

# Tier 2 Interventions

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## Social Skills Training

SCHOOLWIDE SYSTEMS OF POSITIVE BEHAVIOR SUPPORT

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## Social Skill Training

**Purpose:** To teach and reinforce specific skills for those students who demonstrate a skill deficit.

**Essential Elements:** Methodological approach for intensive small-group instruction (tell, show, do, practice, monitor progress and generalize).

**Who can benefit?** Students who demonstrate skills deficit in a specific social skill area (e.g., how to perform skills, when to perform a skill, etc.).

**Who will not benefit?** Students who demonstrate a performance deficit; those students who have the requisite social skills, but are not engaging in the skill under the appropriate conditions.

### Basic Approach

#### **1. Establish the Need to Learn the Skill**

To sell a social skill to students, consider doing the following

- a. Ask students why the skill might be important to them.
- b. Point out potential consequences of using or not using the skill.
- c. Use examples from television, movies, etc. in which characters use the skills.
- d. Identify situations in which the skill could come in handy for students.

#### **2. Identify Skill Components**

To help students know what steps and in what order they must perform the behavior in question, analyze the steps of the social skill by doing the following.

- a. Present a social skill
- b. Brainstorm what the students would have to do to execute the skill.
- c. Write all the students' suggestions on the board or flip chart.
- d. Discuss with the group the relevance of each suggestion. With the group, decide what behaviors would be important and unimportant and why.
- e. Decide with the group the list of behaviors that would be most important in performing the skill in question.
- f. Decide with the group the order in which they should perform the behaviors. Identify potential problems that might occur in performing the skill.

#### **3. Provide the Modeling Display**

- a. Decide if you or a student will model the skill.
- b. Point out the board or flip chart list of skills that are necessary for performing the skill.
- c. Before presenting the modeling display, review the steps to be performed.
- d. Instruct students to watch and see if each step is performed in the proper sequence.
- e. Model the skill for the group or have a student model the skill.
- f. After modeling, invite the students to evaluate the modeling sequence. Discuss their comments.

#### **4. Rehearse the Skill**

To help the students remember the steps of the behavior, invite different students to model the skill for the group.

#### **5. Provide Specific Feedback**

- a. Point out the correct things students did in performing the skill
- b. Offer suggestions for how the students might improve their performance. If necessary, remodel the skill and have students rehearse once again.

#### **6. Program for Generalization**

- a. Role-play a number of different situations in which the skill would be appropriate. Vary these situations as much as possible in terms of who, what, when, and where the skill will be performed.
- b. Teach a number of different ways in which the students could perform the skill. Since an infinite number of ways exist in which people can have a conversation, teach a sufficient number so that the students can generalize the skill.

### **Guidelines for Behavior Rehearsal**

#### **A. Covert Rehearsal**

1. Have students close their eyes. Then present a scene involving social interaction.
2. Have students imagine themselves engaging in a particular social skill in the scene.
3. Have students imagine how the other people in the scene will respond to their behavior.
4. Have students imagine alternative acceptable behaviors they could perform in the same social situation and the consequences associated with each behavior.

#### **B. Verbal Rehearsal**

1. Present a social situation involving interaction.
2. Have students specify each step involved in performing a social skill.
3. Have students orally arrange these steps in proper sequence.
4. Have students describe situations in which the social skill would be appropriate.
5. Have students describe the potential consequences of performing the social skill.
6. For each situation, have students describe alternative social behaviors and the consequences associated with each behavior.

#### **C. Overt Rehearsal**

1. Describe a role-play situation, select participants, and designate roles for each participant.
2. Have participants role-play the social situation; instruct observers to watch the performances of each participant closely.
3. Discuss and evaluate the performances in the role-play and provide suggestions for improved performance.
4. Ask the participants to incorporate the feedback suggestions as they replay the scene.
5. Select new participants to role-play the same social situation.

### **Coaching**

1. Present a social concept. For example, ask the group what is meant by cooperation.
2. Ask for definitions of the given social concept.
3. Provide clarification for the group's definition of a social concept. For example, say, "Cooperation could also mean...as well as..."
4. Ask for specific behavioral examples of the concept. For example, say, "What are some things people might do to show they were cooperating?"
5. Elicit potential outcomes for performing the skill and for not performing the skill.
6. Generate situations and settings in which the skill would be appropriate; generate situations and settings in which the skill would be inappropriate.
7. Use behavior rehearsal to practice the skill.
8. Use specific informative feedback about behavior rehearsal.
9. Based on feedback of the initial behavior rehearsal, have students replay the skill.
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### **Social Problem-Solving**

1. Provide a general orientation to the problem. Indicate that many ways exist to solve problems with others in a socially appropriate manner.
2. Define and formulate the problem by asking the students questions like the following: What exactly is the problem? What are the facts concerning the problem? Are you focused on being angry or upset instead of trying to find out what is really going on in this situation?
3. Generate alternative solutions to the problem by brainstorming as many solutions as possible. Don't focus on how good the solutions are. Make a list of all the brainstormed solutions.
4. Have students identify what would be the consequence (outcome) of each alternative solution identified in the brainstorming.
5. Based on consequences the students generate, invite the students to choose the solution that leads to the best outcome.
6. Discuss what must be done to implement the solution (e.g. who, what, where, when and how).
7. Verify the outcomes of the solution. Ask the students (a) Did the solution work? (b) Could a better outcome be achieved in a different way? (c) How could you modify what you did to achieve a better outcome?

### **Using Peer-Initiated Strategies**

1. Recruit peer confederates for peer-initiation training of social skills. Recruit children who display a high degree of self-confidence and who are well liked by peers.
2. Train peer confederates in social-initiation strategies. Use modeling, behavioral rehearsal, reinforcement for competent performances, and direct instruction in specific behaviors required to initiate a social interaction.
3. Using procedures listed above, prepare peer confederate for initial rejection of their initiation bids.
4. Periodically conduct "booster" sessions to retrain peer confederates and to discuss unique problems they may be having in social initiations.

### Using Reinforcement-Based Strategies

1. Use positive reinforcement as the first choice in changing behavior. Verbal praise or a special reward following appropriate behavior increases the frequency of the desired behavior.
2. Create a list of possibilities for reinforcement. Remember there are no universal reinforcers, and what adults may think is reinforcing may not be reinforcing for students.
3. In selecting student-determined reinforcers, try to use naturally occurring reinforcers, such as praise and access to preferred activities.
4. In some cases you may need to use negative reinforcement. Negative reinforcement refers to an increase in appropriate behavior that offers an escape from or avoidance of distasteful consequences (e.g. no homework if work completed in classroom).
5. Reinforce immediately after a behavior so student is able to see the relationship between the behavior and its consequences.
6. Reinforce frequently after initiating a behavior; decrease after the behavior is established.
7. Teach student self-reinforcement strategies.

### Facilitating Generalization

#### 1) *Train Diversely*

- a) Use sufficient stimulus exemplars.
  1. Vary situations and settings used in the social skills training sessions
  2. Use different people, places, things and so on in role-plays of social skills.
  3. Vary ways in which you teach a given skill (e.g. modeling, coaching, verbal instruction, etc.)
- b) Use sufficient response exemplars
  1. Teach multiple ways of responding to the same social situations
  2. Use brainstorming to generate with the group the ways in which a person could respond in a given social situation
  3. Demonstrate how the children could use the same behavior in different ways (e.g. using words, gestures, voice tone, voice volume, physical orientation to other people, and so on).

#### 2) *Teach Relevant Behaviors*

- a) Teach behaviors that have a high probability of being reinforced in other environments.
- b) Teach behaviors that teachers, parents and other students rate as important.

#### 3) *Teach Functional Mediators*

- a) Use a common social stimuli.
  1. Incorporate, if possible, peers from the generalization environment into your social skills training environment.
  2. To administer consequences in the home and involve parents, use behavioral contracts and school-home notes.
- b) Use self-mediated stimuli.

1. Teach the child to use the following responses as they instruct themselves on the performance of a social skill.
  - a) What is the problem?
  - b) What are some things I could do?
  - c) What is the best thing to do?
  - d) Ok, I'll do it.
  - e) What happened when I did it?
2. Teach children to self-monitor their own behavior by doing the following:
  - a) Determine what they will record.
  - b) Determine how they will record the behavior.
  - c) Determine how they will use the self-monitored data.
3. Use homework assignments to facilitate generalization of social skills across settings.

**For more information on Social Skills Instruction:**

Elliott, S.N. & Gresham, F.M. (2008). Social skills improvement system (SSIS) intervention guide. Minneapolis, MN: Pearson

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