

**Disorders of Attention-Coordinated Care Clinic
Autism Spectrum Disorders – Coordinated Care Clinic
(The ASD Clinic)**

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TEACHING SOCIAL SKILLS TO CHILDREN AND TEENAGERS WITH ASPERGERS

KEY CONCEPTS:

1. Persons with social-cognitive deficits still desire successful social relationships and companionship. Do not assume that they don't want to have friends.
2. Children with Asperger's often score well within the normal range on standardized tests typically used by schools to evaluate students. These tests usually do not test for social skills.
3. Poor parenting or role modeling does not cause Asperger's syndrome.
4. Asperger's children and teenagers are often described by their parents as being "bright but clueless".
5. Persons with Asperger's can have wide ranges of strengths and weaknesses which can puzzle and frustrate parents and educators. For example, "since he can program a computer, why can't he write a book report?".
6. It is often helpful for parents to think of themselves as coaches for their children.

SPECIFIC TYPES OF INTERVENTIONS

1. The "I Laugh" Approach: These are a series of specific exercises to teach communication skills and problem solving. I Laugh stands for **I**nitiating new activities, **L**isten effectively, **A**bstracting and inference, **U**nderstanding perspective, **G**estalt, the big picture, and **H**umor.
2. Discussions on specific topics such as how to greet others, how to wait your turn, how to ask for something, what to do when you don't get your own way, and how to tell someone you like them. Use pictures, roll model actual situations, or write in a journal.

3. Emotion Flash Cards or vocabulary cards: These are cards that describe in pictures various emotions.
4. An activity notebook: These can be used to document all the activities in a given day. Then parents and child together can plan for minor changes in routines to help decrease time spent in repetitive stereotypes movements such as rubbing or twirling, or spending all one's time on a single interest.
5. Strategies to teach how to recognize and cope with one's emotions. These include the use of an "anger thermometer", lists of things that might make one horrified, bored, confused, overjoyed, or mad; or emotion scales which assign a number score to the intensity of a given emotion.
6. Learning to recognize early signs of stress and anxiety, to avoid going into the anxiety-anger cycle.
7. Teach commonsense rules for starting conversations. For example, one system is the PATHS method. This stands for Prepare ahead, Ask yourself what you are going to talk about, Time it right, say Hello, and watch for nonverbal Signals.
8. Roll play various stressful and/or emotional situations.
9. Teach how to notice and use nonverbal skills. For example, the SENSE method. This stands for Space (maintain the proper physical space between others) Eye Contact, Nodding (To show agreement or disagreement), Statements of Encouragement (such as uh-uh), and Expressions (face).
10. Teach vocal cues. One such cue is proper use of tone of voice. Ask teenager or child to try to guess what people are thinking based on inflection in speech patterns or tone of voice.
11. Teach the difference between public and private. Be very specific. Make lists or draw pictures of private activities and public activities. Make lists of examples of private places and public places.
12. How to help others. Teach the child or teenager specific tools to use to understand situations in which it is or isn't appropriate to help others.
13. How to understand and use skills such as using a friendly and respectful tone of voice, or waiting for pauses in conversation.
14. How to give and receive compliments. What types of compliments are appropriate in a given situation.