



Social skills – Body Language

School and Home information sheet

Dear Parent,

Your child is attending/has attended a social skills group. They would benefit from further activities at home to target these skills in their everyday environment (see activities sheet attached). The aim of this programme is to: *increase your child's awareness and understanding of body language and improve their skills in using body language effectively for communication.*

The following goals are the target of their current intervention.

For your child to:

1. Understand which parts of the body we use to communicate and why.
2. Understand the importance of facial expressions for conversations.
3. Use facial expressions during conversation to show emotion e.g. interest, surprise etc.
4. Use appropriate eye contact during conversation.
5. Use their body to communicate e.g. use of posture and gesture.
6. Use appropriate distance and touch during conversation i.e. to be aware of personal space.



Top tips for encouraging social skills at home

- ☺ Demonstrate good social skills when your child speaks to you e.g. use gesture where appropriate, turn to face your child, provide good eye contact.
- ☺ Praise your child when they demonstrate good social skills.
- ☺ Provide specific feedback to your child if they make a mistake e.g. 'You did not use your face to show me how you are feeling, I want you to show me that talking about your friends makes you happy, so you should smile!'
- ☺ Allow some 1:1 time with your child to engage in conversation about what they did that day/their topic of interest.

If you have any questions about this programme, please contact your School Speech and Language Therapist via the school/Schools Speech and Language Therapy telephone on 02082219300.

Carryover Activity Sheet

Social skills - Body Language

Activities

Understanding which parts of the body we use to communicate.

Activity ideas:



Draw the outline of a body on a sheet of paper. Ask your child to think about what body parts we use to communicate. They can draw/colour in the parts of the body. Get your child to explain why they have chosen that part e.g. we use our arms to show gesture and point. Body parts include: Eyes, mouth, ears, hands, posture, face.



Look at photos from magazines/newspapers/television (pause the screen): Ask the child to think about how the person is feeling. Ask the child to notice what is happening to that person's body e.g. 'I know they are angry because they are frowning and they have their arms crossed and their body looks tense'.

Understanding the importance of facial expressions for conversation and using facial expression to show emotion.

Activity ideas:



The 'blindfold game': Ask your child to choose a topic for discussion. Explain to them that you are going to spend 1 minute discussing a topic e.g. your favourite holiday/movie/tv programme etc. Everyone in the discussion will wear a blindfold. After the conversation is over everyone to take off their blindfold and discuss what was difficult about the conversation e.g. we need to use our faces to show how we are feeling/we need to look at the other people.



Emotional sentences (see attached handout pg.51): Choose a sentence, then say the sentence with the wrong facial expression e.g. saying: 'I'm going on holiday tomorrow' with a sad face. Ask your child to show you the correct facial expression they should use. Allow your child to take a turn. The sentences provided are just examples, you can come up with your own ideas.

Using body to communicate e.g. posture and gesture

Activity ideas:



Scenarios (see pg. 74 handout for ideas): Explain to the child that you are going to practice some body language with scenarios. Act out what you have on your card using a mime, emphasising body language e.g. gestures, facial expression etc. The child has to guess what you might be acting based on your body language. Then you act the card out again but this time with words. Use the scenarios on page 74 to help, but you may also come up with your own ideas!

Posture thermometer (see pg.65 handout): Show the child the 'posture thermometer'. Explain to them that sometimes we are really tense (5) and sometimes we are really relaxed (1). Ask your child to think of emotions e.g. angry, frustrated, bored etc., and ask them to plot the emotions on the thermometer, asking them to think about how our posture is in these scenarios.

Use appropriate distance and touch during conversation I.e. being aware of personal space.

Activity ideas:



Touch control: Grab a sheet of paper and write: very close to, quite close to, not so close to. Think about people your child interacts with, as well as other people e.g. teachers, friends, siblings, policemen, shopkeeper, postman. Ask your child to determine where these people fit on our chart, can we touch them/get very close to them or not.



Ways of touching: High-five, hug, kiss, link arms, shake hands, pat on the back. Using the same sheet from the 'touch control' activity, Discuss with your child which 'ways of touching' can we use with each of the people on our list. Is it appropriate to hug a policemen etc. If your child is unsure, prompt thm e.g. do you think Aunty would like it if you gave her a hug? And offer solutions e.g. 'Maybe we could ask her first'.

Social skills games



These are games that can be played at home with your child/the whole family, to help encourage the use of positive social skills.

- **Chinese whispers:** Best played with 3+ players. Everyone should sit in a circle/line. Take it in turns to think of a phrase to say e.g. 'I like chocolate cake'. The person who goes first whispers it into the next person's ear, and so on. The last person has to say the phrase out loud, to see if the phrase was repeated correctly to everyone.
- **I went to the market and...:** Can be played with 2+ players. This is a memory game. The first person says: 'I went to the market and I got X' e.g. 'eggs', the next person has to say what the other person said plus a new item e.g. 'I went to the market and I got eggs and milk'. The game continues until someone forgets an item on the list.
- **Mystery objects:** An object is placed in the bag without the other players seeing it. The bag is passed to each person who then tries to either identify the object with one guess/or describe it without saying the name of the object. Whoever guesses correctly can choose the next object! **Alternative version:** Adult picks something and hides it behind their back. They describe the object to the child, who has to guess what it might be based on the clues.
- **Change one thing:** The child/adult leaves the room. Other people in the room decide to change one thing e.g. someone takes off a shoe, a book is upside-down etc. The person then re-enters the room and has to guess what is different.
- **The alphabet game:** Choose a topic e.g. sport/food items. Take it in turns and go through the alphabet and name items beginning with the letters of the alphabet e.g. apple, banana, cherry...and so on.

Other easy examples of games you can play at home that encourage social skills development: Hangman, charades, Headbands/21 questions, Pictionary.

Space for notes/comments: