not work.

Teach student

Teach rest of team

Practice

Generalize

# Teaching Social & Behavioral Skills

1. Write a meaningful and measurable goal
2. Break tasks down into small parts or steps
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# Questions?

