

The Building Blocks of Friendship: Teaching Social Skills to Children with Special Needs



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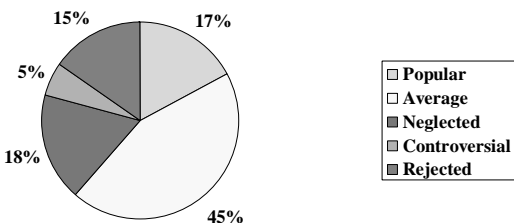
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Overview of Presentation

- Categories of peer acceptance
- Importance of improving social skills and friendship
- Effective methods of social skills instruction
- Overview of Children's Friendship Training
 - Joining other children at play
 - Rules for a play date
 - Resisting teasing
- Summary of Research Findings

Categories of Peer Acceptance



Importance of Improving Friendships

Improving friendships for children may:

- Buffer the impact of stressful life events
- Improve self-esteem
- Increase independence
- Decrease anxious symptoms
- Decrease depressive symptoms



(Buhrmeister, 1990; Matson, Smiroldo, & Bamburg, 1998; Miller & Ingham, 1976)

Importance of Improving Friendships

Peer rejection is one of the strongest predictors of:

- Mental health problems
- Juvenile delinquency
- Early withdrawal from school



(Buhrmeister, 1990; Matson, Smiroldo, & Bamburg, 1998; Miller & Ingham, 1976)

Evidence-Based Components

- Small group format
 - 7-10 group members
- Concurrent parent sessions
 - Expand social opportunities
 - Social coaching
- Didactic instruction
 - Structured lessons
 - Concrete rules / steps of social etiquette



(Matson, 1984; Davies & Rogers, 1985; Fleming & Fleming, 1982; Mesibov, 1984; Gresham, Sugai, & Horner, 2001; Gralinski & Kopp, 1993; Rubin & Sloman, 1984; Frankel & Myatt, 2003)

Effective Methods of Social Skills Instruction

- Role-playing / modeling
- Behavioral rehearsal
- In session coaching
- Real-life practice
 - Homework assignments
 - Parent supervision



(Matson, 1984; Davies & Rogers, 1985; Fleming & Fleming, 1982; Mesibov, 1984; Gresham, Sugai, & Horner, 2001; Gralinski & Kopp, 1993; Rubin & Sloman, 1984; Frankel & Myatt, 2003)

Parent-Assisted Treatment

- Direct supervision of peer interactions through coaching
- Guidance on interpersonal problem-solving
- Provide opportunities for peer contacts
- Aid in homework treatment compliance



(Frankel & Myatt, 2003)

Children's Friendship Training

(Frankel & Myatt, 2003)

- Evidence-based for:
 - High-functioning autism
 - Asperger's Disorder
 - ADHD
 - FASD
- Children 6-12 years of age
- Manualized
- 12 weeks
- 60 minute sessions
- Parent-assisted



Session Format

Parent Session

- Homework review
 - Troubleshoot homework problems
 - Individualize treatment
- Review of child didactic lesson
 - Parent handout is distributed
- Homework assignment
 - Troubleshoot potential homework problems
- Reunification with child

Child Session

- Homework review
- Didactic instruction
 - Concrete rules/steps
- Homework assignment
- Real play activity with coaching
- Reunification with parents

*Children's Friendship Training
(Frankel & Myatt, 2003)*

Overview of Treatment Modules

- Conversational skills
 - Trading information
- Joining other children at play
- Taking "no" for an answer
- Good sportsmanship
- Being a good host on play dates
- Resisting being teased
- Respect towards adults
- Avoiding physical fights
- Graduation



*UCLA Children's Friendship Program
<http://www.semel.ucla.edu/socialskills/>*

Joining Other Children at Play

- Watch
 - Watch to see what they're playing
 - Do you know the rules?
 - Are they playing nicely?
- Wait
 - Wait for a pause in the game
 - Taking a break
 - Ball goes out of bounds
- Ask
 - Ask if you can play
 - Ask someone you know
 - Ask the person holding the ball



*Children's Friendship Training
(Frankel & Myatt, 2003)*

Rules for a Play Date

- The guest picks the games you play
- Praise the guest's behavior
- No refereeing
- If you're bored, suggest a change in the activity
- Let the guest have fun too
- Be loyal to your guest



*Children's Friendship Training
(Frankel & Myatt, 2003)*

Resisting Teasing

- Act like what the person said didn't bother you
- Do not walk away or ignore the person
- Provide a BRIEF comeback that suggests what the person said was lame:
 - Whatever!
 - So what?
 - Big deal!
 - Who cares?
 - Yeah and?
 - Boo hoo!
 - And your point is?
 - Tell me when you get to the funny part.



*Children's Friendship Training
(Frankel & Myatt, 2003)*

Results for Children with ASD

(Frankel et al., in press)

- Child self-report:
 - Improvement in social skills knowledge
 - Decreased loneliness
 - Increased self-evaluation of popularity
- Parent-report:
 - Increased number of hosted play dates
 - Decreased conflict during get-togethers
 - Increased self-control
 - Increased assertion
 - Decreased internalizing
- Follow-up assessment:
 - Most social skills gains were maintained 3-months after treatment

Results for Children with ADHD

(Frankel, et al., 1996)

- Child self-report:
 - Improvement in social skills knowledge
- Parent report:
 - Increased assertion
 - Increased self-control
- Teacher-report:
 - Decreased aggression
 - Decreased withdrawal
 - Increased likeability

Results for Children with FASD

(O'Connor et al., 2006)

- Child self-report:
 - Improvement in social skills knowledge
 - Decrease in hostile attributions
- Parent report:
 - Improvement in overall social skills
 - Decrease in problem behaviors in social situations
- Follow-up assessment:
 - Social skills gains were maintained 3-months after treatment

Resources

Social Skills Programs at The Help Group



because every child deserves a great future



(818) 781-0360

www.thehelpgroup.org

- PEERS
 - Teens with HFA & Asperger's
 - Village Glen Middle School
- School-based social skills
 - Across schools
- Kids Like Me
 - After school social skills groups for children & adolescents
 - Enrollment: (818) 779-5282
- Social Skills Day Camps
 - Summer programs for children & adolescents
 - Application: (818) 779-5207
- After School Enrichment Classes
