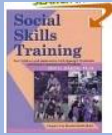


## Social Skills Training Jed Baker PhD



Elementary Level

Middle, High School and  
Beyond


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What are social skills?

What behavior is not a social skill?

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## Everything can be social

- Any action or inaction can have a social impact
  - Is it expected and appreciated?
  - Is it unexpected and unappreciated?
- So cannot have a one size fits all curriculum for everything! We do need skill resources though!
- Individualized social skill goals/targets?
  - First everyone needs a way to communicate, then we ask:
  - What does child do to much of or too little of in expected settings?

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By the end of this webinar can you address these common social issues?

- Emotional regulation problems
  - Need prevention plan that includes both modifying triggers and teaching replacement skills
  - Anxiety, frustration, waiting, inflexibility, dealing with disappointment, sensory overload
- Empathy/emotional support skills
- Basic communication to reciprocal conversation
  - Augmentative and alternative communication systems
  - Establish motivation with shared interests
  - Teach basic reciprocal conversation skills
- Restricted play
  - Expanding repertoire
- Lack of social interest
  - Peer buddy program for less verbal kids
  - Managing social anxiety and shared interest for verbal kids
  - Friendship management

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## Tiered Model of Social Skills Training in Schools

- Tier 1: School-wide
  - Adding structure and options at lunch/recess
  - Training of aides, staff
  - Antibullying programs
  - Peer sensitivity training, creating inclusive social environments
- Tier 2: Case conference (RTI)
  - Lunch bunches, social skill groups
  - Consultation with specialists
- Tier 3: Individualized Social Skill Action Plans (504/IEPs)
  - Target Relevant skills
  - Modify triggers
  - Establish motivation to socialize
  - Teach skills
  - Generalization: teacher/aide/parent prompts
  - Peer sensitivity training, peer buddies
  - Evaluating outcome: teacher/aide/parent input

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## Key Components of Skills Training

1. What to teach? Prioritize what is relevant in desired settings
  - General Communication: augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) systems: PECS, Sign, Speech Generating Devices
  - Personalize small number of priority skills (2-5) based on what they do too much or too little for expected settings
    - Interview parents, teachers, client
    - Observe behavior in environment: Get ABC's of behaviors
    - Use surveys, checklists, or standardized measures
      - See skill menu
      - Constantino's Social Responsiveness Scale (SRS)
      - Gresham & Elliott's Social Skills Rating System (SSRS)
  - Have key stakeholders prioritize small set of skills based on two questions:
    - What do they do too much of to be successful
    - What do they do too little of to be successful
- For Too Much behaviors (dysregulated states), we must also identify triggers/antecedents to create a good prevention plan.

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## Key Components of Skills Training

### 2. Establish Motivation to Learn

- **External motivation:** traditional rewards after task completion. Use a reward menu of activities, objects
- **Intrinsic motivation:**
  - Is learning skills part of client's own stated goals?
  - Make the task itself more enjoyable
    - Reduce frustrating work
    - Limit overwhelming sensory input
  - Use shared interests to increase social participation

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## Partnering with Student

- Build positive self awareness, sense of optimistic future
  - List many strengths that will take you places in life
  - List a few challenges that do not need to be overcome, just modified enough not to interfere with strengths.
- Use parts of testing results to build positive case
- We all need someone to believe in us more than we do sometimes

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## Example student

Strengths	Challenges
1. Good memory for facts	1. Organization
2. Good reader	2. Focus and frustration in classes
3. Great at video games	3. Socializing comfortably
4. Expert in Japanese Anime	
5. Loves animals	
6. Good singer	
7. Kind and caring	<b>Supports:</b> HW system, notes for missed info, possible med for focus, teach a few social/frustration related skills
8. Entertaining	
Can lead to a great academic and work career!	

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### Key Components of Skills Training

3. Skill acquisition matched to language/cognition
  - Level 3: Little receptive language, can't use words only to instruct. Visually based, incidental prompting
  - Level 2: Has language but needs visual support to understand.
  - Level 1: Has good receptive language that you can explain what to do and why (how people feel in response to our behavior).

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### Key Components of Skills Training

4. Generalization to natural setting
  - Prime, Coach, Review
  - Use visual cue card, verbal prompts, reminder apps
  - Practice in natural setting or facilitated group settings
5. Peer sensitivity
  - Sensitize peers to needs of those excluded or teased
  - Solicit peer leaders/buddies (Heroes vs Bullies)
6. Evaluating outcome
  - Observable measures (e.g., frequency of behavior)
  - Subjective ratings
    - 1-never 2-rarely 3-sometimes 4-usually 5-always
  - Normed scales
    - Constantino's Social Responsiveness Scale (SRS)
    - Gresham & Elliott's Social Skills Rating System (SSRS)

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### Autism Spectrum Disorder

1. Social Communication Difficulties
  - Initiating/Reciprocating, one-sided conversation
  - Non-verbal: lack of eye contact, gestures
  - Deficits in developing/maintaining friends
2. Repetitive pattern of behavior (2 of 4):
  - Stereotyped/repetitive movements
  - Insistence on sameness: routines, rituals, transitions
  - Fixated interests
  - Hypo or Hypereactivity to sensory input

Specify Severity Level for each above

Specify if intellectual and language impairment

If #2 is missing: **Social Pragmatic Communication Disorder**

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### Level 3: Significantly Challenged

- Challenge: Cannot simply explain with words about how to do things or why.
- Interventions need to be visual, concrete, and prompted in the moment: goals are often JOINT ATTENTION, SYMBOLIC COMMUNICATION
  - Structure of Teachh, pictures, maybe video
  - PECS: Bondy and Frost. <http://www.pecsusa.com/pecs.php>
  - ABA (DTT, PRT, VBT) emphasis should not just be on external rewards, but intrinsic as well
  - Play based programs, especially those combined with ABA, like Early Start Denver Model (Rogers and Dawson, 2010)

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### Visually based strategies

- One can visually represent:
  - Schedules: APP – visual scheduler
  - Tasks, chores, routines
  - Building something
  - To motivate: For example "First/Then"
- The Teachh Approach to Autism Spectrum Disorders (Mesibov, Shea, Schopler, 2004)
- Visual Supports for People with Autism (Cohen and Sloan, 2007)

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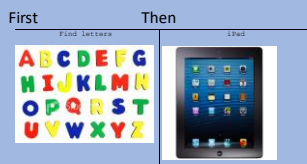
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### First/Then approach




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## Basic Hygiene (Level 2, 3)



## The Six Phases of PECS

- **PHASE I: How to Communicate**
  - Students learn to exchange single pictures for items or activities they really want.
- **PHASE II: Distance and Persistence**
  - Still using single pictures, students learn to generalize this new skill by using it in different places, with different people and across distances.
- **PHASE III: Picture Discrimination**
  - Students learn to select from two or more pictures to ask for their favorite things. These are placed in a communication book—a ring binder with Velcro® strips where pictures are stored and easily removed for communication.



## The Six Phases of PECS

- **PHASE IV: Sentence Structure**
  - Students learn to construct simple sentences on a detachable sentence strip using an "I want" picture followed by a picture of the item being requested.
  - Students learn to expand their sentences by adding adjectives, verbs and prepositions.
- **PHASE V: Answering Questions**
  - Students learn to use PECS to answer the question, "What do you want?"
- **PHASE VI: Commenting**
  - Now students are taught to comment in response to questions such as, "What do you see?", "What do you hear?" and "What is it?". They learn to make up sentences starting with "I see", "I hear", "I feel", "It is a", etc.



### Examples of ABA

- Discrete trial (Lovaas): Externally based rewards
- Pivotal response training (Koegel and Koegel): Intrinsic rewards, start with where students attention is.
- Verbal behavior training (Sundberg and Partington): First part, mand training, uses intrinsic motivation. Create need, then reward is you get what you ask for.

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### Videos of DTI




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### Video of PRT




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## Video of VBT




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## Early Start Denver Model (Rogers and Dawson, 2009)

- Get their attention
  - Clear room of other toys
  - Position yourself in their view
- Follow their lead, start with where they are attending (look for the smile)
- Consider sensory routines
- Build Joint attention: give, show, point
- Build play from turn taking, conventional object play,
- Level 2 and 1: animate doll/animals, symbolic substitution

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## Level 2: Challenged

- Challenge: Understands basic directives, can request, but language is still concrete, tied to present moment. Cannot talk about situations in the abstract.
- Interventions similar to Level 3, yet . . .
  - Can add verbal directives and verbal imitation. Example, Say, "Can I play?"
  - Can begin to work on conversation prerequisites like "wh" questions
  - Social Skill Picture Books (Baker 2001, 2006)
  - Video modeling

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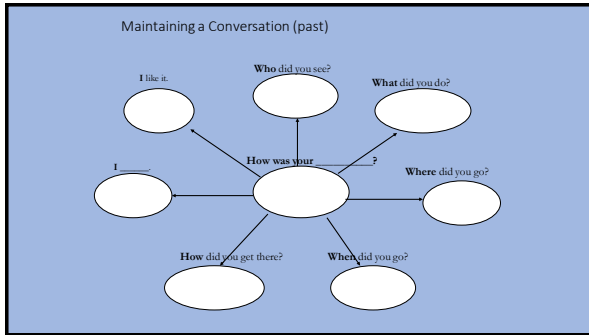
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### Example of Picture Books

#### Accepting No for an Answer

1. Sometimes parents and people say "No" when you ask them for something.
2. Say, "Okay" and do not get mad.
3. If you accept no, then the other person will be happy and may let you do something you want to do later.

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1. Sometimes people say "No" when you ask them for something.



When the boy asks to play the game, the teacher says no and tells him to do his work first.

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## 2. Say, "Okay" and do not get mad.



Right Way  
The boy says okay and does not get mad. He knows he will get to play the game later.

Wrong Way  
The boy gets mad and does not accept no for an answer.

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## 3. If you accept no, then the other person will be happy and may let you do something you want to do later.



Right Way  
The boy now gets to play because he waited until he finished his work.

Wrong Way  
The boy still can't play because he would not accept no and wait to play.

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## Cognitive Picture Rehearsal

- Antecedents: Triggers to problem behavior
- Behavior: Appropriate behavior or skill
- Consequence: Rewards, not punishments.

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Matt is playing at the computer.




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The teacher tells Matt to get off the computer.




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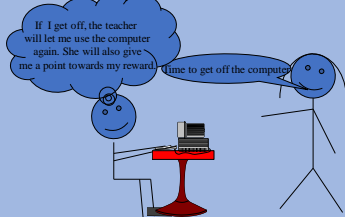
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Matt remembers what will happen if he gets off the computer.




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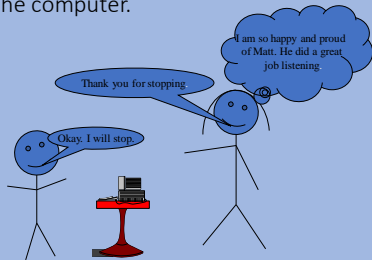
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Matt decides to accept that he must get off the computer.



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The teacher rewards Matt for getting off the computer.



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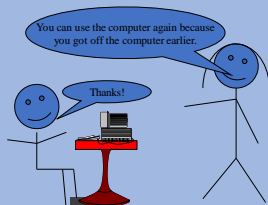
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At 2 pm, the teacher lets Matt use the computer again because he did such a great job getting off the computer earlier.



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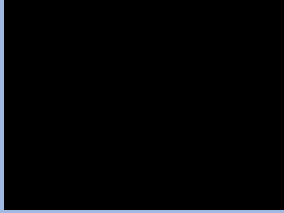
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### Video Modeling or Self-Modeling

- Video peers and then target student. Use to prime skill before situations.
- Better generalization than other forms of learning




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### Level 1: Emerging

- Challenge: Has ability to talk about actual situations in the abstract. Yet still problems with abstractions like perspective taking.
- Interventions can be visually supported, yet one can now explain not just what to do, but why; how other people think and feel.
  - Social Thinking
  - Explaining, modeling and role-playing
  - Video-modeling (with highlighting others thoughts, feelings, reactions).

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### Social Thinking (Garcia-Winner)

- Attempts to teach fluid perspective taking. Teach them how to be a GPS versus giving maps of social situations. Baker's books provide the maps when GPS is not quite there yet.
- "Social thinking" is the process by which we interpret the thoughts, beliefs, intentions, emotions, knowledge and actions of another person along with the context of the situation to understand that person's experience"... "we use this information to determine how to respond to affect the thoughts that person has about us to achieve our social goals."

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### Structured Learning

- Didactic instruction of skill steps
  - Explain not only WHAT to do but
  - WHY; how it makes others think and feel
- Model correct way, and maybe wrong way
  - Avoid wrong way for attention seeking clients who may repeat wrong way to get a laugh
- Role-play with feedback until proficient

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### Structured Learning

- Practice and Generalization
  - Plan when and how they will use skill
- Skill (cue card) goes home to parents, teacher or aide who
  - Quizzes
  - Models & Role-plays
  - Prompts
  - Reinforces with praise, reward, or token economy.
- Need a gimmick for role-play or instruction!

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### Conversational Skills

- Students who:
  - Lack initiation or responding to others or
  - Perseverate with one-sided monologues or
  - Interrupt others
- Need to learn how to:
  - Start and maintain conversations
  - Be sensitive to the listener's interests
  - Interrupt and shift topics appropriately

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## Maintaining a Conversation (level 1)

Ask



Tell

I like \_\_\_\_.

I also \_\_\_\_.

I am going to \_\_\_\_.

I went to \_\_\_\_.

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## Starting conversations with people you know

1. Greet the person.

Say "Hello" the first time you see them during the day.

2. Ask about what they are doing in the **present situation**.

"What are you [doing, playing, reading, eating]?"

3. Ask questions about the **past**.

"How was your [week, weekend, vacation, holiday]?"

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## Starting conversations with people you know

4. Ask questions about the **future**.

"What are you going to do for the [week, weekend, vacation, holiday, after school]?"

5. Ask questions about their **routine or interests**.

"How is [soccer practice, class, religious school, work, chess club] going?"

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### Shifting Topics

- Ask a follow question or make an on-topic comment before asking to switch topics
- Ask to switch topic: "Do you mind if I talk about something else?"
- Or use a linking phrase like: "Speaking of . . ." or "that reminds me . . ."

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### Getting to Know Someone New

3 minutes to find out what you have in common.

NAME	What's your name? Mine is ____.
SCHOOL	Where do you go to school? What grade are you in? What are your favorite subjects?
NEIGHBORHOOD	Where do you live? What's it like there?
INTERESTS	What do you do for fun? What games do you like? What TV shows do you watch? What kind of music do you like?
FAMILY	Do you have a big family? Do you have brothers and sisters? Do you have any pets?

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### Where to teach and generalize social skills?

- Class Format
  - When most of class shares similar skill needs. Especially younger grades
- Small Groups to foster reciprocal friendship
  - Agenda: Talk time, *skill* time, activity time.
  - Interest based groups to capitalize on motivation
    - Game based, film, cooking, robotics, theatre.
- Individual: When attention and cooperation may not be available in group.
- Create reminder to prime, coach, review skill goals for natural settings
  - Phone texts, cue cards, caregiver cues

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### Typical group agenda

- Talk Time:
  - Past, present, future, others routine
  - Ask "wh" or comment
- Skill Theme:
  - Compromise: its give and take if it's a friend you want to make
  - Know your audience: sensitivity to the listener
- Activity Time
  - Make a commercial for a fictional product

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### Conversation and Peer Sensitivity Training: ABC NEWS




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### Overview of Peer Sensitivity

- Is it okay not to play with someone just because they are different from you?
- How are we all the same and different?
- What if we were not allowed to play because of our difference?
  - Example experiential activity: Simon Says

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Be a **HERO** not a **BULLY**!



1. Don't bully or tease
2. Stand up for others who get bullied
3. Include those who get left out

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Generalize peer kindness

- KINDNESS JAR
- Create rotating PEER LEADERS

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Peer Program to Increase Interactive Play for Less Verbal Students

- Explore activities that may be enjoyable to the student. Decrease language and wait time. Examples:
  - Hide and seek, follow the leader, catch/roll ball, red light/green light, guess the animal/feeling, hungry hippos, lucky ducks, go fishing.
- Create visual communications system to initiate and respond to play requests (e.g. choice board).
- Establish routine of playing several games increasing sustained play.
- Teach typical peers to play student's favorite games, use visual communication system, and give target student choice of activities.

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### Joining In Play (for more verbal kids)

1. Decide if you want to join others who are playing.
2. Walk up to the person and wait for a pause in their play.
3. Say something nice about what there are doing. "You guys are good at that."
4. Ask if you can play. Say "Can I play too?"  
or "Can I help?" or slowly join the play.
5. If they say no ask someone else to play.

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### Generalizing Cooperation/Play Skills

- Prime before activity, coach during, then review.
- Facilitate opportunities for play or group projects
  - Class activities: group projects
  - Designated play times
  - Interest based clubs
- Select activities to highlight certain skills:
  - **Simple games** that require attending to others: Builder-architect, barrier games, follow the leader, matching rhythms, hide and seek, red light/green light, catch.

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### Generalizing Cooperation/Play Skills

- **Imaginary/pretend games**: Family routines, shopping routines, dolls and animals, make a commercial or movie.
- **Structured win/lose, take turn games**: board games, sports, team sports where goal scores only after an assist and players can't hog ball for more than 3 seconds.
- **Cooperative school projects**: commercial, stories, poster.

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### Showing Understanding for Others Feelings

1. Look for signs that others are sad or angry.



2. Ask, "Are you okay? What happened?"



3. Ask if you can help.



4. If they say yes, do something to help.




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### "Make Me Happy" Game for teens

- Make cards of upsetting situations
- Take turns acting out the situations while others have to guess what happened.
- When someone guesses right, ask others to make a statement to make the person happy:
  - Show interest by asking about the emotional topic
  - Show sympathy. Say, "sorry that happened"
  - Share a similar experience
  - Validate their feeling. "It makes sense that you feel that way"
  - Contradict any self-defeating thoughts
  - Offer to cheer them up with something fun
  - Give them hope that things will get better
  - Offer help.

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### Conflict Resolution/Asserting Your Feelings



- Schedule a time to talk.

- Be assertive not passive (silent) or aggressive (words or actions that hurt). Use an "I" message:

I feel \_\_\_\_\_ (feeling word)  
 when you \_\_\_\_\_ (describe actions not person)  
 because \_\_\_\_\_  
 What I want you to do is \_\_\_\_\_

- Take turns listening without interrupting
- Offer a solutions that works for both of you

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### Friendship development skills

- Where to meet friends: interest based and proximity
- Getting to know someone new
- Getting together through developed shared interests
- Reading signs of interest: balance initiations with responsiveness
- Deepening relationships through sharing personal information
- Friendship maintenance: scheduling contact

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### In Closing

- Skills Training strategies may vary, live and video modeling often superior to just verbal explanation.
- Despite strategy used to teach skills, certain key components must be addressed in order to be effective and address specific situation for student.
  - Assess behavior in a practical way (i.e., what is too much or too little for situation)
  - Motivation must be established
  - Select strategy suited to student's learning style
  - Consider how to generalize skill
  - Does peer group need to be targeted to offset isolation or bullying?
  - Measure outcome

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### Review of common skill themes

- Emotional regulation problems
  - Need prevention plan that includes both modifying triggers and teaching replacement skills
  - Anxiety, frustration, waiting, inflexibility, dealing with disappointment, sensory overload
- Empathy/emotional support skills
- Basic communication to reciprocal conversation
  - Augmentative and alternative communication systems
  - Establish motivation with shared interests
  - Teach basic reciprocal conversation skills
- Restricted play
  - Expanding repertoire
- Lack of social interest
  - Peer buddy program for less verbal kids
  - Managing social anxiety and shared interest for verbal kids
  - Friendship management

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