



Helpful Social Skill Basics

Are you struggling to fit in? Use the social skills cards below to help yourself out in social situations!



Starting or ending a conversation

- 1.** Get someone's attention by facing them, smiling at them or making eye contact with them. Try to keep your body and face relaxed.
- 2.** Indicate to them you are interested in speaking with them by saying something like "Excuse me," "hi" or "Can I talk to you for a minute?" If you don't know this person, offer your name and ask them for their name.
- 3.** Pay attention to non-verbal communication skills. Try to stand about arm's length away from the other person and adjust the volume of your voice so that they can hear you, but you are not shouting.
- 4.** Use give-and-take. Say something and then allow the other person to respond to that. Then listen to their response as they are talking.
- 5.** You can also respond by ask the person a question about what they are saying, this shows you are interested in what they are talking about.
- 6.** When you are finished speaking to someone and want to leave, you can let them know that by saying something like "Thanks," "Sounds good," "I'm going to go," or "I'll talk to you later."



Clarifying when you don't understand something that's being said or done

Sometimes it is unclear what someone means or how they are feeling by the words they're using or based on their behavior (like gestures or facial expression).

- 1.** Ask some questions to clarify. Examples might include:

"I'm not sure what you mean, can you be more specific?"

"I don't understand what you're saying, can you explain?"

- 2.** Pay attention to the things you see and hear to understand how the person is feeling. This means paying attention to the person's hand gestures, facial expression, the words they are using and the tone of their voice to try and understand them.

- 3.** Use these clues to validate what you believe the person is experiencing. Validating is a way to show you understand someone and helps you relate to them. Use statements that point out the feelings you believe the person is experiencing like:

"It looks like you are feeling _____, is that right?"

"It sounds to me like you feeling _____."



(More cards on next page)



Letting people know that you are taking time to process what they have said:

Sometimes people give a lot of information at once and you need some time to process to be able to respond best.

1. State clearly to the person that you need some time. Examples might include:

"I heard what you said, and I just need some time to think about it."

"Thanks for telling me what you think; I have to think about it."

2. After you process your thoughts, ask questions for clarification if you need to.



Avoid interrupting and give time for response in conversations.

Conversations have give-and-take- one person talks and then the other.

1. Remember to leave space in a conversation for someone to respond to the things you have said. Take time to pause after you make a statement and look at the other person for their reaction (facial expression) and for them to respond to what you just said.

2. Make sure someone is done speaking before you start. Use statements like:

"Are you finished with what you were saying?"

"I don't want to interrupt you; I have something I wanted to say."

3. If you do interrupt or talk over someone accidentally, you can say sorry and let them finish before you begin to speak.



Listen and show interest when people are speaking to you

When someone is talking to you, it is important to hear what they say and to show them that you are interested.

1. Try to look at the person when they are speaking with you. You don't have to look at them the whole time, but some of the time is good; you can also nod your head to show them you are paying attention

2. Focus on their words and think about what they are saying to you

3. Wait for your turn to talk (no interrupting)

4. When they finish, you can say something back



Perspective taking (understanding someone's feelings)

Understanding the perspective of someone helps you identify their feelings and can also help you to relate to them.

1. Watch the facial expression and body movement of the person

2. Listen to their words

3. Using their facial expression, body movement and words, consider what feeling they might be experiencing

4. Make sure that you understand by checking in with them about their feeling, examples of checking might include "Are you feeling sad?" or "It looks like you are angry."



(More cards on next page)



Telling someone you are uncomfortable, upset, sad or angry when you need help

Sometimes you are not feeling good and need help. It's important to be aware of how you're feeling so that it doesn't build up, and also to know how to ask for help when you need it.

1. Think about what exactly is wrong and the words you would use to describe it
2. Think about a trusted person you could ask for support
3. Find that person or ask someone to help you find them
4. Tell that person how you are feeling and what is wrong
5. Tell that person what you need if you know, for example you could say "I need a quiet break." or "I need to use my coping skill."



Creating a compromise (resolving a disagreement)

You don't always agree with others, but sometimes you can work with a person to create an agreement that works for both of you.

1. Decide what it is that you disagree about
2. Tell the other person what you disagree with and why you disagree- try to do this in a calm and even tone without raising your voice
3. Allow the other person to tell you what they think and listen to the answer
4. Think about how you feel about the information that this person has given you
5. Make a suggestion about how you and the other person could do what is best together
6. If you cannot agree, ask someone you trust to help you come to an agreement



Apologize

If you do something that hurts someone, saying you're sorry helps them know you are concerned about what you did and that you value their feelings.

These steps for an apology make sure you get your message across.

1. Let the person know what you are apologizing for by saying "I'm sorry for ..."
2. Tell the person why you know that you were wrong by saying "It was wrong because ..."
3. Identify for the person what you will do differently if this happens again by saying "Next time I will ..."
4. Ask the person for their forgiveness by saying "Will you forgive me?"*

*Remember that sometimes people need time to accept an apology and manage their feelings. If someone does not accept your apology, that's okay. You cannot change their feelings-give them time and space.

