

The Development of Social Skills

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Learning disabilities and Social Skills-Our ability to interact and develop relationships with those around us is not fully realized until we are able to listen and communicate effectively. **If a child has any type of social communication problem, including Auditory Processing Disorder (APD), the ability to connect with others will be affected. More**

Reinforcing social skills in the home One of the most important roles that parents play in their child's development is that of teaching their child social skills. These social skills include daily interaction skills such as sharing, taking turns, and allowing others to talk without interrupting. **More**

Info on Social Groups in Brevard County, FL

Why are Social Skills Important?

Social Skills are the foundation for getting along with others. A lack of Social Skills can lead to behavioral difficulties in school, delinquency, inattentiveness, peer rejection, emotional difficulties, bullying, difficulty in making friends, aggressiveness, problems in interpersonal relationships, poor self-concept, academic failures, concentration difficulties, isolation from peers, and depression. Children with learning disabilities, sensory integration difficulties, Asperger's Disorder, Autism Spectrum Disorder, neurological disorders, and emotional disabilities often need additional training in Social Skills. They will likely benefit from direct instruction in Social Skills Groups led by trained professionals and the availability of a safe environment in which to practice newly learned skills.

Does formalized research support the concept that individuals with learning disabilities have deficient or ineffective social skills?

Yes. The research indicates that individuals with learning disabilities:

- are more likely to choose socially unacceptable behaviors in social situations
- are less able to solve social problems
- are less likely to predict consequences for their social behavior
- are less likely to adjust to the characteristics of their listeners in discussions or conversations
- are less able to accomplish complex social interactions successfully (i.e., persuasion, negotiation, resisting peer pressure, giving/accepting criticism, etc.)
- are more likely to be rejected or isolated by their classmates and peers
- are more often the objects of negative and non-supportive statements, criticisms, warnings and negative nonverbal reactions from teachers
- are less adaptable to new social situations
- are more likely to be judged negatively by adults after informal observation
- receive less affection from parents and siblings
- have less tolerance for frustration and failure
- use oral language that is less mature, meaningful or concise
- have difficulty interpreting or inferring the language of others

If a child has a learning problem, such as a language or auditory processing disorder, **he may have difficulty understanding what another person says or means. He might also have trouble expressing his ideas in speech.** Either of these problems can interfere with interpersonal communication.

A child who has Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (AD/HD) may be inattentive, impulsive, hyperactive – or any combination of these. **If he's inattentive, he may have a hard time paying close attention to other people's speech and behavior; his mind may wander, or his attention will be drawn to something else going on nearby. If he's impulsive and/or hyperactive, he may interrupt others when they're speaking and may find it difficult to wait his turn.** While such a child doesn't behave this way on purpose, others will likely be frustrated or offended by his behavior.

Elements of social skills

It's helpful to think of social interaction as consisting of three basic elements:

- **Social intake** — noticing and understanding other people's speech, vocal inflection, body language, eye contact, and even cultural behaviors.
- **Internal process** — interpreting what others communicate to you as well as recognizing and managing your own emotions and reactions.
- **Social output** — how a person communicates with and reacts to others, through speech, gestures, and body language.

Learning Disabilities and Social Skills:

Our ability to interact and develop relationships with those around us is not fully realized until we are able to listen and communicate effectively. **If a child has any type of social communication problem, including Auditory Processing Disorder (APD), the ability to connect with others will be affected.** To be an effective communicator, either on a playground or in the boardroom, we must be able to hear, discriminate, and understand what is being said. A learning disabled or autistic child must be able to read the visual cues in the other people's expressions, as well as, being able to catch the inflection in one's voice in order to make sense of what was said. We also must be able to notice and comprehend subtle exchanges, such as those involved in sarcasm or humor, and to "read between the lines" in order to determine the hidden meaning in what was said. **Otherwise the life of the learning impaired is filled with social blunders that are frustrating and embarrassing.**

APD often has a dramatic impact on a person's ability to engage in social communication. Therefore, the earlier we gain social skills the better off we are. Even something as simple as show and tell in preschool and kindergarten requires good communication skills. It involves being able to demonstrate and to talk about something of importance. It also requires good listening skills. Using words and language to share in learning and executing those delicate steps in simply connecting with other children can be difficult and embarrassing for the learning disabled child.

Most social communication in elementary school occurs on the playground and in the lunchroom—both places are very noisy. The child with a processing skill deficit may not notice that his inability to discriminate and interpret speech, especially in noisy places, may make it difficult to interact socially in those situations. His input in conversations may end up off topic or inappropriate. He may have difficulty processing and interpreting a joke that was told and therefore was left out of the uproarious laughter. He may not understand what constitutes humor or how to use inflection in his voice to get the delivery of a punch line just right. Therefore any attempt at humor ends up in heartache. His attempt to "be part of a group" or to entertain his peers are often met with blank stares or laughter directed at him instead of with him. Children with right hemisphere based

processing deficits may often compound that with difficulties in social judgment and inappropriate behavior as a response to their peers. **Simply put, some attempts at socially connecting with another human being may become devastating to their self esteem and emotional well being. This makes trying to communicate into a chore instead of a pleasure.**

"But we can neither hide nor run away from the social communication difficulties that can accompany APD. We wear them like an ill fitting coat, and they are apparent to anyone who looks carefully enough at us. of all the difficulties that arise from auditory processing problems, those that impact our ability to interact with others strike the deepest, hurt the worst, most demean ourselves in our own eyes." Terry James Bellis Ph.D.

Even if we ignore the other aspects of learning difficulties with APD, this should be reason enough to emphasize early identification and intervention. Because unless there is some intervention, the social struggles on the playground and in school will carry over to the workplace.

Reference: Bellis, Terry James Ph.D., When The Brain Can't Hear: NY, Atria Books 2002

Since social skills depend on being able to process and discriminate speech and conversation- The Listening Program (TLP) could be the intervention that you need. **The Listening Program not only develops better auditory processing and communications skills, it also helps those with difficulties in regulating mood and frustration levels due to auditory processing difficulties.**