SOCIAL AUTOPSIES

A social autopsy is a problem-solving strategy designed to support social skills. Students with difficulties understanding social interactions can use a social autopsy as a way to analyze the social errors they made.

Examples of where social autopsies may be used include:

- Ignoring others' greetings
- Asking a question in a class without raising hand
- Continuing to talk on the same topic
- Sneezing without covering own mouth

The steps include:

- **Identify the error.** The student describes to an instructor what happened and identifies what the error was. Identifying the correct emotions about the error can be difficult. The instructor helps the student understand the moment. In addition, the instructor teaches the unspoken rules that govern people's behavior in a given setting.
- **Identify the persons who were hurt by the error.** Lack of theory of mind can be an obstruction in identifying others' feelings or thoughts about the error. Teaching theory of mind may become a central aspect for this step.
- **Decide how to correct the error.** The student may need to observe the natural setting in which the desired behavior can happen. The instructor helps the student identify what other people do in the same situation and how the consequences can be different.
- **Develop a plan that does not cause the error.** Based on the identified way to alter the error, the student makes a plan and writes down in the worksheet what to do for the next time.

Remember the Autopsy is:

- a supportive, structured, constructive strategy to foster social competence
- a problem-solving technique
- an opportunity for the child to participate actively in the process
- conducted by any significant adult in the child's environment (teacher, parent, bus driver)
- conducted in a familiar, realistic, and natural setting
- most effective when conducted immediately after the social error

It is not:

- a punishment or scolding
- an investigation to assign blame
- controlled/conducted exclusively by an adult
- a one-time "cure" for teaching the targeted social skill