



EVERY CHILD WANTS TO PLAY

Simple and Effective Strategies for Teaching Social Skills

Annie Baltazar Mori, OTD, OTR/L
Danette Bonfield Piantanida, MA, CCC-SLP



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310.328.0276

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Edited by:

Zoe Mailloux, MA, OTR/L, FAOTA

Susanne Smith Roley, MS, OTR/L, FAOTA

Graphic design by:

Christine Barnicki

TO MY HUSBAND, BRIAN,
FOR HIS ENDLESS SUPPORT THROUGHOUT THIS PROJECT.

AND TO MY PARENTS, BILL AND SHIRLEY,
FOR FILLING MY LIFE WITH PLAYFULNESS AND LOVE.

❧ ANNIE BALTAZAR MORI, OTD, OTR/L

TO MY FAVORITE PLAYMATES, BREANN AND MITCHELL.

AND TO MY PARENTS, DAVE AND LOLA BONFIELD,
WHO INSPIRE ME FROM HEAVEN AND EARTH.

❧ DANETTE BONFIELD PIANTANIDA, MA, CCC-SLP

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It is human nature to interact. Social networks and support systems enhance physiology, emotions and perception of life experiences, ultimately improving health and happiness. When we ask parents about their hopes and dreams for their children, health and happiness are high on the list.

Human beings are innately meant to be part of a social group. Whether as part of our family or community, social interactions are scattered throughout our daily lives. They can be as complex as a conversation

THE “EVERY CHILD WANTS TO PLAY” DVD AND WORKBOOK ARE DESIGNED TO HELP CHILDREN FIT IN BY OFFERING STRATEGIES TO SPELL OUT THE UNSPOKEN RULES OF SOCIAL INTERACTIONS.

at a party or as basic as standing in line at the grocery store. They contribute to how we view ourselves and influence our self-esteem.

Navigating the social world requires complex sets of skills and abilities. Children spend a great deal of their early years learning the social expectations and rules of their families, neighborhoods, and cultures. When children have a condition or disability, their social interactions are likely to be affected by their ability to understand expectations and acquire skills in a typical way.

Social interaction begins with parent-child bonding. Babies smile at the sound of their parents’ voices. A toddler shows interest in others by watching and imitating what others are doing. School children develop skills for cooperative play and teamwork. Childhood play and interactions lay the foundation for the more complex interactions and relationships that occur in adolescence and adulthood. (A chart of major milestones in the social development of children is presented in Appendix A.)

Children’s social skills affect how others view them and ultimately interact with them. Are they attentive and respectful students? Are they fun to play with? Do they work and play well with others? The early years set the stage for future success. If children receive positive feedback about how they are viewed by others, they will continue to seek activities in which they feel successful. Thus, they will continue challenging themselves to develop more complex social interactions with peers and adults. They are more likely to develop social networks and support systems that will become valuable for developing friendly resources, such as finding out what homework they missed, obtaining a job, or receiving emotional support. Children who struggle to fit in often feel isolated and unsuccessful. They may be discouraged to participate in class or on the playground, fail to establish necessary social supports, be unable to appropriately approach someone for assistance, or lack confidence to make a phone call to set up a job interview.

“Every Child Wants to Play” includes a training DVD that accompanies this workbook. This publication was developed through the shared experiences of therapists, clients, and families at Pediatric Therapy Network,” especially those involved in the Buddy Club™ social-skills training program. Buddy Club™ originated through the collaboration and unique contributions of speech-and-language pathologists and occupational and physical therapists. These complementary disciplines worked together to establish a social-skills program for children who struggle with an understanding of the unspoken rules of social interactions.

FORWARD

As an occupational therapist, **Annie Baltazar Mori** contributes her understanding of play, sensory integration, motor skills and social-emotional development in daily occupation. Her therapeutic and educational experience gives her knowledge of the importance of playfulness and the environment to social learning.

As a speech-and-language pathologist, **Danette Bonfield Piantanida** initiated the Social Skills Department at Pediatric Therapy Network. She collaborated with speech-and-language pathologists and occupational and physical therapists in creating the Buddy Club™, a group program designed to develop social skills in children struggling with relationships. Her experience as a special-education teacher and therapist gives her an understanding of the relationship between play, language and social interaction. Danette strives to provide children and families with the support they need to build life-long relationships.

Many of the skills and strategies presented in this workbook are a culmination of training, knowledge, and program development at **Pediatric Therapy Network**. This program was specifically created to develop the social interaction of children with special needs and their families. The “Every Child Wants to Play” DVD and workbook are designed to help children make and keep friendships by offering compensatory strategies to spell out the unspoken rules that occur in social interactions. We emphasize the importance of integrating lessons into meaningful play and social activities. In this way, children immediately

experience the impact of positive social interactions. They are motivated to continue because they feel successful when playing with others.

“Every Child Wants to Play” also takes into account the multiple demands placed on a child in social situations. Along with social and emotional skills, children must access language, cognitive, motor, and sensory skills for interaction. This product provides a toolbox of effective strategies to help children and their families feel more confident in social situations.

This program is designed to support children, ages 4 through 12 years. However, many of the strategies have been adapted for older children through adolescence and young adulthood. The units in this workbook may be followed in sequence. However, program facilitators will want to observe a child’s social abilities and strive to provide the just-right challenge for a specific child. Skipping units or presenting portions of units may be more appropriate for some children’s individual needs.

Practicing social skills is usually most successful within situations that are meaningful and internally motivating for a child. Interaction and practice with other children who share interests with your child are likely to increase the enjoyment of engaging with others.

HOW TO USE THIS DVD AND WORKBOOK SET

USER'S GUIDE

The “*Every Child Wants to Play*” DVD and workbook are divided into 10 units in three sections. The units in each section identify concepts that are incremental and progressively build on previous concepts and strategies.

I. Body Awareness and Visual Strategies

Unit 1: Personal Space

Unit 2: Trading

Unit 3: Body Talk

II. Facilitating Dynamic Social Situations

Unit 4: Choosing the Appropriate Activity

Unit 5: Coming to Center

Unit 6: Making Child-Directed Play
Appropriate

Unit 7: Turn-Taking

III. Verbal Strategies

Unit 8: Thought Bubble

Unit 9: Talk Balloon

Unit 10: Topic Circle

The DVD provides:

- Examples of children’s interactions during social play
- Explanations of social skills by the authors
- Demonstrations of techniques used during social skills training sessions
- Demonstrations of interventions during unstructured play
- Parent reports about the effects of this program on their child’s social skills

The accompanying workbook includes:

- Lesson plans for teaching each skill
- Further explanation of the strategies demonstrated in the DVD
- Practice activities that may be helpful in teaching these skills
- Information about social-skill development and age expectations.

GUIDE TO USING THE UNIT LESSONS

Each unit includes the following sections and subsections:

Overview of the concept presented in the unit

- An introduction to the concept, e.g., What is Personal Space?
- Information about the rationale for the concept, e.g., Why is Personal Space Important?
- Underlying reasons a child may have difficulty with an aspect of social skills, e.g., Poor Awareness of Personal Space
- How this difficulty manifests during social situations, e.g., Social Consequences of Poor Awareness of Personal Space

Lesson plans for helping children master the concept

- Key points for a child to learn the concept
- Rules to present once the child understands the main idea
- An introductory lesson followed by a facilitator checklist to help ensure the child’s success in learning and using the concept
- Additional practice activities to reinforce the skill

Taking it home and to the community

The ideas in this section are meant to help the child use the skills that have been practiced in the learning environment within everyday situations and activities, e.g., Awareness of Personal Space in Daily Life.

Teaching Strategies

The strategies presented in units 1–3 and 8–10 may be presented to a child individually or within a group. However, even if presented to a child individually, social skills are best practiced in a social context with an appropriate peer group modeled after the type of children with whom

HOW TO USE THIS DVD AND WORKBOOK SET

a child is likely to form a friendship. An appropriate playgroup could be defined as a group of children who are:

- The same or similar ages
- In the same classroom or neighborhood
- Have similar social or play abilities
- Have similar cognitive abilities
- Have similar interests in activities

When considering the children most likely to form friendships, we recognize that all people generally enjoy the company of others who share similar interests and abilities. Consider supporting relationships with children who will support a child's self-esteem and consider the child an equal in the peer group. Observe the child's abilities and seek peers with similar skills and interests. Once a playgroup or play partner has been identified, use units 4–7 to develop strategies for facilitating social skills in a dynamic playgroup with peers.

FORMING A TEAM

Children are in contact with a variety of adults and children throughout their day. Forming a team of individuals that is informed of the strategies and skills a child is learning and assists the child in applying these skills in a variety of settings is beneficial. It is helpful to communicate to the team how to best coach the child to use recently learned strategies, such as bringing a toy to a central location and taking turns playing with it.