Social Competence Series: Play and Friendship
Go To Meeting Instructions

- Microphones should be muted
- Please do not click out of Go-To-Meeting window
- Content questions can be typed in the chat tool on right side of screen
- Please type in number of people at your location now
Social Competence Series: Play and Friendship
Outcomes

• Participants will be able to list how autism spectrum disorder (ASD) affects early types of play.

• Participants will be able to identify supports for teaching play skills to individuals with ASD.

• Participants will be able to identify friendship skills that need to be taught to individuals with ASD in order for them to develop friendships.
Social Competence

The ability to interact successfully with peers and adults; social effectiveness

Assumes a certain set of expectations:

• Knowing the rules
• Reading facial expressions and body language of other people
• Reacting consistently to your own and others’ emotions
• Communicating appropriately with different groups
Social Competence Description

“[S]ocial [competence] means one is able to adapt to an ever-changing landscape that takes into consideration the environment, the people in it, the thoughts, beliefs and needs of the individual and others who share the environment--whether or not they are in direct communication--as well as individual and collective history of knowledge and experience.”

(Winner, 2002, p.21)
Where Does It Begin?

Development of social competence begins with our first interaction
What is Play?

- Play is pleasurable
- Play requires active engagement
- Play is spontaneous, voluntary, and internally motivated
- Play involves attention to means over ends
- Play is flexible and changing
- Play is not literal

(Wolfberg, 2003, p. 20-21)
“Play is the business of childhood and it would be fair to say that most children love their job.”

(Sigafoos, 1999)
Play and Development of Social Competence

- Play is important and good play skills are connected to better cognitive, social, linguistic, and emotional development.

- Play and Social Competence are directly connected because playing allows children the opportunity to express different emotions such as intimacy and affection, which then leads to the foundations of friendship.

(Wolfberg, 1999)
Types of Early Play: Typical

Manipulation Play--Can appear as young as 8 months

- Exploratory/sensorimotor play
- Movements such as gazing, mouthing, patting, swiping, grasping, shaking, banging, turning, and dropping

(Wolfberg, 2003, p. 8)
How ASD Affects Manipulation Play

• Present at higher rates than functional or symbolic play possibly because sensory experiences, such as running, jumping, spinning, bouncing appeal to children with ASD

• Some will begin playing with toys in a stereotyped way

(Wolfberg, 2003, p. 10)
Types of Early Play: Typical

Functional Play--Appears by the end of the first year

- Simple or complex actions with constructive materials
- Simple examples include stacking blocks, putting a doll in a bed, or trying on hats
- Complex examples include brushing a doll’s hair or wrapping a stuffed animal in a blanket
How ASD Affects Functional Play

• Less likely to spontaneously appear in children with ASD
• When it appears, can range from simple to complex
• Due to a range of abilities, it includes activities that are directed to objects and/or self and/or peers
• Overall, children with ASD spend less time in functional play and produce fewer functional play acts

(Wolfberg, 2003, p. 11)
Types of Early Play: Typical

Symbolic-pretend play—Appears between 2 and 3 years of age

- Imaginary play in three fundamental forms:
  - Object substitution—using one object to represent another (pretending a banana is a telephone)
  - Attribution of absent or false properties (pretending a dry table is wet)
  - Imaginary objects as present (pretending that an empty cup is full of tea)

(Wolfberg, 2003, p. 9)
How ASD Affects Symbolic Play

- Least likely to appear spontaneously in children with ASD
- When children with ASD do pretend play, they incorporate fewer diverse, flexible, novel acts than children of a similar developmental level
- Often seen as play rituals that vary slightly (scripted, repetitive)

(Wolfberg, 2003, p. 11)
“If play is the beginning of measuring the world and finding one’s place in it, it shouldn’t be hard and one should feel successful.”

-Cammie McGovern
Tips for Teaching Play

• Model appropriate ways to approach peers
• Assist child verbally or hand over hand to show new ways to play with materials
• Pair a new toy with a familiar toy and alternate turns
• Introduce new toys gradually and play with the new item a bit longer each day
• Encourage use of sensory materials to expand flexibility with materials (i.e. play-doh or shaving cream can be used with cars or other favorite items)
• Give child choice within limits.

(Retrieved from http://www.fraser.org/tip_sheets/play_skills.PDF 8/12/10)
More Tips for Teaching Play

Don’t be afraid to “change the rules” or use only some of the pieces to simplify the play in the beginning.

- Remember to teach “one step at a time”
- Small steps will lead to BIG gains
- Program for success
- Provide “prompts” as needed in order to ensure that the child continues to be successful and motivated
- Structure play time in “small time frames” frequently throughout the day
- Know when to end a play session

Even More Tips for Teaching Play Skills

- Environment: In a natural setting, have various ability levels represented with organized, attractive, clear boundaries.

- Communication: Have an individual communication system in place, respond to all attempts from individual, talk about what you are doing, imitate actions to gain attention, add visual supports.
Using Special Interests in Play

Using a child’s special interest can improve motivation and add reinforcement.

If a child likes Star Wars, use various activities to teach different play skills

- Star Wars Legos can be used to teach building, fine motor, and pretend skills
- Star Wars costumes can be used to teach pretend play or play with peers
- Star Wars figurines can be used to teach figurine pretend play and imagination
- Star Wars puzzles, games, art projects and books can be used to teach sharing, turn taking, winning/losing, peer play

(Smith, 2001)
Including Peers in Play

• Choose inclusive settings for play: play dates, playground, park, sports

• Include special interests: start with what the person with autism enjoys; find out what same age peers are doing and expand to those activities/items

• Plan for supports: teach peers and adults how to interact with and include the individual with autism; add visual supports as needed
Play Helps Make Friends
## Levels of Friendship

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Level One</th>
<th>Level Two</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ages 3 to 6</td>
<td>- Friendship is very basic</td>
<td>Ages 6 to 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Friendship is often defined by proximity</td>
<td>- Children are less likely to engage in pretend play</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Children believe that a friend is someone who wants to play with you or who wants to give you something</td>
<td>- Children are more likely to understand reciprocity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Children are more likely to understand their own motives, thoughts, and feelings</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Attwood & Gray) and (Smith, 2001)
## Levels of Friendship

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level Three</th>
<th>Level Four</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ages 9 to 13</td>
<td>Adolescence Through Adulthood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Friendship is defined using common interests and experiences</td>
<td>• Peer acceptance and belonging is more important</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• More aware of other people’s feelings and opinions</td>
<td>• Peer acceptance may be more critical than family acceptance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Less “playing” and more “helping”</td>
<td>• Individuals realize that not every person is going to be a good friend or a good person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• More games with rules</td>
<td>- Sports, board games, card games, video games</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Attwood & Gray) and (Smith, 2001, p.4)
Friendship Skills

The ability of young people to develop friendships with peers is critical to their emotional development and success in school.

- Using theory of mind
- Possessing the basics for establishing friendships
- Understanding the hidden curriculum
- Handling anxiety
- Understanding and recognizing emotions
Theory of Mind

“Theory of mind is the understanding of mental states of others including their intentions, desires, beliefs and emotions.”

Difficulty in:

- Predicting
- Reading intentions
- Understanding emotions
- Explaining own behavior
- Understanding perspective or reference
- Reading and reacting to others’ interests
- Understanding social interactions

Basics for Establishing Friendships

- Individuals need to understand the communication system
- Individuals need to learn the social skills valued by the peer group
- Individuals need to have problem solving skills
- Parents/Educators should provide consistent opportunities and time
- Parents/Educators should provide accommodations
- Parents/Educators should provide encouragement and support
The Hidden Curriculum

“The set of rules or guidelines that are often not directly taught but are assumed to be known.”

Phrases associated with hidden curriculum:

- “I shouldn’t have to tell you but …”
- “Everyone knows that …”
- “It’s obvious …”

(Myles, et al., 2004)
My teacher says I’m rude. I think I’m honest. I don’t understand why I can’t tell someone that they have bad breath, ugly hair, or to go away because I’m busy.

This is Asperger Syndrome.

(Gagnon, E., & Myles, B. S. (1999). This is Asperger syndrome. Shawnee Mission, KS: AAPC.)
Hidden Curriculum in School and Social Situations

Examples

• Teachers do not all have the same rules. One teacher may allow gum in the classroom while the other does not.

• Teachers have assumed expectations for their students. They are expected to greet their teachers, sit down when the bell rings and listen quietly to announcements.

• When a teacher gives you a warning, it means that she wants the behavior to stop and that most likely there will be a consequence if the behavior occurs again.

(Myles et al., 2004)
Hidden Curriculum Examples Continued

- When the teacher is scolding another student, it is not the best time to ask the teacher a question.
- People do not always want to know the honest truth when they ask you a question. Your best friend does not want to hear that she looks fat in a new dress she just bought for the dance.
- Acceptable slang that may be used with your peers (i.e., “dawg,” “phat”) may not be acceptable when interacting with adults.
- People are not always supposed to say what they are thinking.

(Myles et al., 2004)
Anxiety

- All individuals experience anxiety in social situations because everyone wants to gain peer acceptance, feel included, and have meaningful friendships and relationships.

- Some individuals with ASD experience anxiety differently. Because ASD is a disorder of social cognition, individuals with ASD experience heightened levels of social anxiety and therefore experience behavioral challenges in social situations.

(Buron, 2007)
How to Lessen Anxiety

• Teach calming techniques
• Prep for new situations
• Practice social skills with familiar people
• Use the Incredible 5 Point Scale
• Use visual supports
  • When an individual has difficulty understanding a social concept, consider showing them using a picture, drawing, or written words
  • Visuals remain consistent
  • A picture/word description stays in place when verbal words are over
Incredible 5 Point Scale

- Controls emotional reactions
- Student participates
- Identifies problem
- Enhances alternative, positive behaviors

(www.5pointscale.com)
Example of an Incredible 5 Point Scale
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>5</th>
<th>Feeling Out of control</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>This could end up with me being fired if I fall apart! I need to use my “HELP” card to ask for help so I can have a quiet break</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>4</th>
<th>Almost over the edge</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I can feel it coming and know I need to get out. Grab the stress ball and walk outside</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>3</th>
<th>It’s Building</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I feel unsettled, hard to concentrate. Ask the boss for a break</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2</th>
<th>Something is not quite right</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I know something is happening. Self-Talk (“Relax”), Listen to music while I work</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>Chillin’</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I am good. I can do the work and I feel safe.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Individuals can use the concept of the 5 Point Scale to develop a visual reminder of how they may feel and what they need to do.

This scale is an example of what may be developed after a person has worked through and recognizes how it feels to “escalate and escape” and what action may be necessary when that occurs to avoid unfortunate endings.
Visual Support: Anxiety

[Image: Stop sign with instructions: Deep Breath IN, count to 5, Let it out SLOW, Relax]
Emotions

Many emotions manifest differently in individuals with ASD:

- Excitement
- Enjoyment
- Pleasure
- Confusion
- Misunderstanding
- Love

Ohio Center for Autism and Low Incidence
# Excitement, Enjoyment, Pleasure

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expected Responses</th>
<th>Possible responses from an individual with ASD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Smiling</td>
<td>• Smiling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Jumping up and down</td>
<td>• Flapping arms, hands, and/or wrists</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Singing</td>
<td>• Screeching or Squealing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Sharing the excitement with others</td>
<td>• Rocking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Laughing</td>
<td>• Talking non-stop and very rapidly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Giggling</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

![Image of a laughing baby]
Confusion and Misunderstanding

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expected Responses</th>
<th>Possible responses from an individual with ASD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Asking questions</td>
<td>• Responding or taking the meaning literally even though it may not make sense</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Having a puzzled look on your face</td>
<td>• Exhibiting fear at the unknown or unpredictable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Scratching your head</td>
<td>• Having a tantrum or meltdown if things do change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Looking to others for clarification</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Love and Affection

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expected Responses</th>
<th>Possible responses from an individual with ASD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Hugging</td>
<td>• Moving away</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Kissing</td>
<td>• Avoiding eye contact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Smiling</td>
<td>• Unresponsive to receptive affection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Patting on the back</td>
<td>• More attachment shown to objects rather than people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Holding hands</td>
<td>• May oddly initiate touch yet retreat from approaching touch</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Summary

- Learned how ASD affects the development of play skills
- Know how to support individuals with ASD in learning how to play
- Learned friendship skills that need taught to those on the spectrum so they can develop friendships
Thanks for Learning with OCALI.

For further information on this topic, contact Wendy Szakacs, OCALI Regional Coach

wendy_szakacs@ocali.org
Next Webinar in the Series: Social Competence Strategies for Social Competence and Other Relationships
References

References Continued


