

Autism Education Series: Social Skills and Social Interactions

What do Social Interactions Include?

- Play skills - taking turns, sharing, cooperating.
- Conversation skills - body language and knowing what to say.
- Emotional skills - managing feelings and understanding how others feel.
- Problem-solving skills - reading the context, dealing with disagreements, making decisions.

Children with autism might have a harder time:

- Starting a social interaction with others.
- Responding to invitations to interact from others.
- Sharing enjoyment with others (e.g., smiling, laughing with someone).
- Talking about something that is outside of their interest.

Help Improve Social Skills

- Observe what other children are doing in social situations and take note of what your child does.
- Ask others for their thoughts too (e.g., Early Childhood Educators, extended family, etc.).
- Learning new skills requires practice. Identify a skill to practice and support your child. Remember to consider the “where” and “who” within in your goal, and how you will help them.
- With a little help, children with autism can have more success in social situations.

Social Interaction Strategies - 3 Tips for Success

1. Child motivation

- Choose activities that are **fun** for your child.
- Choose activities that are **simple** for your child.
- Make sure your child is **familiar** with the toy/activity.

2. Setting the Stage for Success

- Keep play sessions short and end on a positive note.
- Consider the setting - limit distraction, promote face-to-face interaction.
- Choose a motivating activity where your child is more likely to interact.

3. Focus on the Interaction

- Try social games (e.g., tag, hide-and-seek, row-row-row your boat, etc.)
- Let go of the ‘rules’ of the game.

