AFIRM

Autism Focused Intervention
Resources & Modules

Social Skills Training (SST)
---Step-by-Step Guide---

This practice guide outlines how to plan for, use, and monitor the social skills training practice.

Keep in mind that SST can occur in either with an individual learner with ASD or in a group format.

BEFORE YOU START...

Each of the following points is important to address so that you can be sure the selected EBP is likely to address the learning needs of your student.

Have you found out more information about. . .?

☐ Identified the behavior...

☐ Collected baseline data through direct observation...

☐ Established a goal or outcome that clearly states when the behavior will occur, what the target skill is, and how the team will know when the skill is mastered...

If the answer to any of these is "no," review the process of how to select an EBP.

For more information visit:
www.afirm.fpg.unc.edu

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Now you are ready to start...

Step 1: SST Planning

The planning step explains initial steps and considerations involved to prepare for and develop a training plan for a learner with ASD.

1.1 Determine if training will be 1-on-1 or a group

Decide if the training will be conducted in an individual or group format based upon various factors including the skills and developmental level of the learner with ASD, the availability of the trainer, availability of space, and scheduling constraints.

1.2 Select peers for participation

To select peers for participation, consider if the grade level and needs of other potential participants. Also, determine if peer models will be included.

1.3 Conduct social skills assessment

Use informal and/or formal assessment methods to obtain more information about a learner's current social competence as well as areas of need.

1.4 Select content of lessons

Consider the needs of the learner with ASD and group members (if a group format was selected). Remember large topics of instruction might include underlying components to the skill that will need to be addressed as well.

1.5 Determine format structure

SST should have a common format for each session. At a minimum, the lesson format should include a check in, introduction and teaching of a new skill, practice of the new skill, feedback, and opportunities to practice new skill outside of lesson format.

1.6 Select instructional strategies to use

A variety of instructional strategies can be used to teach social skills including direction instruction of skills, modeling, video modeling, role play, prompting, reinforcement, facilitated practice, and use of visual cues.

1.7 Prepare materials

Before you begin social skills training, you will need to prepare the materials. If you have selected any curriculum to support instruction, you will need to obtain those materials.

Step 1: SST Planning (continued)

1.8 Prepare instructors and adults to assist with training

Before beginning to use SST make sure all adults who will be leaders are familiar with the lesson plans and the reward system planned for participants.

1.9 Determine meeting place and schedule

A meeting time and place for the training needs to be selected that is convenient for both the learners with ASD, other members, and the leader.

*The **SST Planning Worksheet** in the Resource section will help you plan for SST.*

Step 2: Using SST

This step describes the process of using social skills training.

2.1 Implement the training as planned

Refer back to the plan for instruction or the Planning Worksheet. Consider creating session guides to plan for individual lessons.

*The **Session Guide** in the Resource section will help you plan for specific training sessions.*

2.2 Reinforce learner use of target skills

Reinforce learner's use of new target skills or behaviors. Select items or activities that are reinforcing to the learner with ASD.

2.3 Support generalization of target skills

Make a plan to support a learner in generalizing skills learning in the training session to other settings, people, and activities.

2.4 Provide support to peer models if applicable

Adult leaders should provide time for peers to become familiar with the learner with ASD, review the goals and format of the training session with peers, and provide specific suggestions of what is expected from peer.

Step 3: Monitoring SST

The following process describes how the use of social skills training can be monitored and how to adjust your plan based on the data.

3.1 Collect data on learner use of target skills

Team members should collect data on target skills and behaviors. Use event recording to collect frequency data at every instance the behavior occurs. When using a group format for SST, consider collecting data using one data form.

> The **Event Recording Form** in the Resource Section will help you monitor behaviors with low frequency.
>
> The **Group Data Form** in the Resource Section will help you collect data on multiple learners.

3.2 Determine next steps based on learner progress

If a learner is making progress based upon data collected, team members should continue to use SST and consider using it to address additional goals.

If the target skill or behavior is not increasing, ask yourself the following questions:

- Is the target skill or behavior well defined?
- Is the target skill or behavior measurable and observable?
- Has enough time been devoted to using SST?
- Was SST used with fidelity? (Use the SST Implementation Checklist to determine fidelity.)
- Is a consistent format used for each session?
- Are instructional strategies being used consistently?
- Are reinforcers used that are motivating to the learner?

If these issues have been addressed and the learner with ASD continues not to show progress, consider selecting a different evidence-based practice to use with the learner with ASD.