

SOCIAL SKILLS TRAINING

The purpose of social skills training is to assist you in developing prosocial behaviors and interactions with others. Research has shown that poor social skills goes hand in hand with emotional and behavioral problems (Spence, 2003). Also, youth with good social skills are less likely to engage in delinquent behavior and associate with delinquent youth and more likely to have positive school involvement, and engage in prosocial activities and with prosocial youth.

Programs that wish to include social skills training should **include the following**:

- **Behavior rating scales and questionnaires** (Spence, 2003, p. 88)
 - o One frequently used tool is the Social Skills Rating System (Gresham & Elliott, 1990, as cited in Spence, 2003)
- **Behavioral observation** (Spence, 2003, p. 88)
 - o Direct observation of a youth's behavioral patterns will help assess areas of weakness and strength. This can include reports from parents, teachers and peers. Some tools include:
 - Play (Farmer-Dougan & Kaszuba, 1999, as cited in Spence, 2003)
 - Peer Social Behavior Code (PSBC) of the Systematic Screening for Behavior Disorders (SSBD; Walker & Severson, 1992, as cited in Spence, 2003)
- **Verbal Instruction**
 - o Provide instruction and discussion. The verbal instruction should include specifics, not just general terms. For example, when speaking generally about "friendship," explain "friendship" means someone is a friend, someone you are nice to, like to spend time with, share toys, etc. Also speak specifically about related skills and task.
- **Hands on Practice**
 - o Provide practice in as real-life-situations as possible. This may include: modeling, role-playing, real-life practice. Also, change the youth's social environment to facilitate positive social interactions (providing activities, involving the youth in clubs, etc.).
- **Feedback and reinforcement**
 - o As with any behavior modification program, honest feedback and reinforcement are necessary (for further information on reinforcement, see Reinforcers and Punishers summary).
- **Assertiveness Training**
 - o Teach youth to be assertive, rather than submissive or aggressive.

Possible Areas to Target in Social Skills Training:

- Problem Identification: helping youth learn to identify problems and problem situations in their lives, including identifying triggers.
- Problem Solving: generating multiple solutions and predicting consequences.
- Social Perception: correctly interpreting social cues.
- Communication Skills: learning appropriate verbal and nonverbal communication (body language, eye contact, etc.).
- Social Resistance Skills: Teaching you to effectively avoid tempting situations, associate with delinquent peers, and dealing with peer pressure.
- Specific areas: teen pregnancy, drug use, criminal behavior, etc.

REFERENCE:

Spence, S. (2003). Social Skills Training with children and young people: Theory, Evidence, and Practice. *Child and Adolescent Mental Health* 8(2); 84-96.