



## Building Social Skills

Many children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) lack important social skills such as taking turns, sharing, and joining in games. These skills are important in school and in life and are essential for developing meaningful peer relationships. Although social skills are often difficult to learn, there are methods that can help to develop these skills to help children with ASD lead full and social lives.

- There are three general ways to approach social skill learning. (A) Request that the school offer social skill lessons and activities in the child's classroom, at lunchtime, and in after school programs. Formal goals and activities can be part of the child's IEP. (B) Seek out outpatient social skills programs from a local healthcare provider. (C) In natural settings, role play and model various types of social interactions.
- There may be social skills groups within the community that are appropriate for your child. Look on the internet, ask your child's pediatrician, contact your local library, or look in a local parent's magazine for suitable groups in your area. Seek out community groups which focus on an area of interest for the child, such as an acting class, chess group, or reading club.
- There are generally four social skill areas that are targeted. (A) Work with the child on conversation skills. (B) Help your child with the skills needed to develop and maintain positive relationships. (C) Share activities that help your child express his or her feelings and emotions appropriately. (D) Develop practical conflict management skills. These skills should be taught and practiced among different people in different environments so that they can be useful in all areas of the child's life.
- Take the time to prepare for social situations before they occur. Use pictures, television shows, and videos to illustrate various scenarios. Watch the shows together to discuss the character's actions, choices, and reactions of others. During social interactions you can cue and reinforce appropriate social skills. Afterward, discuss the interactions with your child and develop strategies to improve challenges that may have occurred. You can take videos of your child and provide feedback and reinforcement.
- Programs are available to help other children understand differences and be more inclusive of children with different challenges. [www.childrens-specialized.org/KohlsAutismAwareness](http://www.childrens-specialized.org/KohlsAutismAwareness) has many resources available teachers, after school providers, team coordinators, youth group leaders, and others who work with children.

