



VIDEO TRANSCRIPT

Building Social Skills

Families living with autism spectrum disorder often look for tips on how to handle the many different challenges that may arise. “Real Life Tips for Kids with Autism” is a series of practical videos and resources presented by the experts at Children’s Specialized Hospital.

Social skills are really important for children with autism because a lot of kids with autism lack in that area. They need help in that area. For example, on a playground, they might not know how to take turns when going on a slide or at lunchtime, they don’t know really how to interact with the other kids on the playground or at the lunch table.

There are three outlets that parents can use to help teach their children social skills. The first is school-based social skills, and that’s basically where a school district would offer social-skills program to a child that needs it. It could be in the classroom, it could be during lunch, or it could be after school.

The second kind of social-skills that parents can use to help their kids is outpatient social skills, and there’s two different kinds of that. One is a start/stop group so it is anywhere from 6 – 12 weeks. It starts on the same date. It ends on the same date. There’s typically a different topic that the facilitator would work on each week. Another form of outpatient social skills groups are open-ended groups. So these are groups that are ongoing, all the time. Typically kids of the same age, not always the same struggles because you wouldn’t want a group with all kids that have the same strengths and weaknesses; it just wouldn’t work for a group. But these are more open-ended groups so kids can come and go as they need it. If a child needs to be there for three months, they are there for three months. The great thing about open-ended groups is typically there’s not a waiting list. You don’t need to wait for the group to start because it’s open-ended. Kids can come and go as they need the service.

The third way that parents can help their kids build their social skills is helping them themselves. They can do that through modeling, like modeling how to act in a specific situation or role-playing. If they know a behavior is challenging for their child, they can act it out not in that situation, and hopefully it will help them generalize it into a real-life situation.

Parents can find social skills groups a lot of different ways. You can talk to your pediatrician. You can do a GOOGLE search on the internet. A lot of times in doctors’ offices they have parents’ magazines with resources in their areas. So those are the best ways to kind of find groups in your area.

Another thing that’s really good for parents to remember when they’re working on social skills with their children is to prepare them for a situation. They can do that through pictures or videos or just talking about what’s going to happen, and then during a social situation, cueing them when they need it; Maybe when they’re struggling with a

behavior or maybe just to remind them, “Oh you’re doing a good job.”

The last thing is to have a discussion about it after it is over. Let them know what they did great. Let them know what they need to work on the next time. That way they’re kind of learning the skill actually in a real environment.

There are four main areas that any social skills program or parent should be working on with their children. The first is having conversations, maintaining friendships or having friendships, expressing their feelings, controlling their emotions, and conflict management skills; what they need to do when they get upset. So parents should be working on this, programs should be working on this so that they have good experiences on the playground, in the school, and be able to generalize from working with the parent or working in a program into a real-life situation.

I also think a really good strategy for parents too is to talk to the facilitator of the social skills program and ask them to help them with different skills they could be working with their kids at home to make home life better. As parents, sometimes we need to talk to other parents and other professionals for ideas on how to help us, help our kids with their behavior, so it is really important to do that and any good social skills facilitator will be able to help you with that.

For those people interested in programs to help kids that maybe don’t have autism learn more about kids that have autism and facilitating that and not just autism, anyone with any developmental disability, from scout masters to athletic directors to anyone, we have a great program on our website it is called “Friends Like You. Friends Like Me.” and it was a program basically created to teach kids that don’t have any disabilities like autism or any other developmental disability about it and building friendships with those kids.

The most important thing that I can say to parents is to just work with where your kids are at, and just help them where they are right now, and just continue to build on those skills and definitely, definitely no matter what, whether working with them in the home, or you have somebody working with your kids in a program, just make sure that they are generalizing or learning how to generalize those skills to real-life. Cause it’s great if your child knows how to share their trains in your living room but you also want to make sure when they go to their preschool program that they are able to do it there too. So just continuing to build on those skills so that skill officially becomes like a learned skill and then you can work on the next skill.



Through a partnership with Kohl's Cares, Children's Specialized Hospital is improving access to care for children with special health care needs.



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