

Session 2



Strategies for Supporting Young Children with Autism Spectrum Disorders

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Virginia Autism Council

<http://www.autismtrainingva.org>

The Virginia Autism Council is a state-supported council of autism experts seeking to define needed skill competencies and to advance training and educational opportunities for personnel and caregivers supporting individuals with autism.



Goals for Training

To introduce good general strategies for addressing:

- Everyday situations
- Independence
- **Communication**
- **Early Social and Play Skills**



Goals for Training

1. Providing Proactive Strategies - Everyday situations
2. Following Directions within Daily Routines - Independence
3. **Enhancing Expressive Communication – Communication**
4. **Developing Social and Play Skills – Early Social and Play Skills**



3. Enhancing Expressive Communication

- Discuss functions of communication
- Learn about strategies for teaching communication



Building Blocks of Communication

How:
Sounds/ Words/ Gestures/ Intonation/
Volume/ Tone/ Pacing

Why:
Intent/ Need/ Desire



Enhancing and Building Communication

How:

Children with autism (as with all children) will resort to whatever they know works to get their needs met. We need to teach appropriate skills to satisfy needs and desires.



When a child does not use words or conventional gestures to communicate these functions, he frequently uses problem behavior.



Can't tell you what I want = tantrum



Oops, a new task = hitting



Communication – Intent (Why)

Basic	Intermediate	Advanced
-desires	-yes/no	-relate information
-terminate	-converse on topic of interest	-gain information
-no	-initiate conversation	-share ideas / thoughts
-help	-comment	-converse on multiple topics
-choice	-ask questions	-initiate, maintain, and terminate conversations
-greet	-answer questions	
	-share feelings	



Teaching Communication



General Strategies for Encouraging Communication

Observe child closely to identify any effort or evidence of communication

Reinforce communication by responding to it

Shape communication as child gains skills

Teach specific words / signs

Move down to the child's eye level



How Do We Teach Communication?

- **Explicitly:** must provide direct instruction
- **In context:** provides meaning and generalization
- **Through motivational activities:** creates desire and interest
- **Through routines:** provides opportunity for repetition
- **Through environmental modifications:** creates opportunity for communication



“Seize the Moment & Create the Opportunity”

- It is critical to ensure that we are setting up enough opportunities each day for the child to communicate. It is not enough to wait and see what the child wants or is playing with. We must arrange the environment so that we have multiple teaching moments throughout the routine. We must set up situations full of enticing activities so the child can have opportunity after opportunity to let us know what he wants.
- Some motivation can be seized by waiting or by being observant (e.g. hunger or thirst)
- Some motivation can be created (e.g. crayons are missing, box of crayons is in sight but out of reach)



Routines

Establish routine; then stop and wait for communication

- Routine has a logical, predictable sequence (e.g. circle time, dinner, play time, bath time)
- Predictability is used to elicit communication and increase joint attention



Routines

- Blowing bubbles
- Swinging
- Eating dinner
- Watching a movie
- Bath time
- Reading a story
- Dropping blocks in a bucket
- Pushing trains along a track
- Singing/rhymes/social games
- Cloze procedure



Routines

Communication Ideas:

- Request
- Answer questions
- Comment
- Describe sequence
- State feelings/ thoughts
- Describe relevant aspects of events
- Describe actions
- Describe participants
- Describe props/materials



Instruction (Motivation)	Response	Consequence (Natural R+)
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Mom and child play with Play Doh. Mom holds up star cookie cutter and waits for request.	Child says, "Star."	Child given star cookie cutter.
It is time to eat lunch. Child looks for his lunch on the shelf and it is gone. Teacher prompts him to say, "Where's my lunch?"	Child repeats the question.	Teacher points to the lunch and says, "There it is."
It is time for finger painting. Teacher gives paint to child in tightly sealed container.	Child says, "Want paint."	Teacher opens paint container.
Child is swinging. The swing slows to a stop. Mom waits.	Child says, "Swing."	Mom pushes child on swing.



Environmental Modifications

- Use interesting materials and activities
- Place materials in sight but out of reach
- Offer small portions
- Set up situations where assistance is needed / materials are missing
 - Use containers child cannot open
 - Use toys child needs help operating



Environmental Modifications

Set up problem-solving situations

- Remove a piece of puzzle, toy, or game
- Remove needed tool/ object (e.g. spoon)
- Give wrong item/ food to child

Teach child to communicate dislikes

- Offer disliked food and teach acceptable ways of rejecting
- Teach child strategies to indicate "no" or desire to end activity



Environmental Modifications

Offer choices throughout the day (make it visual!)

- Clothes to wear (e.g., choice of two pants, shirts)
- Foods and drinks (e.g., choice of cereals, juices, different kinds of fruit)
- Toys, tapes, books, crayons
- Places to go





Communication Systems

This slide features a blue background with several images: a yellow speech bubble, a hand pointing up, a green electronic communication device with a keypad, a green communication board, a hand holding a yellow ball, and a grid of communication cards with various icons and text.

Video Clips

Teaching Social Communication to Children with Autism: A Practitioner's Guide to Parent Training and A Manual for Parents (2 book set)

Authors: Brooke Ingersoll, Ph.D., and Anna Dvortcsak, CCC/SLP

4. Developing Social and Play Skills

Early Social and Play Skills

What's the Best Way to Teach Social Skills?



We focus on PLAY!



Play offers the most natural and the most frequent opportunities for young children to learn and engage.



Step One – Observe and Match

OBSERVE the child

- What does he spend his time doing?
- What are his passions?



Then: Do what he is doing – **MATCH** his behavior.



So, If the Child Is...

- Lining up cars, you line up cars nearby
- Opening and closing a cabinet door, you open and close a cabinet door nearby
- Rocking back and forth, you rock back and forth nearby



Step Two – Join In

Join the child’s play by adding to it!

So, if he is lining up cars, you can:

- First, add some of your cars to his line
- Then, when you add another car, have the line go in a different direction
- And then, instead of adding a car, add a block to the line



Step Three – Take Turns

Strategies to Develop Turn-Taking:

- Do something and then wait
- Interpret the smallest of behaviors as a turn – be a careful observer
- Don’t focus on what the child may be doing wrong
- Take the same number of turns as the child



Suppose He Won't Take a Turn?

- Give a signal of some kind, like pointing or making a sound
- Give a gentle prompt, to help him take his turn. This helps to ensure success as he develops turn-taking skills.
- Immediately reward him when he takes his turn



Step Four – Develop Routines

- Use turn-taking to develop the routine
- Name the routine and use repetitive words/phrases to encourage the child's initiation of & participation in the routine
- Use the routine to develop language
- Practice the routine throughout the day



Things to Remember When You Play

- Play more than talk
- When talking, avoid questioning or commanding – instead, comment
- Be animated and enthusiastic, without overwhelming the child
- Have fun!



Development of Toy Play



Complexity of Toy Play

- Exploratory
- Combinational
- Cause and Effect
- Functional
- Simple Pretend



Easiest Toy Play Activities

- Close-ended
- Include limited toys / materials
- Involve one partner (or no one)
- Have separate toys / materials for each
- Require no sharing, turn-taking or waiting
- Require no listening or language



A Key to Developing Toy Play: Imitation

- Have two sets of toys
- Start with simple actions with toys
- Use prompting, if needed, to ensure success
- Be enthusiastic, give lots of praise (and other reinforcers, if needed) and have fun!



Another Key: Define the Play Space

- Consider:
 - Physical boundaries
 - Limiting distractions
- Limit available toys and activities
- Then have a predictable play routine



More Strategies to Develop Social & Play Skills

- Use language just above the child's level of communication
- Ensure your play / interactions match the child's ability or are just above
- Wait for him to respond - wait for him to take a turn
- Move ahead slowly – make changes gradually
- Have him stay in the interaction just a little longer



How To Measure Success with Your Social & Play Skill Strategies

When you are successful, the child will, more and more...

- Voluntarily interact and play with you
- Initiate play with you



James MacDonald



How To Measure Success with Your Social & Play Skill Strategies

When you are successful, the child will, more and more...

- Stay in interactions with you for longer periods of time
- Increase his number of turns

James MacDonald



How To Measure Success with Your Social & Play Skill Strategies

When you are successful, the child will, more and more...

- Imitate you
- Prefer to be with you instead of being alone

James MacDonald



How To Measure Success with Your Social & Play Skill Strategies

When you are successful, the child will, more and more...

- Have play that is changing and developing
- Show his pleasure and enjoyment in spending time with you!!

James MacDonald



Video Clips

- What strategies do the parents use?
- What works?
- Would you have done anything differently?



AHA! Activity

Think about what you just learned about the development of communication, social skills and toy play, then think about a child you know with ASD.

1. What communication skills can you teach? How will you teach them?
2. What are next steps you might take to expand social and toy play skills?



Strategies for Supporting Young Children with Autism Spectrum Disorders

Questions



Resources

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