

How do I help my child with ASD make and maintain social relationships?

Many individuals with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) experience social challenges. Some individuals can benefit from learning social skills, specifically breaking down some of the steps of social interaction for things like 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. Good social relationships also improve one's mental health and life expectancy.

- If your child has communication challenges that interfere with their ability to interact with other people, a referral to a speech and language pathologist (SLP) may be necessary. SLPs can help individuals with challenges in talking, understanding what others say, and social skills. For more information, on accessing the services of an SLP see the Tip Sheet, "Therapies."
- 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. Encourage enrollment in community activities that interest your child so that they can meet peers and potential friends with common interests.
- Children younger than eight or who have intellectual disabilities will benefit from pictures, physical prompts, and demonstration. For older children and those who have a good understanding of language, consider enrollment in a program that teaches social skills. To be maximally effective try teaching social skills in natural settings (restaurants, playgrounds), use social stories, try role-playing and have others demonstrate socially appropriate behaviours.
- It is important for parents to support their child to learn social interaction skills by encouraging them to practice frequently 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
Email: caroline@korupsychology.ca
Website: korupsychology.ca

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

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. The story is written in the first person to help the student. It starts with the student's understanding of a situation and a story is developed to describe what is happening and why, and how people feel and think in a situation.

Website: carolgraysocialstories.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 (ASERT): ucalgary.ca/asert/intervention

Website (UCLA PEERS): semel.ucla.edu/peers

SocialThinking.com

This company has published very popular social learning programs like Superflex/The Incredible Flexible You, which are very well-known and targeted to children and teens. 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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