

Social Skills

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1. Social skills are the purposeful strategies used to successfully interact with others in interpersonal and social situations.
2. Often students may not have the social skills necessary to function well with others or even be aware of the need for such skills. You need to select a few and teach explicitly
3. Any skill is best learned in context. In the classroom provide context to practice: small groups, pairs, and recess. This is the best way to insure they will transfer to real life situations.
4. Use role play situations such as creative drama.
5. Observe your students to see which social skills need teaching. Select only 5 to 10 skills to teach
6. Identify and reinforce pro-social behavior when you see it.

Consequences of Good Social Skills

With a full repertoire of social skills, students will have the ability to make social choices that will strengthen their interpersonal relationships and facilitate success in school. Some consequences of good social skills include:

- Positive and safe school environment
- Child resiliency in the face of future crises or other stressful life events
- Students who seek appropriate and safe avenues for aggression and frustration
- Children who take personal responsibility for promoting school safety

Consequences of Poor Social Skills

Students with poor social skills have been shown to:

- Experience difficulties in interpersonal relationships with parents, teachers, and peers
- Evoke highly negative responses from others that lead to high levels of peer rejection (peer rejection has been linked on several occasions with school violence)
- Show signs of depression, aggression and anxiety
- Demonstrate poor academic performance as an indirect consequence
- Show a higher incidence of involvement in the criminal justice system as adults

Impact on School Safety

Given the demonstrated relationship between social skills and school safety, schools are increasingly seeking ways to help students develop positive social skills, both in school and in the community. Social skills related to school safety include:

- Anger management
- Recognizing/understanding others' point of view
- Social problem solving
- Peer negotiation
- Conflict management
- Peer resistance skills
- Active listening
- Effective communication
- Increased acceptance and tolerance of diverse groups

EXAMPLES OF SOCIAL SKILLS

Basic Interaction Skills

These are the simple skills involved in conversing and interacting with others on an everyday basis. They include:

1. Making frequent eye contact
2. Smiling when greeting people and talking. Try to look pleasant.
3. Showing "confident" body language: an open, direct stance, not fidgeting or twisting.
4. Basic politeness: saying please and thank-you, saying hello and good-bye, etc.
5. Showing interest in others, e.g., asking how their day was, how they thought they went on an exam, etc.
6. Phone manners: Answer the phone by saying Hello, in a pleasant voice. As a caller, identify yourself and ask to speak to the individual you are calling.
7. Greet people you meet or encounter in passing.

Adolescent Interaction Skills

1. Asking somebody for a date: It is okay to be nervous. Be positive and considerate when asking somebody for a date. Ask well ahead of time (three days to a week). Respond politely if that person declines. Okay, well, thank you anyway.
2. Also, in responding to a request, be polite and considerate of that person's feelings.
3. Do not say negative things about others. Talk about them as if they were your mother/father, sister/brother, or best friend.

Conversation Skills

These are the skills you use when talking to other people. They include:

1. Taking turns when talking
2. Listening and showing interest in what the other person has to say
3. "Small talk": being able to chat about unimportant things
4. Nodding and smiling to indicate that you are following along
5. Using humor
6. Knowing when to disclose personal information and when not to
7. Be a good listener. Encourage others to talk about themselves.
8. Do not dominate the conversation.
9. In conversation, talk in terms of the other person's interests.
10. Make others feel important by paying attention to what they are saying. Do not let your conversation be disrupted
11. Approach skills: being able to go up and start talking to someone who you don't know or don't know well.
12. Use the person's name when talking to him or her.
13. Ask people not to interrupt politely.

Building And Maintaining Friendships

There are many skills involved in making and sustaining friendships. Most of the skills in this list will also enable you to make and have friends. For example:

1. Sharing decision making, i.e., not always insisting on having one's way but negotiating about what to do, where to go, etc.
2. Showing appropriate affection and appreciation.
3. Maintaining contact, i.e., not expecting the other person to "do all the work" of keeping up the friendship.
4. Being supportive, i.e., showing concern when your friend is having a hard time.

5. Allowing distance and closeness. People need time apart as well as together.
6. Thoughtfulness: "thinking ahead" about what might be a nice thing to do for your friend.
7. Be willing to share with others.
8. Identify and communicate your feelings when you feel angry, upset, or hurt.
9. Communicate. If somebody is hurting you or making you feel uncomfortable, tell that person. This is hard to do initially, but gets easier with time.
10. Say no if you really do not want to do something. Do not allow yourself to be pressured.
11. Learn when it is appropriate to put group needs ahead of self and when it is not.

Being A Good Human – Consideration Skills

1. Be considerate of others. Do not take from, hurt, or embarrass other people.
2. Look for the positive in others.
3. Take turns. Wait patiently in line; take turns.
4. Be prompt. It is inconsiderate to make others wait.
5. Seek synergy. Look for situations that work out to be in the best interest of all.
6. Cooperate with others in order to reach a shared goal.
7. Admit when you make mistakes.
8. Apologize when you realize that you have made a mistake or hurt somebody.
9. Be fair and honest. Seek to tell the truth.
10. Understand others. Look for the reasons behind their behaviors. Try to see things from the other person's point of view.
11. Encourage others in their efforts. Everybody is good at some things and not so good at others.
12. Recognize and acknowledge when other people do a good job.
13. Help others when you see that they need it.
14. Respect others. Nobody is more or less important than anybody else.
15. Try to say only kind or positive things about others. Do not gossip, criticize, or condemn others.
16. Forgive others if they make a mistake.

Being A Good Human – Consideration Of Self

You can't be a good friend to others if you are not first a good friend to yourself.

1. Ask for help when you need it.
2. Don't criticize yourself. Think positive thoughts.
3. Allow yourself to make mistakes.

Empathy

Empathy means being able to put yourself into someone else's shoes and recognizing their feelings. It is not the same as sympathy or "feeling sorry for someone". Empathy is responding in an understanding and caring way to what others are feeling.

1. Notice other people's feelings.
2. Express concern at others' distress.
3. Try to recognize what someone else might be feeling in a given situation.
4. Show sensitivity to others' feelings when communicating. For example, being tactful when making critical comments (when criticism is necessary and/or appropriate).

Dealing With Conflict

Social interactions do not always run smoothly. Conflict resolution skills include:

1. Assertiveness or being able to say what you are feeling without being aggressive or getting personal.
2. Negotiation skills: being able to discuss a conflict calmly and rationally and come to an agreement about a solution.
3. Try to find similarities and differences. Refuse to argue or debate as this seeks to create winners and losers and does not promote understanding.
4. Synergy. Seek a solution in which all parties win.
5. Celebrate differences. Not everybody should be the same. Differences of opinion, experience, values, religions, and political views strengthen a society.
6. Find points of agreement.