

Social Skills Interventions for Children with Asperger's Syndrome or High-Functioning Autism: A Review and Recommendations

White, S. W., Keonig, K., & Scahill, L. (2007). Social skills development in children with autism spectrum disorders: A review of the intervention research. *Journal of autism and developmental disorders*, 37(10), 1858-1868.

What Is the Study About?

The study is a review of Social Skills Training (SST) intervention styles in the school and the its effectiveness when working with children diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). The article compares ten intervention styles and the research efficacy of each.

What Are Social Skills?

Loosely defined as greetings, initiating and responding to interactions, maintaining interactions, giving and receiving compliments, turn taking, eye contact, self control, and sharing ideas.

Three Major Concepts From the Study:

1. Social Skills deficits are common among children with Autism an continue into adulthood unless addressed
2. 70% of SST interventions are considered "promising"
3. Research supporting the success rates of SST is still in the early stages.



What Did They Find?

Of the ten studies reviewed, seven showed positive effects from the social skills intervention/treatment and three showed no efficacy of treatment. The findings suggest the while 70% of the treatment styles reviewed had positive outcomes, among the intervention styles there was not consistency of how "social skills" should be defined. While social skills deficit curriculum interventions are widely used today, the research supporting the successes of these interventions are still in their early stages. More SST interventions needs to be developed to specifically target children with Autism.





Types of Interventions Reviewed

1. Classroom wide SST intervention involving work with greetings, initiating and responding to interactions, maintaining interactions, giving and receiving compliments, turn taking, and sharing.
2. Role-play exercise and games teaching social skills including: sharing of ideas, compliments, offering help, recommending changes, and exercising self-control.
3. Social Stories
4. Theory of Mind Training Program
5. SST Group working on Social Skills
6. Teaching social skills to students as well as parents in a 90-minute session
7. **Generalization: individual intervention followed by loosely structured group activity.**
8. Social Scripts
9. **TOM Skills**
10. **Teaching basic social skills and advancing students towards advanced social skills through homework after sessions**

*Interventions yielding negative effects are colored red

Why is it Important?

This study is important because it reviews the research and empirical data behind the SST intervention styles that may already be implemented in schools through group therapy. With the information of which interventions resulted in a positive outcome, those implementing the intervention have a better idea of where to start in teaching social skills. Generally speaking, it is important to know which of the interventions are actually evidence-based in order to support best SSW practice

Limitations

Not enough research, at this time, still in the early stages of EBP for social skills deficits. These interventions can be labeled as “promising”. There was limited follow-up after the intervention was implemented.

What Can School Social Workers Do?

- School social workers can follow-up with students on a year to year basis to see if the intervention is still effective.
- Develop new curriculum and interventions
- Be informed regarding the most up-to-date research about the interventions most used.
- Participate in research when and where able

