

Social Skills Training Case Example

Student: Mason

Grade: 4th

Presenting Problems: Socially Awkward

Intervention: Social Skills Training

Background

Mason struggles when in classroom and social settings with peers. He struggles to read the non-verbal cues of other students when he tries to play with them at recess. He interrupts conversations between other students or the teacher while she is talking. His teacher wants to help him improve his social skills so that he can be more socially successful and make friends in his classroom.

Getting Started

Collect observational data on the social skills that need improvement. Consider what deficits may be contributing to these behaviors.

The teacher wants to collect some observational data to see which specific skills she wants to target. She sees that Mason has a hard time with peers at recess and during specials. When looking back at the data, it seems like Mason needs help with reading non-verbal cues, personal space, and starting conversations. She decides that these are the first three skills she wants to work on with Mason.

Implementation

Introduce the intervention to the student

Sample Script

Teacher: *Mason, I see you have been working really hard at recess to play with kids in our class. I know sometimes it can be hard to play with other kids, and I have some ideas about how we can work together to make friends even easier and to have more fun playing with kids in our class.*

Mason: *What are we going to do?*

Teacher: *Each week we are going to learn a new skill that can help us make friends and get along with other kids, and then we will practice them together. After we practice together, you will get to go try out the new skill that we learned at recess and we can talk about how it went.*



Mason: *What are we going to learn?*

Teacher: *Today we are going to learn about something called nonverbal communication. That is a pretty big word, do you know what nonverbal means?*

Mason: *No, I have never heard of that!*

Teacher: *That is okay. Nonverbal communication is when we can tell what someone is thinking by looking at their body language.*

Mason: *I know what body language is! That is like when someone smiles or frowns at you.*

Teacher: *Exactly! You are right on track.*

Give examples of what the skill looks like and how it can be used.

Teacher: *Let's do some practice. If I do this *does a silent scream and grimaces face*, what do you think that I am thinking and feeling?*

Mason: *You look pretty mad!*

Teacher: *You've got it! How could you tell?*

Mason: *Your mouth looked like it was screaming, your face was all scrunched, and you made fists.*

Teacher: *Exactly, I was communicating how I was feeling with my body and my face. So, Mason, why do you think this is an important skill for us to practice?*

Mason: *I don't really know.*

Teacher: *That is okay! I can help you out. When we just practiced, you were able to tell how I was thinking just from looking at my body. Why do you think that is useful?*

Mason: *Maybe so that we can know what our friends are thinking at recess or at lunch when we are playing.*

Teacher: *That is a great idea. It is important for us to know what our friends' body language is communicating to us. That can help us to know when maybe they want to play with you, or maybe need a break from playing. How would you know at recess that your friend wants a break from playing?*

Mason: *Maybe they stop playing or try to play with someone else?*

Teacher: *I like your thinking, that is a good idea. If you see your friend start walking away, looking at other kids, or he stops playing the game, maybe he needs a break from playing. What could you do if that happens?*



Mason: *I could ask him if he wants a break or I could go play with someone else.*

Have the student practice the skill in a hands-on, fun way

Teacher: *How about you try one now! How would you show me that you are bored?*

Mason: **rests head in hands, yawns**

Teacher: *You look pretty bored. What were you doing to show me how bored you were? How were you nonverbally communicating?*

Mason: *I was yawning and looking tired and I was looking around.*

Give the student feedback on their practice of the skill

Teacher: *Now I am going to try one! *makes a disgusted face**

Mason: *You look like you are kind of annoyed. Or maybe you just saw something gross.*

Teacher: *You are right on track! I love how you told me two different things that I could have been feeling. You are right, my face could have been communicating two different things.*

Have the student practice the skill throughout the day

Teacher: *So this week at recess, I am going to come find you a few times and ask you what you think some other kids on the playground are thinking. Do you think we could do that?*

Mason: *Yes, I think I can*

Provide feedback on how the student has been using the skill during the school day

Later that day, the teacher pulls Mason aside.

Teacher: *Ok Mason, it is time for us to practice. Do you see Khalil over there? What do you think his body is telling us?*

Mason: *He looks like he is having fun*

Teacher: *I agree, he is smiling and running with his friends, so he does look pretty happy. How about Meena?*

Mason: *She doesn't look very happy. Maybe she is sad?*



Teacher: *Nice job noticing that she was not feeling very happy. Do you see how her arms are crossed, her face is scrunched, and she is facing away from her friends? I think she looks like she might be mad about something.*

Mason: *That makes sense.*