

STAGES OF SOCIAL READINESS – TEACHING SOCIAL SKILLS

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STAGE OF SOCIAL READINESS

1. **Sensory Exploration Play: Playing with objects based upon their sensory qualities**

- Have peer play centered around sensory exploration games such as rough and tumble, shaving cream, play-doh, etc.
- Use adult games such as peek-a-boo, I'm gonna get you, etc...
- Symbolic play themes should not be a large part of play at this point.

2. **Parallel Play: playing side by side another child**

- Have kids play with same toy or with same theme
- Have there be some interaction between two toys/themes – for example, building a bridge to connect two block buildings.
- Even if the kids are playing with different toys, have the material be shared or have another child be the “keeper of materials” so the child with autism has to ask his/her peer for the materials.

3. **Interactive Play: playing with another child**

- Have one material that both children can work on: for example, one picture and two markers, one marble ramp and one marble (for competition), a wagon where the children can take turns pulling and being pulled, seesaw, game of catch, trains on a track with only a few trains and each child can be the conductor, parachute, etc.

WHAT NEEDS TO BE IN PLACE FOR SUCCESSFUL PLAY?

1. **Interest in other children:**

- What type of kids does the child with autism show interest in? Older children? Peers? Younger children?
- Have you picked peers that the child is comfortable with?
- Are the peers old enough to understand the child's disability?
- Have the peers been educated about the child's disability? Is the education on-going? Do the peers understand the disability and do they have a place to ask questions when they arise?
- Are they mature enough to give up a turn for the child on the Autism spectrum

2. **Interest in activities:**

- Is the activity something the child with autism is interested in?
- Always try to pick activities that the child with autism is extremely motivated by.
- Pick activities that the child is interested in, not the adult.
- Pick activities the child is good at – something they have mastered, not a skill they are learning.
- Try to pick activities that are short in duration and don't involve lengthy directions.

3. **Parallel play skills**

- Does the child have parallel play skills, or does the child prefer to play in a corner by him/herself?
- First must come parallel play before interactive play
- Lay out activities that would be interesting to many children at many levels (for example, Lego's, blocks, etc.)

4. Turn Taking

- Does the child have turn taking skills?
- Can the child wait for more than one second before leaving the game?
- Does the child understand why other kids need a turn?
- Does the child take interests when other kids are having their turn?
- Can the peers understand that the child with autism may need more than one turn in a row initially? Does the peer become upset?

5. Language

- Does the child have a way to communicate?
- If the method is not language, do the other children understand? (i.e.: sign language, picture exchange?)
- How much language does the child have? Enough to get by? Enough to communicate? Enough to communicate when frustrate or mad?

6. Sensory environment

- Does the child have any sensory sensitivities? If so, what are they?
- Is the environment sensory friendly?
- Does the child have a way to say, "I need a break?" (leads to outbursts)
- Are there modifications that can be made?

7. Understanding of activity or rules of the game

- Does the child understand how to play the game in the true way (not the child's made up way?)
- Are the rules too complicated? Do they make sense?

WHAT IS SOCIAL SCRIPTING?

Definition: Writing out dialogs about social situations which a child can read and follow. For example,

All people need to wait in line.

When Connor is waiting in line he may stand straight with his arms down at his side. Connor may not touch another child. If Connor needs to say something to Mrs. Ross, Connor may raise his hand and wait until Mrs. Ross calls on him.

What is the purpose of social scripting?: Social scripting is a way to make social situations more predictable and give a child choices for what they can and can't do.

Writing Social Scripts for Jake: *Leaving the classroom*

Jake wants to leave the classroom. Jake can wait at the door and put his hand on the "stop" sign and wait for Clover to take his hand or Jake can say to Clover, "I want to leave" and take Clover's hand. Jake may not leave the classroom without Clover's hand.

Stories should be short, to the point, not leaving out any details, and specific (Jake vs. children; Mrs. Ross vs. Teacher)



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MODELING APPROPRIATE BEHAVIOR

- Having adults and peers model correct social behavior is another way to teach social skills.
- The child with autism needs to be held to the same standards as his/her peers. In this case, if all the children are waiting in line quietly the child with autism should not be given special permission to talk or jump around. Unfortunately, kids will be kids and if the child with autism is not held to the same standards and expectations, the other children will begin to ostracize and resent the child with autism.
- Until the child can adequately follow rules, the child should not be
- Permitted to participate in activities with the other children.

