PEER MODEL EDUCATION CURRICULUM

A Program for Helping Peer Models Teach Social Skills to Children with Autism Spectrum Disorders

Funded by Autism Speaks
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The purpose of this program is to teach school-aged children like you to help children with autism learn social skills.

We will work with you over the next week to teach you how to teach them!

Then, you will be expected to spend the next 8 weeks with the children with autism. During those 8 weeks, you will teach them how to use the “SCORE skills.”

**SCORE Skills**

**SEE Skills**
- Sound (how your voice sounds)
- Expression (how your face looks)
- Eye Contact

**Social Skills**
- Sharing Ideas
- Complimenting Others
- Offering Help or Encouragement
- Recommending Changes Nicely
- Exercising Self Control

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1 Vernon, Schumaker, and Deshler (1993).
So what does it mean to be a peer model?

A peer model is a child who shows good social behaviors and is interested in teaching those skills to other children. In this program, the peer model will be showing and teaching good social skills to the children with autism. That means talking with them, playing with them, and helping teach them the SEE and SCORE skills.

We want you to teach the SEE and SCORE skills by:

- Modeling the skills,
- Prompting the children to use the skills, and
- Praising them for using the skills correctly.

We also want you to encourage the other children in the group to use good behaviors and follow the rules.
Are there any rules for being a peer model?

Yes, there are rules, but they are pretty easy to follow.

Here are the rules:

1. Do your best to come to ALL of the social skills groups. That means we will need you to be here every week for the next 8 weeks.

2. Keep everything you hear in the group confidential.

What does “confidential” mean?

That means you will protect the privacy of the other children in the social skills group by keeping anything you learn about them to yourself.

Here are some ways to keep things confidential:

- Call each other by first name ONLY.
- Do not talk about the children in the group with anyone outside of the group.
What is Autism?

Autism is a developmental disorder that affects children in the way they communicate with others and their ability to make friends. Children with autism may also show some unusual behaviors.

- Children with autism might:
  - Use poor eye contact when talking to people
  - Have difficulty making friends
  - Have problems with speech and language
  - Flap their hands or make other unusual movements
  - Do things or say things they like over and over

Why are peer models important for kids with autism?

First, peer models can help other children learn social skills when the peer models show good social skills themselves.

Also, sometimes children with autism have a harder time making friends, so peer models may help them by being a friend. Since most children meet friends at school, it is important for peer models to help the children at their own school who have autism.
So, where do we begin?

The first thing a peer model should know is how to initiate verbal interaction. A peer model should know how to start the conversation.

Steps for initiating verbal interaction:

1. Approach the child.
2. Use eye contact.
3. Use the child’s name.
4. Then, start the conversation by...

   • **Asking a question**
     Example: “Ben, what did you do this weekend?” or “Joe, what do you think about our science projects?”

   • **Telling an idea**
     Example: “Sally, I have an idea ... let’s play Monopoly.”

   • **Stating a comment**
     Example: “Michael, I really like your shoes.”

It’s a good idea to... **Initiate interactions often!**
PART 2  PEER MODEL EDUCATION CURRICULUM

By now, you have already learned how to initiate verbal interactions. To review, write the steps for initiating verbal interaction here:

1. _______________________________________________________________
2. _______________________________________________________________
3. _______________________________________________________________

4. Then, start the conversation by:
   • _______________________________________________________________
   • _______________________________________________________________
   • _______________________________________________________________

There are a few ways to teach social skills. The first two ways you will learn to teach social skills are by modeling and prompting. Remember, you will be teaching the SCORE Skills. The SCORE Skills are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SEE Skills</th>
<th>Social Skills</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sound</td>
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<td>Eye contact</td>
<td>Offering Help and Encouragement</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Recommending Changes Nicely</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Exercising Self Control</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 Vernon, Schumaker, and Deshler (1996).
HOW TO TEACH SOCIAL SKILLS BY MODELING

The next thing a peer model should know how to do is model behavior.

What is modeling?

Modeling is demonstrating a good behavior so that the children with autism will do it, too. Both the teachers and the peer models will be modeling behaviors and skills.

Examples of modeling SEE skills:

- The group leader models how to make eye contact by looking a student in the eye when she talks.
- A peer model models how to use a pleasant sound by talking in a pleasant voice tone to another student.

Examples of modeling SOCIAL skills:

- The group leader models how to share an idea with another person for the group to imitate.
- A peer model models how to recommend changes nicely by making a nice recommendation to a student.
Another thing that peer models should know how to do is **prompt** the children with autism.

**Prompting** means giving hints to remind the learner to use a social skill. You can prompt for any of the SCORE skills.

Examples for prompting SEE skills:

- **SOUND**: “Mary, please use an inside voice.”
- **EXPRESSION**: “Joe, can you use a more pleasant expression?”
- **EYE CONTACT**: “Jack, please look at me when you’re talking.”
Examples for prompting social skills:

- **Sharing Ideas:** “Mary, do you have an idea about what we should have for dinner?”
- **Complimenting Others:** “Tommy, did you notice how nice Joe’s shirt looks?”
- **Offering Help or Encouragement:** “Sally, it looks like Annie needs help.”
- **Recommending Changes Nicely:** “Jack, do you have any suggestions for Jill?”
- **Exercising Self-Control:** “David, I know you are upset, but remember to stay calm and exercise self-control.”

Another way to prompt someone is to start a statement for them, and let them “fill in the blank.” For example, you can start a sentence by saying:

- “Sally, one idea is….”
- “Joe’s shirt is….”
- “A nice recommendation would be…”

Now you know two ways to teach social skills to children with autism! To review, the two ways to teach are:

_____________________________ and ______________________________

Now that you know how to teach social skills by modeling and prompting, let’s go over what each of the SCORE skills actually involve.

The first thing that the children with autism will learn is the SEE skills.

**Sound:** How your voice sounds *(Pleasant or Neutral)*

**Expression:** How your face looks *(Pleasant or Neutral)*

**Eye Contact:** Looking into the other person’s eyes
Then, the children with autism will learn one SCORE social skill per week.

1. **Sharing Ideas**
   - **Sound:** pleasant
   - **Expression:** pleasant
   - **Eye contact**

   **Share an idea.**
   Stay on topic.
   Don’t talk too long about a topic.

*Example:*

**Peer model:** “Tommy, do you have an idea of a game to play?”

**Child with autism:** “I have an idea! Why don’t we play tag?”

2. **Complimenting Others**
   - **Sound:** pleasant
   - **Expression:** pleasant
   - **Eye contact**

   **Say something nice.**
   Say the person’s name.
   Be specific.

*Example:*

**Peer model:** “Tommy, what do you think of Joe’s shirt?”

**Child with autism:** “Hi Joe. I like your red shirt.”
3. **Offering help and encouragement**
   - **Sound:** pleasant or neutral
   - **Expression:** pleasant or neutral
   - **Eye contact**

   **Ask if the person wants help**
   **Give help**
   **Offer encouragement**

   *Example:*
   
   **Peer model:** “Tommy, it looks like Mary’s books are really heavy. Maybe you should ask her if she needs help carrying them.”

   **Tommy:** “Mary, do you need some help carrying your books?”

4. **Recommended changes nicely**
   - **Sound:** neutral
   - **Expression:** neutral
   - **Eye contact**

   **Say something good.**
   **Explain what could be changed.**
   **Make a suggestion.**

   *Example:*
   
   **Peer model:** “Tommy, what’s wrong? You look upset.”

   **Tommy:** “My mom is making hot dogs for dinner and I don’t like them.”

   **Peer model:** “Maybe you could ask her to make something different. You should probably tell her something nice first.”

   **Tommy:** “Mom, you are a good cook, but I don’t like hot dogs. Could we have pizza instead?”
5. **Exercising self-control**

- **Sound**: neutral
- **Expression**: neutral
- **Eye contact**

**Count to 5.**

**Ask a question.**

**Say “okay.”**

*Example:*

**Peer model**: “Tommy, you seem upset that you have to stop playing the video game.”

**Tommy**: “I don’t want to stop.”

**Peer model**: “It might help to count to 5.”

**Tommy**: Counting 1, 2, 3, 4, 5.

**Peer model**: “Remember to tell your mom okay.”

**Tommy**: “Okay, mom.”

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**Tips for Helping with Social Skills**

Teaching social skills might feel strange at first, but the more you practice, the easier it will become! Remember, you can ask the group leaders for help when you need it.

**Make sure you practice prompting and modeling the SCORE skills!**
Positive Reinforcement

What is positive reinforcement?

A response by the teacher or peer that increases the learner’s behavior

Positive reinforcement can come in a lot of forms. You can give positive reinforcement to increase the learner’s behavior by giving positive attention, such as:

- Verbal praise, like “Good job!” “Well done!” “Awesome!”
- Pat on the back
- High five
- Fist bump

You can also give positive reinforcement by giving rewards, such as:

- Toys
- Food
- Money
- Privileges
- Good grades
- Points

Example: Alex compliments another child in his social skills group. The group leader says, “Nice compliment Alex! You earned a token.” Then, Alex gives more compliments to his friends in the group so he can earn more tokens.
Aside from leaning on and practicing to teach social skills, peer models should also be good at giving verbal praise as a form of positive reinforcement.

Here are some tips to help you give good verbal praise to the children with autism:

1. Be specific.
   - Use first names and say what was good.
   - Example: “Josh, you used great eye contact!”

2. Use it frequently.
   - Especially when someone is learning a new skill.
   - As the children begin to use the skills more frequently, you can praise less often.

3. Be consistent.
   - Give praise for only the good behaviors.
   - Do not give praise when there are bad behaviors.
   - Praise right away after seeing the good behaviors.

**Examples:**

- Nathan offers help and encouragement to another group member. The group leader tells him right away, “Nice job helping your friend, Nathan!”
- “Bella, that’s a great idea!”
- “Nice compliment, Tommy!”
- “Cameron, you did an awesome job of offering help.”
- “Samantha, great job recommending a change nicely!”
- “Carter, way to exercise self-control!”
What should you do if the child has problem behaviors?

If a child with autism in the group shows some bad behaviors, you can just ignore those behaviors.

For example, you can ignore:

- Inappropriate, loud noises
- Talking out of turn
- Mean words
- Name calling
- Talking too much
- Pouting
- Not cooperating

Ignoring means: don’t look at or talk to the child when these behaviors occur!! Once good behaviors return, begin to give positive attention and verbal praise again.

Remember, the group leader is in charge and will help you out when the children show any bad behaviors. Here are some ways the group leader might respond to problem behaviors:

- Ignore the child
- Put the child in time-out
- Remove tokens/points
REVIEW!

When children are showing good behavior, peer models should give v________________ p________________. For bad behaviors, just i_________________.

This is the end of the Peer Model Training! You have finished learning about what it means to be a peer model and we are confident you will do a great job helping out in our social skills group. Thanks for your commitment to being a peer model.

GREAT JOB!
APPENDICES

1. Hypothetical situations
   a. Role play: Sharing Ideas
   b. Role play: Complimenting Others
   c. Role play: Offering Help and Encouragement
   d. Role play: Recommending Changes Nicely
   e. Role play: Exercising Self Control

2. Peer Model Training Test

3. Peer Model Satisfaction Survey
ROLE PLAY: SHARING IDEAS

You notice John on the soccer field waiting for his brother to get done with soccer practice. Jeff told you about the new Pokemon movie he saw this weekend. Prompt Jeff to consider telling John about the movie that he saw this weekend.

You and your friends, Mark and Paul, are playing basketball together. Mark previously told you about a great basketball play he saw on television last night between Creighton and Northern Iowa. Prompt Mark to share his story with Paul about the play that he saw.

You and your friend John are playing a game of Mancala. You are feeling hungry for a snack and John agrees. Prompt your friend John to tell share his idea of what kind of snack he would like.
ROLE PLAY: COMPLIMENTING OTHERS

You notice that Mark has a very cool shirt on. Prompt your friend Luis to compliment Mark on his neat shirt.

You notice that Jimmy has a new haircut. Prompt your friend John to compliment Jimmy on his haircut.

You notice that John has very nice handwriting skills. Prompt your friend Mary to compliment John on his handwriting skills.
ROLE PLAY: OFFERING HELP

You notice that Jacob is struggling with putting some books on a top shelf in a book case. Prompt your friend Joe to offer help to Jacob with putting the books away.

You notice that John is trying to do a math problem \((50 - 25 = \underline{\quad})\). He seems to be struggling with this problem. Prompt your friend Jacob to offer help to John with his math problem.

You notice that Mark fell down while riding his bicycle. He is crying because he hurt his knee. Prompt your friend John to offer help to Mark.
ROLE PLAY: RECOMMENDING CHANGES NICELY

You notice that Ryan’s shoes are untied. Prompt your friend John to recommend a change nicely.

You notice that John has made a big mistake on his homework assignment. He wrote a story about bugs instead of trees. Prompt your friend Mark to recommend a change nicely.

You notice that Brendon has used the wrong color of pen to write his assignment. He is using a red pen instead of a blue pen. Prompt your friend Mark to recommend a change nicely.
ROLE PLAY: EXERCISING SELF-CONTROL

You notice that Mark is very angry because he was just told that he has to stop playing soccer and come in to do his homework. Prompt your friend Mark to use the exercise self-control skill.

You notice that John is upset because his teacher told him he has to redo his social studies assignment because he did not follow the instructions. Prompt John to use the exercise self-control skill.

You notice that George is upset because his soccer coach told him he can’t play this weekend because he missed a practice. Prompt George to use the exercise self-control skills.
PEER MODEL TRAINING TEST

T or F  1. Social skills are only needed when we are in school.

T or F  2. Social skills require use of both conversation skills and body language skills.

T or F  3. An example of giving a compliment is: “Mary, you did a great job on the test.”

T or F  4. An example of recommending changes nicely is “You did a really poor job on your homework. You better change it.”

T or F  5. As a peer model, it is important to correct your friend whenever you hear any bad words or words of disagreement.

T or F  6. Two important steps to help your friend with learning social skills is prompting and reinforcement.

T or F  7. An example of exercising self-control is when a child is able to accept instructions or negative feedback without showing he is upset or angry.

T or F  8. Sharing ideas includes using good body language, and then talking a long time about your topic of interest.

T or F  9. When offering help and encouragement, it is best to just pitch in and help without even asking if the person wants help.

T or F  10. It is important to give words of praise such as “good job” as soon as you notice your friend saying kind words or using their social skills well.
SATISFACTION SURVEY

PEER MODEL / SCORE Social Skills Program

1. How helpful was the training program (first two sessions) to help you feel comfortable in assisting the children with learning the SCORE social skills?
   - Very unhelpful
   - Unhelpful
   - Neutral
   - Helpful
   - Very helpful

2. How much did you enjoy teaching the children the SCORE skills?
   - Not at all
   - Not very much
   - Neutral
   - I liked it
   - I liked it very much

3. How much did you like playing games and doing activities with the children in the program?
   - Not at all
   - Not very much
   - Neutral
   - I liked it
   - I liked it very much

4. Rate the amount of time spent in participating as a peer model in the SCORE Skills program:
   - Too little
   - It was about right
   - Too much

5. How helpful do you think it was for the children with autism to have a peer model help them in learning the skills?
   - Very unhelpful
   - Unhelpful
   - Neutral
   - Helpful
   - Very helpful

6. Would you do the program again, if you could?  ☐ YES  ☐ NO

7. Overall, how satisfied are you with being a Peer Model in the SCORE Social Skills program?
   - Not satisfied at all
   - Not very satisfied
   - Fairly Satisfied
   - Satisfied
   - Very Satisfied

8. Would you recommend this program to other children?  ☐ YES  ☐ NO

...continued
9. Please describe how this program was helpful to you:

10. Please describe how the program might be improved to be more helpful to other children:

11. Please add comments: