

The Road to Building Social Skills

One of the most important skills for children to learn is how to socialize and get along with other people. Social skills help to develop connections with other people and impact all aspects of life.



What Abilities are Involved with Social Skills?

- Nonverbal – body language, eye contact, personal space, facial expressions
- Verbal – greetings, start/end conversations, ask questions, get needs/wants met, resolve conflicts
- Support – family, friends, school, authority figures, employment, community members
- Pragmatic Language/Social Conversation – hi/bye, how are you? please/thank you/you are welcome, etc.
- Thinking – perceptions, making choices, self-monitor, social norms, different behavior for different situations

How to Teach Social Skills:

Teach, Model and Practice:

- Identify what skills need to be developed
- Determine steps to build those skills
- Practice in different settings: family, restaurants, stores, school, etc.
- Step in to cue/prompt you child and lead by example



- Think about your (adult) social skill abilities (strengths/challenges)
- Start where the child is
- Role play social situations with the child
- Remind to use certain skills before entering a social situation
- Look for teachable moments to educate your child about proper skills
- Afterwards, reflect with the child/youth what worked, what didn't
- Discuss what teasing and bullying looks like
- Encourage, praise and be positive
- Acknowledge good/bad examples – video, in person, books, etc.




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Suggestions

- Home environments are important to develop these skills; don't leave it up to school or therapist
- Create social opportunities for your child – don't wait for others to invite your child to a party
- Research suggestions online for social skill building
- Limit the child using screens during social times unless the child uses it for communication
- Help the child to write thank you notes
- Find more ideas:
 - Use social stories – online, books or create your own
 - Use YouTube videos
 - Access community opportunities – library, park, recreation programs
 - Positive Behavior Interventions at school
 - Books/Links:
 - Thinksheets for Teaching Social Thinking and Related Skills by Michelle Garcia Winner
 - www.verywellfamily.com
 - www.childrenscolorado.org/conditions-and-advice/parenting
 - Life Skills for Kids: How to Cook, Clean, Make Friends, Handle Emergencies, Set Goals, Make Good Decisions and Everything in Between by Karen Harris