

JCSD Distance Learning Lessons for Pragmatic Language

Lesson one - Teaching Negotiation Skills / Other people's perspectives

Students with Autism, Asperger Syndrome and other related social language disorders often struggle to get along with peers / siblings, practice conflict resolution and make appropriate decisions because they cannot keep the end goal in mind. [Elizabeth Creary (1984) and Tim Kowalski (2010)] This lesson will attempt to teach you how to equip your child / teen to successfully negotiate with family members, peers and other adults.

- Study other people's facial expressions and what they are doing with their body - Use real time situations happening at home. For example siblings fighting over screen time, family members disagreeing about what to have for dinner, or any other time a strong emotion is visible on another person's face. Point out which of the six basic emotions the person's face is expressing [happy, mad, sad, disgusted, afraid, surprised]. If your child / teen is the cause of the other person's emotional response, point that out. *"Your sister is mad because you turned on her bedroom light at 6:30 in the morning the get your iPad charger."* *"Look at your brother's face, he is frustrated because we had what you like for dinner for the past three nights."*
- Get the facts. Get the feelings - Be truthful with your child about how other people feel / think about his / her current actions. Once out of school, the rest of the world will not be as tolerate of the child's social language disorders. Working to train our children / teen today, may be the difference in getting and keeping a job in the next five years. **Fact: It is rude to turn on other people's bedroom lights when they are sleeping; Feeling: Do you like it when other people think / feel you are rude? /// Fact: It is selfish in a family to require others to eat only what you like. Feeling: Do you like it when other people think / feel you are selfish?**
- Keep the focus on the end goal - Many children / teens get stuck arguing for the sake of arguing. Keep the focus on the goal. [**Get my charger without making sister mad // Eat food I like without causing brother to suffer**]. 'Let's stop arguing and figure out a solution.'
- Brainstorm some alternatives - If you like to watch movies in the morning, **lay the charger in the living room before you go to bed** so it will not be in your sisters room OR **wait until your sister wakes up to go into her bedroom for the charger.** // Since you've picked meals for the past three nights, **you can choose a side dish and your brother will pick the main dish OR alternate nights which child or teen picks the evening meal. Your brother picks tonight, you pick tomorrow.** Constantly altering our home and world to revolve around our child's likes and dislikes will not benefit in the long run. Once out of school, the real world may fire them from a job for being rude to co-workers or not care at all about their food preference. Preparing for life five years down the road helps them be successful outside our homes.
- Evaluate the consequence / outcome - If you were to do this.....this may happen // "If you were to do thissister / brother would feel....". The goal of this step is to help your child / teen determine what the most socially acceptable versus socially unacceptable outcome of their action would be BEFORE it occurs. Help he / she decide which action to take.
- Have fun! - If we want lasting results from training / correcting our children / teens then we must train / teach / and yes even correct in kindness and when possible with a twinkle in our eye. **More than 50% of this content has been paraphrased from Tim Kolwalski's EXCELLENT book set "Social Pragmatic Success".** ☺ hm

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Lesson two - Teaching Non-verbal Skills for Social expectations / for specific situations

Students with Asperger Syndrome and other related social language disorders often struggle to understand non-verbal social expectations / situations that require a person to act or perform in a given manner. Many children / teens with social language disorders are sadly mistaken to think 'what works well in one place will work well everywhere'. [Tim Kowalski (2010)] This lesson will attempt to teach you how to equip your child /teen to successfully navigate social roles for specific situations.

- Every place and social situation is different - Teach your "What" "When", "How" and "Why" for every place you go. **Dentist** - Teeth Cleaning / Be Still / Inside Voice / Open Mouth / Good manners [yes mam, no sir, thank you] / Prevent Cavities; **Movie Theater** - Watch a movie / Once movie starts NO talking except for emergencies / Chew popcorn quietly / Sip drink quietly / Respect others around you who paid \$ 10 so they can enjoy the movie as well; **Grocery Store during COVID-19** - Rapid shopping / Sanitize hands / Avoid touching people, doors, etc. / Stay 6+ feet away from others / If a sneeze or cough occurs, cover your face by placing in the crease of your elbow / Inside Voice / Good manners [thank you , you're welcome]. If a social blooper occurs, discreetly train the desired behavior in that moment so the teen will know what to do the next time you are there.
- Authority figures, Friends and Family - Interacting with these three groups requires different styles of language / non-verbal skills. What works well with friends, DOES NOT work well with the principal! With principals, teacher, school staff, doctor's office staff, Walgreen's staff - **when in conversation, stand 3-4 feet away** [currently 6+ feet. Before COVID-19 more than 4 feet would have been considered weird or rude, but not currently]. Appropriate distance may change in light of health concerns. With friends / family, standing between 2-3 feet away in conversation is appropriate. Introducing yourself to new authority figure, teacher or classmate is appropriate ONLY once; but you wouldn't introduce yourself to a person in an elevator or in line with you at the grocery store.
- You are always sending a message to those around you - **Slumping** sends a message to the receiver that you may lack confidence or may be shy; so stand tall! **Shaking hands** in introduction with a **weak grip** sends the message you are disinterested / cold; **Shaking hands too firmly** sends the message you may not want to be friends at all!; **Brief eye contact a few times a minute** sends the message you are listening to the speaker and interested in what is being said. **Groomed hair, nails and skin** sends the message you respect yourself and are someone others will want to approach.
- Have fun! - As our teens transition into young adulthood, we want to equip them the expected social behaviors that will make them successful in relationships and one day soon a job or college. When training the social success skills into your teen, keep the mood light and enjoy the time you have together. **More than 50% of this content has been paraphrased from Tim Kolwalski's EXCELLENT book set "Social Pragmatic Success".** ☺ hm

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Lesson three - Teaching Facial Expressions / Expressions must match intent

Students with Asperger Syndrome and other related social language disorders often have significant problems understanding and using facial expressions that match the intent of messages they are trying to send. Problems also arise socially when others using sarcasm or intending to deceive the teen with social language disorders. [Tim Kowalski (2010)] This lesson will attempt to teach you how to equip your child /teen to better understand and use facial expressions effectively.

- Video versus pictures - Because pictures are static [remain the same] student's with social language disorders are very good at identifying the six basic emotions in pictures [Happiness, Anger, Fear, Disgust, Surprise, Sadness]. BUT, moving pictures [YouTube videos, Television recordings, and non-animated Movies or even some Soap Operas] work best because moving pictures mimic real life interactions and express a variety of emotions in a very short period of time. YouTube videos of *I Love Lucy* are a great option. Watch the video with your child / teen with the volume muted for one - two minutes at a time.
- Identify - Repeat the muted video watching for several trials with different videos until your child / teen consistently identifies emotions accurately [Happiness, Anger, Fear, Disgust, Surprise, Sadness]. Now begin to explore **WHY** the character expressed that emotion.
- A-B-C - To understand the **WHY** behind the emotion expressed by the character we will use A-B-C concept of behavioral intervention. **Antecedent** [what event happened just before the emotion was expressed], **Behavior**, [this IS the facial expression] and **Consequence** [what reaction occurred right after the emotion was expressed].
- Review Video again and apply A-B- Go back to the 5 - 10 video clips watching one to two minutes at a time muted. Help your child identify what happened just before the emotion [Antecedent], what was the emotion expressed through the facial expression [Behavior]. Ask, **Why did the character use that face? // What made her / him act that way? / Was he being sarcastic or trying to trick / deceive someone?**
- Find the consequence - Once your child / teen is confident identifying the cause [what happened just before the facial expression], then begin to find the consequence. Ask, **What happened as a result of the facial expression? Did it lead to the people becoming better friends? Did it create a problem?** You may need practice identifying the consequence many times [25 or more videos] as this is the goal for the child to begin to realize that some of his own negative consequences can be avoided by managing his facial expressions.
- Watch other people in real time - Go spy on other family members with your child and observe in real time their facial expressions. While watching the other family members, point out the facial expression, what happened just before and if there was a positive or negative consequence. While waiting on a family member, people watch in the grocery store parking lot. Watch for facial expressions when others interact, try to figure out what happened just prior and if there was a consequence.
- Have fun! - Turn it into a game to see which one of you can identify all six emotions in the parking lot before the other family member. You will never waste time teaching and training your child how to be successful interacting with others. **More than 50% of this content has been paraphrased from Tim Kolwalski's EXCELLENT book set "Social Pragmatic Success".** © hm