



# Tips, Strategies, and Resources for Establishing Meaningful Friendships

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# Background

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Individuals with ASD are at risk for:

- Increased isolation and loneliness
- People with ASD may have poorer perceived companionship, security, and the help they actually can receive, or that is available in their friendships
- 71.4% of adolescents with autism are either isolated or peripheral in their classroom. Given reports, this number is generally the same for elementary children.

What skills are  
needed to make  
friends?

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# Where to Start

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- Assess Social Functioning
- Distinguish Between Skill Acquisition and Performance Deficits
- Select Intervention Strategies
- Implement Intervention
- Evaluate and Monitor Progress

# 1. Assessment of Social Functioning

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**What is the goal? To gain a friend? To gain 3 friends? To be better at small talk?  
To sit in a group for 30 minutes?**

- Should include both observation and assessment

## **Social Skill Checklists:**

- Autism Social Skills Profile (ASSP)
- CELF-5 Social Pragmatics Screener

## **Social Pragmatics Assessments:**

- Social Language Development Test
- TOPL (Test of Pragmatic Language)
- Social Skills Improvement System

*Interviews: The student! Parents, teachers, other providers, etc.*

# 2. Skill Deficit or Performance Deficit?

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**A skill deficit is one that is absent and needs to be explicitly taught.**

- Do they know how to do what I'm asking them to do? Or do they only have a general idea of the skill? May get misconstrued as something else
- Can the student only perform the task with hurdle help?
- Is it within the student's zone of proximal development? (ZPD)

**A performance deficit is a skill or behavior that is present but not demonstrated consistently across communication partners and environments.**

- Need to address the barrier(s) e.g. lack of motivation, anxiety or sensory sensitivities, lack of generalization

# 3. Intervention Strategies: Accommodations & Assimilation

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**Accommodations (changes in the environment that are either physical or social to promote positive social interactions-- beyond the school environment):**

- Autism Awareness Training for Classmates
- Peer Mentor Intervention
- Signing up for clubs
- Attending social groups
- Add a pet to the classroom
- Lunch Bunch

**Assimilation (Changes in the child)**

- Direct intervention for specific social skills

# 4. Types of Intervention to Implement

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## **Thoughts and Feelings Activities/Theory of Mind**

- Thought Bubble Activity
- Drama activities
- Drawing to music
- MOODS
- Bamboozle
- Books
- Pretend Play
- Hide and Seek
- Group Games [tend to stay away from winning and losing games in the beginning]
- Apps [AutisMIND; Social Skill Builder (The Perspective Taking App, You are a Social Detective, SSB: My School Day App; Social Skill Builder LITE)]
- Social Thinking by Michelle Garcia Winner



# Social Stories/Comic Strip Conversations

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**Social Stories are great for teaching situation-specific skills**

- School Dances
- Field Trip
- Anything new

**Establishes expectations for the student, reduces anxiety, and gives them a chance to ask questions.**

**Comic Strip Conversations-combines stick-figures with "conversation symbols" to illustrate what people say and think during conversations.**

**Specific guidelines for stories and the book resource for Comic Strip Conversations can be found at: [carolgraysocialstories.com](http://carolgraysocialstories.com)**

# Role Playing/Behavior Rehearsal

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- Can be scripted or spontaneous
- Most useful for initiating and ending conversations

**Behavior Rehearsal – Excellent strategy to use “in the moment,” especially with students with skill-deficits.**

**Identify a communicative act that could be improved, model a more socially appropriate interaction, ask the student to try again.**

# Video Modeling and Self-Modeling

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**Effective for children across the spectrum from early childhood to adolescence.**

**Video Modeling: The individual watches a video of a behavior and then imitates that behavior**

**Video Self-Modeling: The student performs in the video and can see themselves being successful with the skill!**

*Recently, studies are showing that VSM are maintained over time and transferred across settings and environments!*

# Social Groups

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## **Before:**

- Manage Expectations (Talking to parents too!)
- Identify needs and strategies (particularly sensory)
- Make a plan for time, level of participation, etc.

## **During:**

- Allow for natural communication opportunities (i.e. allow time for sharing: One Good Thing, Check in, etc.)
- Give students the chance to pass or take a break.
- Praise, praise, praise the positive.

# Parent-Centered Approaches

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- Children's Friendship Training
- PEERS Curriculum

# 5. Implementation of Intervention

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- Provided in multiple settings by multiple providers.
- 50/50 model (Mixed model?) – Half individual instruction, half in group to start

# Q &A

# Thank you!

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