

How do I help my child with ASD, or myself, to make and maintain social relationships?

Many individuals with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) experience social challenges. These challenges can be overcome by learning specific and more socially successful skills. Individuals can benefit from breaking down some of the steps of social interaction into smaller steps, such as starting a conversation, taking turns during a game, finding friends with common interests, organizing a social gathering, and handling disagreements and other social problems such as bullying and teasing. Social skills are important and the nature of social interactions can vary across environments (home, community, school, and work). Improved social relationships can enhance outcomes in education, employment/vocation, and independent living. Strong social relationships also improve one's mental health and life expectancy.

- If you or your child are experiencing communication challenges that interfere with the ability to interact with other people, a referral to a speech and language pathologist (SLP) may be recommended. SLPs can help individuals with challenges in communicating, understanding what others say, as well as social skills in general. For more information, on accessing the services of an SLP see the Tip Sheet, "Therapies".
- For children at an early age, encourage social opportunities with other children and adults to help teach your child the rules of social interaction and behaviour.
- Developing friendships usually begins with meeting people who have common interests. Consider enrolling yourself, or your child, in community activities that are novel or interesting so that there are opportunities to discover if there are peers with common interests. These activities can lead to potential friendships.
- Children younger than eight, and those who have intellectual disabilities, tend to benefit from pictures, physical prompts, and demonstration to enhance their learning. For older children, youth and adults (those who have a good understanding and use of language), consider enrollment in a program that teaches social skills. To be maximally effective, teach social skills in natural settings (restaurants, playgrounds), use social stories, try role-play and have others demonstrate socially appropriate behaviours.
- Parents are encouraged to support their child to learn social interaction skills through frequent practice in as many different settings as possible and to provide positive reinforcement for their efforts.

RESOURCES

The Resource Centre (a Sinneave Family Foundation initiative) does not endorse or guarantee the exhaustive, complete, accurate or up-to-date nature of information provided and does not assume any risk for the outcome of information or referrals provided.

Amazing Kids Social Skills Group – Koru Psychology

This workshop is for 5 to 16 year olds and it includes a number of recreational and educational activities that are geared towards improving social skills and confidence.

Phone: 403.650.1616
Address: 100 – 2107 Sirocco Drive SW, Calgary, AB T3H 5P1
Website: koruphychology.ca

Calgary SCOPE Society

A community organization that supports those with disabilities, their families and friends, and other community members. They offer two social skills programs for individuals diagnosed with a developmental disability.

1. Social Knowledge in Practice (SKIP) focuses on social skills development for teens in Grades 7-12.
2. Adult Social Knowledge (ASK) focuses on social skills for adults.

Phone: 403.509.0200

Address: 219 - 18 Street SE, Calgary, AB T2E 6J5

Website: calgaryscope.org

Carol Gray – Social Stories

Carol Gray and her colleagues developed Social Stories. A social story is written in the first person to help guide the student (the reader) in what they can do correctly. It starts with the student's understanding of a situation. The story is then developed to describe what is happening and why, and how people feel and think in the situation.

Website: carolgraysocialstories.com/social-stories

Do 2 Learn

An information website with tips for everything from sensory needs to job skills and social skills, and how to think about and deal with behaviours.

Website: do2learn.com

Moroz Child Psychology Group Inc.

Kelly Moroz is a psychologist who works with individuals to develop their social and communication skills. His practice offers social skills programming in groups and individually. Other services include dealing with strong-willed behaviours.

Phone: 403.541.1199

Address: 10 Discovery Ridge Hill SW, Calgary, AB T3H 5X2

Email: info@morozchildpsychology.com

Website: morozchildpsychology.com/social-skills-groups.php

Program for the Enrichment and Education of Relational Skills (PEERS)

PEERS® is 14-week social skills program for youth with social challenges. It was originally developed by Dr. Elizabeth Laugeson at UCLA. It is an evidence-based program for adolescents and young adults with ASD. It is currently being offered by the Autism Spectrum Education, Research, and Training (ASERT) group at the University of Calgary.

Email: peers@ucalgary.ca

Website: ucalgary.ca/asert/intervention

Website: semel.ucla.edu/peers

SocialThinking.com

This company has published very popular social learning programs for children and teens called Superflex/The Incredible Flexible You. The website does have a section for young adults and a list of books and graphic novels for social learning for teens.

Email: info@socialthinking.com

Website: socialthinking.com

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