Social Emotional Learning Strategies

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A Different Approach . . .

April, a kindergartner, grew up alone. When she entered school, she was simply fascinated with other children. To get their attention, she grabbed kids around their necks at recess, all the while smiling. When she clutched at them kids called her “the mean girl,” and at first we agreed. They screamed and she was punished. No one was getting anywhere. Finally we changed our approach. “April, are you trying to play with that girl?” we asked. “Here’s how you touch when you want to play,” we said. We then asked another child to show April how. When she was no longer seen as mean, other kids rallied to her—helping her learn to play. We all just needed to understand differently. (L. Tobin, 1998)
A Different Approach . . .

When a middle school student lacks social skills, what have we been teaching him for eight years that was more important than how to make friends?
Why do I need to teach Social Skills?

- NOT everyone naturally ‘gets’ social skills
- There is a direct correlation between poor social skills, behavior problems, and academic achievement!
Why Teach Social Skills?

- Understanding social interactions helps us to predict the behavior of others
  - Helps students take part in groups
  - Helps students form friendships
- Cost of poor social skills
  - About 50,000 children and youth die each year because of poor social skills (Olhoff and Olhoff, 2004)
  - More difficulty obtaining and keeping a job
Why Teach Social Skills?

- Persons with AS have a significantly higher risk for depression (1 in 15)
- Teens and adults with AS have a significantly higher rate of suicide
  - Unable to handle rejection
  - Greater difficulty with relationships
  - Difficulty managing their own emotions
  - Often have fewer skills for dealing with these problems
Meltdown Visual Activity
Anxiety
Points to Consider Regarding Anxiety

- If we can treat Anxiety, we can alleviate opposition.
  - Some students have the belief that if they can control their environment, they can control their anxiety!
  - Some students may have learned that intense emotions manipulate others.
Anxiety Activity

Meeting new people

Trying to do everything perfectly
Proactive Not Reactive

- Teach the student to have a plan to keep themselves in check:
  - Teach them breathing techniques
  - Give them an outlet for tensing muscles such as a stress ball they keep in their pocket
  - Teach them how to go to their “calm” place
Relaxation Visual

Learning to Relax

When I get angry or tense my body can feel many different ways -

- My teeth may be clenched
- My hands may feel sweaty
- My hands may be in a fist
- My face may feel warm
- My muscles may be tight and hurt

When I begin to feel angry or tense there are many ways to help me relax -

- Close my eyes and take 5 deep breaths
- Ask to take a break
- Ask to take a walk
- Ask to stand up and stretch
- Get a relaxation toy
Positive Affirmations

I can do it!

I’ll try my best and that will be good enough!

I am safe.

I will stay calm and relaxed.
Special Place Strategy

See Handout and You Tube Link:

http://youtu.be/3fL6JapU7nM
Kid’s Relaxation Video:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aaTDNYjk-Gw
Coping Visual

Not very well
Not so good
Fine
How am I coping?

What can I do?
Take a break
Find a quiet place
Take a deep breath
Ask for help
Start over

I’m feeling anxious.
I need to calm down.
What do I do?

I can take a deep breath.
I can count to five.
I can go to a quiet place.
Breathing Visual

SQUARE BREATHING

1 2 3 4
breathe in for 4 seconds

hold for 4 seconds

4 3 2 1
breathe out for 4 seconds

1 2 3 4
hold for 4 seconds
Student Activity

- Breathing Deeply: Have the kids take a deep breath while counting to five. Then as you count back to one, have them slowly release the air.

Exhale . . .

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1
**Student Activity**

- **Combined Breathing and Muscle Relaxing:** Have the kids pretend they are balloons filling up with air. As you count to five, they slowly breath in and fill up their balloons, stretching and tightening their muscles. Have them hold it a few seconds. Then, as you count back to one again, have them release the air and relax their muscles as though their balloon is deflating.
Student Activity

- Muscle Relaxing: Have the kids pretend to become frozen by slowly tightening each part of their bodies until they are "frozen solid". Then, let them "thaw" by relaxing each part of their bodies and allowing their anger to melt away.
## Worry Journal

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>My Worries:</th>
<th>How Did I Handle My Worries:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Anger Management
Anger Management Activity

- We have to TEACH new coping skills and distraction techniques to keep stressors from piling higher! Brainstorm coping skills we can teach students😊!
Why Do I Get Angry?
Check off the reasons why you get angry

An adult gets mad at me ____

I can’t figure something out ____

I feel left out ____

My sibling and I fight ____

It’s too loud ____

I’m picked on ____

I lose a game ____

I break something ____
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Situation</th>
<th>Angry Response</th>
<th>Non-Angry Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>![Image] I can’t figure something out</td>
<td>Example: <em>I break my pencil and yell</em></td>
<td>Example: <em>I ask for help</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>![Image] My sibling and I fight</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>![Image] I feel left out</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>![Image] An adult gets mad at me</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
When you are angry, use your stoplight to remind you how to behave appropriately. When you feel like you might lose control, STOP. Next, CALM DOWN and think of a solution to your problem. When you are calm, you can GO ahead and solve your problem!
Anger Control Stoplight

Use the following scenarios to practice anger management skills while using the stoplight as a visual aide:

- A sibling is continually teasing you
- At recess, some kids tell you that you can’t join in a game
- You get home from school only to find that your dog has chewed up a favorite toy
- You are being picked on by a classmate every day
- You spill your milk all over the table
- You lose a game

Free Template at:

Wheel of Choice

Walk away
Draw a picture

Count to 10
Go cool down

1 2 3 4 5
6 7 8 9 10
I Feel Cards

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Happy</th>
<th>Sad</th>
<th>Ugh</th>
<th>Angry</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

*Tip of the day:
Students often need a visual & a word to describe how they are feeling.
How to use good impulse control...

STOP!

THINK

What might happen? Good Idea? or Bad Idea?

FREEZE

FOLLOW

Created by Jill Kuzma 10/09 – http://jillkuzma.wordpress.com
Responsible Thinking

What are you doing? or What did you do?

Is that ok?

What happens when you ______?

Is that what you want to happen?

Is __________ going to get you what you want?

What are you going to do next time?
# Incredible 5 Point Scale

## Fill in your own Stress Scale

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Person, place or thing</th>
<th>Makes me feel like this:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td>This could make me lose control!!!!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td>This can <em>really</em> upset me.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td>This can make me feel nervous.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>This sometimes bothers me.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>This never bothers me.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### 5 Point Scale for MS & HS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rating</th>
<th>Looks Like</th>
<th>Feels Like</th>
<th>I Can Try To</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Kicking or hitting</td>
<td>My head will probably explode</td>
<td>Call my mom go home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Screaming at people – almost hitting</td>
<td>Nervous</td>
<td>Go to see Mr. Peterson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Quiet Sometimes rude talk</td>
<td>Bad mood grumpy</td>
<td>Stay away from kids I don’t like</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Regular kid – not weird</td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>Enjoy it while it lasts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Playing hockey</td>
<td>A million bucks</td>
<td>Stay that way!</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Incredible 5 point Scale Templates and Examples

Video

0 Incredible 5 Point Scale Video:

Activity

- Design an Incredible 5 Point Scale:

Think about an individual who would benefit from using the Incredible 5-Point Scale.

- What is the behavior of concern?

- What does the behavior look/sound like at different levels on the scale?

- Design a scale.
Social Skills Strategies
Taking Turns Visual
Say Hello Visual

Find this person

Say Hello

look at them

say "Hello"

wait and listen
Topic Board Visual

I made a comment about...

I asked a question about...

star
# Conversation Checklist

When having a conversation, be sure to do the following. Rate yourself when finished.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Make eye contact with your partner</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stay on topic</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use appropriate voice volume</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use appropriate nonverbal communication</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ask questions about the other person</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make comments</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Take turns</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keep body and brain in group</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demonstrate appropriate personal space</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enjoy the conversation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be respectful</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Begin and end conversation appropriately</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Play Doh People
Online Social Skills Tool:

Free Social Skills Videos

- http://jillkuzma.wordpress.com/youtube-video-links-for-social-skills/
Lots of people find reciprocal conversation difficult! Remember that person who wouldn’t stop talking at the last party you went to?

Our students find reciprocal conversation skills particularly perplexing. They may say little or nothing on the playground or in class discussions. Or they may hold forth in a lecture of monologue fashion, not noticing the signs that others are becoming impatient.
Pie Chart Visual Strategy

This isn’t fair. One kid is “using up all the words.”

When people are talking together about something, it’s like they’re sharing a pie. Everyone gets their piece of the words.
Template for Pie Chart Activity

Topic Sticks Activity

Animals  Recess
Friends  Games
Family   Ty Shows
Movies   Summer
Swimming Food
Sports   Books

When was the last time you were afraid?
If you could be a character in a book, which one & why?
What accomplishment makes you most proud?
Poison Thoughts Activity

The following activities help students to increase awareness of problem thoughts and beliefs:

1. Make a “Poison Thought Game.” Scatter the thought bubbles in a jumble all over the floor. Say something like this: “We’re going to do a kind of matching game. These red thought bubbles are different kinds of thoughts that make people upset. The green ones help to fight the red ones. See if you can find green ones to match up with each of the red ones.”

2. Play “Hunt for your Poison Thoughts.” Say something like: “Each person has certain Poison Thoughts that bother them more than other ones. Which ones bother you the most? Which Antidote Thoughts do you need to fight them?” You can do this by either scattering the thought bubbles around the floor, or taping them up to a wall, or else by holding them up one at a time in sequence for the child/children to look at.

3. Fill out the blank thought bubbles.
Poison Thoughts Activity

If I ask for help, I am weak and helpless.

It is brave and smart to ask for help.

I need to win and get my way!

Other people also need to win and get their way.
Poison Thoughts Activity

- People are not doing it *my* way/ the *right* way!
- People are breaking rules!
- There is usually more than one way to do something.
- It’s not usually my job to be in charge of rules.
Template for Poison Thoughts Activity

Filtering Thoughts Activity

Filter the Thoughts Activity

FILTER IT

I'm going to hit you!
NO! Me first!
No, I won't do it!
I wish he was dead!!

SAY IT

I'm disappointed!
This is hard!
I'm angry!
I'm worried!
I need some help!
I need a break!
Colander Activity – Filtering Thoughts
Filtering Thoughts Activity

- In social skills training in schools and psychotherapy settings, young people on the autism spectrum often struggle with controlling angry verbal outbursts. The Filter the Anger Activity is designed to:

  - Raise awareness of okay vs. not-okay things to say when you are mad
  - Introduce and reinforce the idea that thoughts can be “filtered” before they are turned into words.
Filtering Thoughts
Activity Template

Mint New Thoughts Activity

1. Now, show the kids how to fill out the OLD THOUGHT money. If you have not already introduced the kids to “poison” and “antidote” thoughts, you will want to do this slowly and carefully. You can offer them examples.

2. Have the kids fill out the NEW THOUGHT money now. Provide plenty of extra blank money for them to practice. Tell them that they can use more than one NEW THOUGHT to replace the OLD THOUGHT.

3. Have the kids run the old money through a paper shredder😊!
Mint New Thoughts Activity
Template for Mint New Thoughts Activity

Green Zone Activity

When two colors mix, it makes a brand new color. When two people talk, they mix their interests together, and they talk about what they BOTH like.
Green Zone Activity

What should the person on the left talk about in the Green Zone?
Green Zone Activity

Venn Diagram:
- Left Circle: Jumpropes, TV Shows, Cookies, Cellphones, Computer games, Pac-Man, Scary movies
- Right Circle: Christmas, Cellphones, Pie, Cookies, Cookies, TV Shows, Cellphones, Computer games, Spongebob, DS, Wii, Computer games, Steelers
Green Zone Activity

1. Color blue in this circle.
2. Color yellow in this circle.
Color green in middle.

Green Zone Coloring Page
Template for
Green Zone Activity

http://autismteachingstrategies.com/autism-strategies/green-zone-part-2-downloads-see-previous-blog-for-text-directions/etc/
Students with social skills deficits might not make typical and expected statements in conversation to indicate interest. This happens for two reasons:

1. They might not be at all interested in what the other person is saying.
2. They might be interested, but they are not aware of the importance of validating words and phrases in conversation and they are not well practiced in using them.
Validating Words Visuals

Cool  That’s bad luck
Awesome  Oh no!
Interesting  That’s terrible
Validating Words Activity

- Get a partner.
- Spend a minute describing your weekend and have the other person remain silent.
- Switch Roles: Spend a minute describing your weekend and have the other person give validating words.

- How did it feel?

- Check out the validation handout!
Template for Validating Words

Compliment Tag
Tell the kids: “This is Compliment Tag. A compliment is when you say something nice to someone — about the way they look, something they have, something they did, something they said, or they way they are. When you play Compliment Tag, the person who is “it” tries to tag you. To keep from becoming “it,” you have to give this person a compliment quickly before they tag you. If they tag you before you can give them a compliment, then you are ‘it.’ ”

Easy Compliment Tag: Compliment something the person is wearing, hair, shoes, appearance.

Harder Compliment Tag: Compliment something the person is good at.
Emotions Charades

- Angry
- Being Told No
- Happy
- Opening A Present
- Sad
- Grandma Dies
Using Magnets to Show What Attracts

1. Get some magnets that both attract and repel each other depending on how they are positioned. Allow the kids to hold them and demonstrate how the magnets “attract” and “push away.”

2. Say something like this: “The things we do and say affect other people like magnets affect other magnets. Some things we do and say “attract” other people. That means that other people like it. When they like it they want to be around us. Some things we do and say can push away other people, just the way one magnet can push away another magnet.”
Using Magnets
Activity Worksheet

Name:__________________

Are you like a magnet for other people when you TALK?

You ↔ Other person

Things I can SAY that “attract” others

Things I SAY that make others not want to be around me

©Autism Teaching Strategies, 2012
Using Magnets
Activity Worksheet

Name:__________________

Are you like a magnet for other people when you PLAY?

You          Other person

Ways I PLAY that “attract” others

Ways I PLAY that make others not want to be around me

©Autism Teaching Strategies, 2012
Using Magnets
Activity Template

People Points Activity

Other people are usually watching and listening to us. The information they get with their eyes and ears goes into their minds. Some of the information about you stays there a long time. People talk with other people. The information they have in their minds, about you—both good stuff and bad stuff—can get passed on to the minds of others in this way.

- When you put a good memory about yourself into another person’s mind, we will call that a People Point. It’s something like scoring a point each time you do something cool, or nice, or when you behave well, or when you deal with something hard without getting too upset.”

- “Other people also remember when we do things that they do NOT like. Like when you do something mean, or rude, or out of control. Or, if you don’t pay attention when another person is upset or having a hard time. When that happens, we will call that earning Negative People Points.” [Now, encourage the child to recall a recent time when they earned Negative People Points.]
People Points Activity
People Points
Activity Template

Here’s what was going on: | Here’s what I did that caused a social error: | Here’s what happened when I did that: | Here’s what I should do to make things right: | Here’s what I’ll do next time to keep it alive: 
---|---|---|---|---
| | | | |
Words Hurt/Words Help

- Students may experience difficulty understanding the social consequences of their words and actions. This lack of awareness can affect them in several ways:
  1. The child may be less likely to say something encouraging or complimentary to another person.
  2. The child may fail to discern the harmful effects of hurtful words, and blurt out “unfiltered” statements with harsh, judgmental or violent content.

- When we try to help students increase their ability to use kind words and refrain from hurtful ones, it seems very helpful to use clear visuals. It also helps to equate the other person’s emotional pain and pleasure to physical pain and pleasure. My clients seem to “get” that other people feel physical pain and pleasure much better than they understand other people’s emotional pain and pleasure.
Words Hurt/Words Help
Activity Visual

Words can really hurt someone. It’s in their mind, but it feels almost like other kinds of pain.

1. When you say mean things like: (circle)

2. It can make another person’s mind feel almost like: (circle)

- A toe getting stomped on...
- Tasting or smelling something awful...
- Hearing a fire alarm from just three feet away...
- A gust of shivering, cold wind
Words Hurt/Words Help
Activity Visual

Words can make other people feel great.

1. When you say kind things like... (write down kind things you have said):

   __________________________________________________________

   __________________________________________________________

   __________________________________________________________

2. It can make another person's mind feel almost like:

   (circle)

   - they are getting a present...
   - they are hearing their favorite music...
   - they are smelling something good...
   - they are being petted like a soft kitten...
   - they are tasting their favorite food...
Words Hurt/Words Help
Activity Template

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Situation</th>
<th>Negative Thinking</th>
<th>Positive Thinking</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>You have to take a test.</td>
<td>I am going to fail. This is going to be too hard.</td>
<td>I’ll try the best I can and be happy with that. It will be OK.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You are going to a new school.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You need to ask the teacher a question.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You are going to the doctor/dentist.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You are going to bed and you are afraid of the dark.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You try to get your school work perfect.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You are shy and some new kids try to talk with you.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Red Choices, Green Choices

- A Decision Making Visual that allows the student to determine what happens next, depending on whether they make a red choice or a green choice.
**Bob's School Assembly**

*When Something Bothers Me, or Hurts My Ears, or Makes Me Uncomfortable*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Green Choices</th>
<th>Red Choices</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>__Take/Wear Headphones</td>
<td>__Forget Headphones</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>__Sit Toward Back</td>
<td>__Lie on Floor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>__Sit on Chair</td>
<td>__Stand on Chair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>__Squeeze My Puddy</td>
<td>__Squeeze (Pinch) Adult</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>__Stand Near Exit with ___</td>
<td>__Run Out the Exit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>__Ask For a __ Min. Break in the Hallway</td>
<td>__Yell / Scream</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>__Ask _____ for Help</td>
<td>__Forget to ask for Help</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>__Hands on Another</td>
<td>__Hands on Bob</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>__Keep Feet on Floor</td>
<td>__Feet on Another (Kick)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>__Go Back to Classroom with Adult</td>
<td>__Go Back to Classroom with No Adult</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| __ __________________ | |}

After I try my best to choose green assembly choices for ___ minutes, I would like: (Check One)

- __Computer with 15 Min. Timer
- __Bookshelf with 15 Min. Timer
- __Art Supplies with 15 Min. Timer
- __ __________________ with 15 Min. Timer

AND... (Check as Many as You Want)

- __A Green Note Home!
- __Three Green Stars on My Chart!
- __You to Tell Me How Happy You Are!
- __You to Smile!
- __Mom to Smile When I Get Home!
- __ __________________
# A Few Social Skills Apps

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>App</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Price</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>My DPS</td>
<td>The Digital Problem Solver (DPS) originally appeared in The Social Express™ as a tool for the characters to use to identify emotions and coping strategies. Users quickly requested a real DPS to use outside of the software.</td>
<td>.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Quest</td>
<td>Social Quest is an application to be used to improve pragmatic language comprehension and expression in a variety of social situations for older elementary, middle school, and high school-aged populations.</td>
<td>14.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Skill Builder Full</td>
<td>All of Social Skill Builder app modules use interactive video to teach key social thinking, language and behavior critical to everyday social situations. Modules include: • Friendship/Life Skills • Understanding Emotions • Problem Solving • Critical Thinking • Perspective Taking</td>
<td>12.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feel Electric!</td>
<td>Part of the Military Families “Finding the Right Word” initiative, this app offers tools that use content and curriculum from The Electric Company to explore emotional vocabulary and self-expression.</td>
<td>Free</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Skills</td>
<td>Social Skills, the stories contain targeted instruction in the following core areas: Joint Attention; Non-Verbal Communication; Greetings; Structured game play; Turn Taking. Elementary age students</td>
<td>6.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stories2Learn</td>
<td>Use one of the 12 created social stories or create your own. For use with individuals with autism and other developmental disabilities.</td>
<td>13.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manners Social Story and Speech Tool</td>
<td>This app includes a 10 page social story about why it is important to be polite, and how to have good manners.</td>
<td>2.99</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Activity

0 Shape Up Summarizer

Practical Application
Sources

- www.loveandlogic.com
- www.autismtrainingsolutions.com
- www.5pointscale.com
- www.cyke.com
- www.behaviordoctor.org
- www.FreePrintableBehaviorCharts.com
- www.AutismTeachingStrategies.com
- www.redandgreenchoices.com
- Dr. Tony Atwood