



# Social Skills and Teens: Fostering Functional Skills

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## Objectives:

Attendees will learn the following:

- Importance of functional social skills in teens
- What functional social skills are
- Activities/ idea to increase social skills

Will look  
different for  
each individual

Based on likes,  
dislikes,  
abilities, future  
goals, etc

What are Functional Social Skills?

# Communication Skills

- ▶ Increasing social skills using the most functional mode of communication
  - ▶ Vocal
  - ▶ Pictures
  - ▶ Sign language
  - ▶ Augmentative communication device (iPad, Go Talk etc.)

# Coping/ Emotional Regulation Skills



Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT)- falls under applied behavior analysis (ABA)



Mindfulness



Meditation

# Barriers to Social Skills

Like to be alone

Concrete thinking

Not understanding emotions/ body language of self and/or others

Specific topics of interests not interesting to same aged peers

Not being able to answer why questions

Lack of inferencing skills

# Abstract: Understanding Social Language

- ▶ Idioms
- ▶ Sarcasm
- ▶ Thinking outside of the box
- ▶ Emotions and body language

# Direct Instruction of Social Skills



Can be pre-packaged programs



Virtual Reality Programs



Video modeling



Role play



Social stories and lessons



# Mindfulness

- ▶ Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT)
- ▶ Meditation

- ▶ Immediately teaching social skills naturally
- ▶ Use of prompts
- ▶ Explaining the why behind what is being done, said
- ▶ Pointing out others emotions and body language as it is happening
- ▶ Can also be done using favorite tv programs, books, etc.
  - ▶ Using closed captioning on tv

## Social Skills In Vivo: Natural Environment

# Intraverbals

- ▶ Part of B. F. Skinner's verbal behavior approach
- ▶ Considered social language
- ▶ Asking questions of child
- ▶ Safety questions (phone #, date of birth, parent names, address, etc.)
  - ▶ Generalized by having different people, ask in a variety of locations under different settings
- ▶ Intraverbal webbing



# Social Skill Instruction in School

- ▶ Can be part of IEP or 504
- ▶ May be a part of speech and language services
- ▶ Ask teachers to foster connections with others who have the same likes
- ▶ After school activities
- ▶ May look like a variety of things
- ▶ Use some of the strategies from school at home and vice versa-communication is key

# Using Social Stories or Lessons

Great for prepping for significant transitions

Moving

Different schools

Teacher out

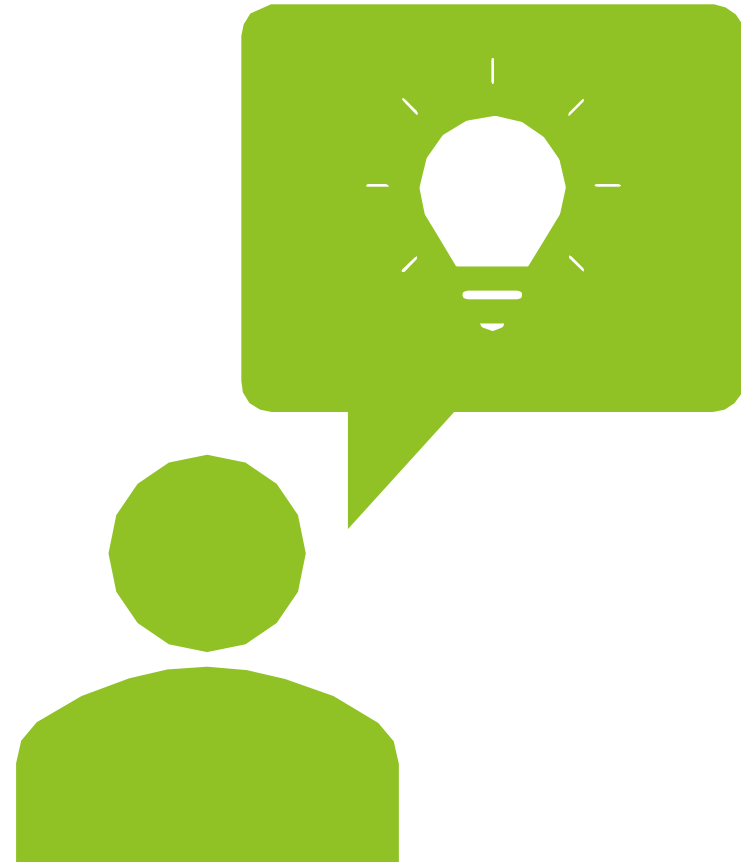
New therapist

vacations

# No Filter: Sheldon Syndrome

## What to Do?

- ▶ When someone says what they are thinking, without knowing and/or understanding social appropriateness
- ▶ Prompt in natural environment
- ▶ Use examples the person would understand, with preferred reinforcers



# Bullying

- ▶ Definition: Bullying is unwanted, aggressive behavior among school aged children that involves a real or perceived power imbalance. The behavior is repeated, or has the potential to be repeated, over time.  
([www.stopbullying.gov](http://www.stopbullying.gov))
- ▶ Explain what it is, what it could look like
- ▶ Need concrete examples
- ▶ Come up with a plan if your child is being bullied (be specific in who they should tell, when, etc.)

# Cell Phone Etiquette



**Direct instruction first**



**Create specific rules and consequences for cell phone use**

Time

Limits

Social media can and can't be used

Parental settings

When appropriate to use and not



# Cyber Safety: 1<sup>st</sup> Direct Instruction

Explicitly state once on internet, phone, etc., it is out there forever

Not sharing personal information

No sharing of lewd pictures (detailing what lewd is)

Social media

Dating sites

# Cyber Safety: Natural Environment

- ▶ Explaining what is seen on celebrities they like using social media
- ▶ Showing what you post, friends post that are appropriate vs. inappropriate
- ▶ Different apps to monitor social media and texts (Bark) or to mirror phone to your phone-
  - ▶ Important so missteps can be addressed immediately before it gets out of control



# Activities to Foster Social Skills

- ▶ Playing board games
- ▶ Family games/ sports/ events
- ▶ Organized activities after school
- ▶ Joining sports teams
- ▶ Related to their likes
- ▶ Libraries and community events

# Resources

- ▶ [www.stopbullying.gov](http://www.stopbullying.gov)
- ▶ <https://do2learn.com/SocialSkills/overview.htm>
- ▶ <https://www.autismparentingmagazine.com/autism-social-skills/>
- ▶ \*Disclaimer- not endorsing these sites, just giving as a resource to parents