Michigan Autism Training Videos Presents:

Teaching Social Skills To Individuals With Autism

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STATE OF INTERVENTION

• Social deficits remain the most resistant to intervention efforts

• Social skill deficits are socially significant (i.e., community and workplace)
IMPACTS EARLY ON

• Every level of development is impacted by social skills
  - Potential for isolation
  - Bullying
  - Marginalized
  - Loneliness
WHY IS IT HARDER TO TEACH THESE SKILLS?
DIAGNOSTIC CRITERIA REVIEW

• Impairment in social interaction
  - Global responses
  - Outcomes are so remote
  - How do we begin?
WHY ELSE IS IT HARDER TO TEACH THESE SKILLS?

• Multi-element skills
  - Several components for each skill

• Involve social judgment as well as skill mastery
  - Judgment is made more difficult by the myriad possibilities that exist in natural interactions
WHEN DOES SOCIAL SKILL TRAINING BEGIN?

• What are the most fundamental deficits?

• What are early targets of instruction?
  - Manding
  - Imitation
  - Play skills
IMITATION TRAINING

- The basis of many more complex behaviors
- “Watch and do”
- Importance of observational learning
DEVELOPMENTAL APPROPRIATENESS

- Use developmental information to create target skills
- Matching expectations create success in environments with peers
WHAT ABOUT TEACHING TOLERANCE?

• Possibility for training tolerance in the community

• Still important to work specifically with individuals with autism to create integration
CRITICAL ISSUES IN SOCIAL SKILLS

• Responsiveness
  - to the overtures and bids of others

• Initiations
  - Responsive does not mean initiative

• Qualitative aspects of responses and initiations
  - Clear, appropriate, timely
  - Endurance

• Complex social behavior
ASSESSMENT APPROACHES

- ABLLS and the VB-MAPP
  - Both have sections relevant to social skills

- Core skills
  - Manding
  - Imitation
FUNCTIONAL BEHAVIOR ASSESSMENT

• Usually not a necessity for deficits

• Some children may need further assessment
  - Excess behaviors (inappropriate behaviors)
TREATMENT

• Generally taught through structured training
  - Discrete trial training
  - Naturalistic training

• Focus on transfer to natural environment

• Demonstration of behavior in generalized contexts

• Spontaneous display of behaviors
HOW TO MAKE SOCIAL INTERACTION REINFORCING

• Variability across individuals

• Social motivation will change over time of intervention
VIDEO MODELING

• Has also been shown to be effective in building a variety of skills
  - Play
  - Conversation

• Probably under-utilized given the empirical support
  - High response effort
  - Need to program variability
POTENTIAL ISSUES

• Similar problems for video modeling and scripting
• Individuals may perseverate on scripts or models
• Program in variability and novelty to prevent issues
  - Multiple exemplars
SOCIAL SCRIPTS

• Help provide ways for individuals to continuously engage in conversational exchanges through systematic fading
GENERIC WARNING

• Individualize treatment to teach individuals to discriminate between examples and non-examples
FEEDBACK SYSTEMS

• Behavior skills training approach

• Demonstrate (model)

• Practice (skills)

• Provide feedback (on performance)

• Self-monitoring- individual watches and rates own behavior
WHAT ABOUT JOINT ATTENTION?

• Best work done by behavior analysts (e.g., Taylor)

• Initiating interactions and responding to engagements is often largely absent for those with autism

• Crucial to social skills because later interaction rest on gaining the attention of others and responding to their bids
PERSPECTIVE TAKING

• The capacity to understand an experience from another person’s point of view

• Occurs in a variety of concrete and abstract ways
EMERGING INTERVENTIONS

• Social Stories and Social Thinking

• Social stories are often one component