Social Engagement & Steps of Being Social:
An Overview for School Teams

Presented by
Marci Laurel, MA, CCC-SLP
Speech Language Pathologist
The Autism Programs, Center for Development and Disability

Kathleen "Mo" Taylor, OTR/L
Occupational Therapist, Clinical Specialist
The Autism Programs, Center for Development and Disability

Disclosure

• Marci Laurel and Kathleen Taylor are employees of the University of New Mexico where some of this content has been developed.

• Presenters have published Social Engagement & the Steps to Being Social with Future Horizons.

• Marci Laurel is the author Our Hearts’ Desire: For Parents Navigating the Journey of Sensory Processing Challenges which is used as a reference for the model presented today.

• Kathleen Taylor is the owner of a private therapy business "Theraplay" where this content has been developed and disseminated.

• Presenters have no relevant nonfinancial relationships to disclose.

Introductions

Who are you?

Who are we?
Training Objectives

Participants will:

- Define the four components of social engagement.
- Name three of the four Skill Sets of the Steps to Being Social.
- Link two evidence based practices for teaching specific social skills.
- Be familiar with the sub-skills of the model.

Social

Why is it so, so important?

Social Skills Count

"Having good social skills simply means people share their space with others effectively."

-- Winner, 2005

Social skills are not just for social situations or for making friends...these skills are needed to function every day in all settings.
Where Did you Learn Social Skills?

We do it intuitively

Now we have to teach it cognitively

Teach Me How

• Social skills need to be taught directly and explicitly in a variety of settings.

• Learners with ASD will not learn social skills just by being around people who have better social skills than they do.

Some Basics of the Model

• Everyone needs to be self-regulated in order to “be social.”

• Engagement is the foundation of “being social.”

• Skills have to be broken down into small and specific “steps.”

• Social needs change as social demands change.
All Communication is Social!

- Children may learn to talk or use alternative methods of communication, but these have little value if social interaction skills are not developed to provide opportunities to use those skills for meaningful communication with another person. (Frea, 2015)

- Difficulties using social communication are often related to problem behaviors identified in children with ASD.

The Four Components of Engagement

Self-Regulation:

- being in an emotional and physical state to learn and respond positively within an interaction

Calm + Alert = READY

ENGAGEMENT
What Type of Sensory Input Helps This Person Stay Regulated?

- Tactile (touch) input
- Auditory (sound) input
- Visual (sight) input
- Vestibular (movement) input
- Olfactory/gustatory (smell/taste) input
- Proprioceptive (position) input

ONLY when self-regulated can one begin to share space to pursue a positive social interaction.

ENGAGEMENT

Shared Space: being in proximity

What Space Will Support this Person?

- In what settings are they calm and alert?
- What proximity to others do they prefer?
- How is the space visually defined?
- How will you limit or organize materials?

Within a shared space, we can begin to be attentive together.
ENGAGEMENT

Shared Focus: Both people paying attention to the same thing

- Shared Space
- Shared Focus
- Self-Regulation
- Shared Pleasure

Taylor & Laurel, 2016

How Could You Support this Person to Share Focus?

- What is the person interested in?
- How do they bring your attention to it?
- How do you bring their attention to something else?
- How long can you share focus?

Now that we are on the same topic, we can begin having fun together

ENGAGEMENT

Shared Pleasure: Enjoying the same moment together

- Shared Space
- Shared Focus
- Self-Regulation
- Shared Pleasure

Taylor & Laurel, 2016
How Can You Identify Pleasure In This Person?

- Identify what nonverbal cues are associated with “fun?”
- Who can help you identify individual cues?
- Where and when can you observe?

It is the synergy of shared space, shared focus and shared pleasure in the context of a calm and alert state, that defines the very special moments of engagement.

Video on engagement in school home or community.
**Strategies for Engagement**

- Shrink in the space
- Limit the materials
- Use motivating items or topics
- Identify the moments of engagement
- Try to increase the duration and frequency of the “engaged moments”
- Teach others the importance of “engagement”

**Assessment**

- Assessment is important in order to:
  - Know where an individual is on the steps and how to support his or her progress
  - Point out gaps in critical skills
  - Identify links to evidence-based practices to help teach those skills
  - Assist with creating groups
  - Create meaningful and measurable behavioral objectives

**Assessment**

- Who are the communication partners?
  - Skilled Partners (SP)
  - Trained Peers (TP)
  - Peers
- Where are you assessing social skills?
  - Therapy room
  - Classroom
  - Other school environments…
Sub-steps

- Social Steps are broken down into smaller skills (sub-steps) that are:
  - Critical to social development
  - Measureable
  - Meaningful
- Engagement is recorded as a simple yes/no dichotomy – yes they did or no they did not

Sample Sub-Skills: FOUNDATION

Self-Regulation 1 of 2
- Appears to be in control of body and emotions: Stays in designated space without aggression, yelling, or overt signs of distress

Shared Focus
- Briefly pays attention to the same thing with a skilled partner

Shared Pleasure
- Appears to experience pleasure with a skilled partner (e.g. smiles, glances, looks, laughs)

Evidence-Based Practices: FOUNDATION

- Task Analysis
- Parent Implemented Intervention
- Reinforcement
- Visual Supports
- Prompting
Engagement is the Foundation
to all the “Steps” of
*Being Social*

**Skill Set: FOUNDATION**

- Shared Space
- Shared Focus
- Shared Pleasure
- Self-Regulation

Taylor & Laurel, 2016

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**The Steps of “Being Social”**

- Proximity
- Parallel Joint Attention
- Reciprocal Exchange
- Give and Take
- Perspective- Taking
- Reading the Social Scene
- Group Cooperation
- Friendship
- Growing Connections

Taylor, Laurel 2016

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The steps of “Being Social” include:

- "Oh, you are doing this too"
- "Oh you are here"
- "We are looking at this too"
- "We are in it for the long haul"
Skill Set: **LOWER 4**

*Lower 4*
Learning to be together with a social partner and beginning to participate in back and forth interaction

Evidence-Based Practices: **LOWER 4**

- Task Analysis, Parent Implemented Intervention, Reinforcement, Visual Supports (boundaries), Prompting
  - Visual Supports (schedules/cues)
  - Discrete Trial Teaching
  - Naturalistic Interventions
  - Joint Attention Training

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Skill Set: **MIDDLE 4**

*Middle 4*

Learning to use directed back and forth communication and understand that others have different ideas, and that social activity is happening everywhere.

Evidence-Based Practices: **MIDDLE 4**

*Task Analysis, Parent Implemented Intervention, Reinforcement, Visual Supports, Prompting, Discrete Trial Teaching, Naturalistic Interventions, Joint Attention Training*

- Social Skills Training
- Social Narratives
- Video Modeling
- Peer Mediated Interventions
Skill Set: **UPPER 4**

Upper 4
Learning to interact successfully as part of a group, create friendship, and move toward lasting meaningful relationships

Evidence-Based Practices: **UPPER 4**

- Task Analysis
- Parent Implemented Interventions
- Reinforcement
- Prompting
- Visual Supports
- Discrete Trial Teaching
- Naturalistic Interventions
- Joint Attention Training
- Social Skills Training
- Social Narratives
- Video Modeling
- Peer-Mediated Interventions
- **Self-Management**
- **Generalizing evidence based strategies**

The Steps of “Being Social”
Assessment

• Who are the communication partners?
  • Skilled Partners (SP)
  • Trained Peers (TP)
  • Peers

• Where are you assessing social skills?
  • Therapy room
  • Classroom
  • Other school environments...

Sub-Skills

• Skill sets are broken down into smaller skills that are:
  ✓ Critical to social development
  ✓ Measureable
  ✓ Meaningful

Sub-Skills

• Lower, Middle and Upper 4
  • Recorded on a 0 to 3 scale
    ✓ 0 = Not observed
    ✓ 1 = Being acquired
    ✓ 2 = Uses intermittently with support, limited environments
    ✓ 3 = Uses across settings, people and environments

  0 = Not yet
  1 = Beginning
  2 = Practicing
  3 = Got it
Sample Sub-Skills: **LOWER 4**

- **Proximity 1 of 1**
  - Shares the same space (no more than 5 ft) without aggression or excess physical contact or vocalizations for at least 5 minutes

- **Parallel 1 of 4**
  - Attends (e.g., looks at action or person) briefly to what the SP is doing

- **Joint Attention 1 of 4**
  - Alternates visual attention between object of interest and the SP

- **Reciprocal Exchange 1 of 7**
  - Imitates a sound or action

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Sample Sub-Skills: **MIDDLE 4**

- **Reciprocal Exchange 1 of 7**
  - Engages in back and forth interaction for more than one exchange

- **Give and take of conversation 1 of 4**
  - Intentionally directs a message (nonverbal or verbal)

- **Perspective Taking 1 of 4**
  - Identifies ways to figure out what others are thinking by reading nonverbal cues

- **Reading the Social Scene 1 of 5**
  - Labels the social interactions within a given environment

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Sample Sub-Skills: **UPPER 4**

- **Reading the Social Scene 1 of 5**
  - Adjusts social communication based on social situation and partners

- **Group Cooperation 1 of 8**
  - Agrees on a topic or activity (e.g., suggests, negotiates)

- **Friendship 1 of 6**
  - Finds out what he/she has in common with another person

- **Growing Connections 1 of 7**
  - States differences in the type of friendship (e.g., best friend, girlfriend)
In Closing...

“Love is just a word until someone comes along and gives it meaning.”

Anonymous

Questions

For More Information:

kmtaylor@salud.unm.edu

mlaurel@salud.unm.edu