TEACHING SOCIAL SKILLS USING DISCRETE TRIAL TEACHING

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THE COURSE OF TYPICAL DEVELOPMENT

• There Is A Natural Feedback Loop That Shapes A Child’s Behavior
  – My actions impact the world
  – Things that happen in the world impact me in ways that are desirable or undesirable

EMERGENCE OF SOCIAL SKILLS IN TYPICAL DEVELOPMENT

• Typically Developing Children Will Learn To Refine Their Behaviors Based On Differential Social Outcomes.
  – Approval, Interest, Attention And Shared Enjoyment With Others Influence
    • What behaviors are likely to be repeated
    • Which behaviors are likely to diminish
  • Social Interest Is The Fuel

EMERGENCE OF SOCIAL SKILLS IN TYPICAL DEVELOPMENT

• Many Aspects Of Typical Social Behavior Are Shaped By The Natural Environment
  – e.g., Checking In: If you don’t pay attention to what others are doing you might miss out.
  – If you don’t share . . .
  – if you are mean to people . . .
• Formal Teaching Is Not Necessary

WHY SOCIAL SKILLS DEFICITS IN AUTISM?

• This Natural Behavior Shaping Process Is Not Impacting Children With Autism
• Children With Autism Do Not Seem To Learn From Natural Contingencies:
  – Could Be A Motivational Issue: What They Find Reinforcing Is Different
  – Might Also Have To Do With How They Learn And Process Information
  – Or Simply What They Are Paying Attention To
SO WHAT CAN WE DO?

SPECIALIZED APPROACH TO TEACHING: DTT

• DTT Is A Way Of Strengthening The Signal
• Focuses On One Small Aspect Of Behavior At A Time
• Carefully Timed And Sequenced Events To Make The Right Connections
• Putting Essential Information In The Foreground
• Repeated Practice Of Skills To Deeply Etch The Circuit

DISCRETE TRIAL TEACHING (DTT)

• Timing Is Critical In DTT
• It’s Not Sufficient To Know How To Do Something; It Only Counts If You Do It At The Right Time
  — Saying hi
  — Clapping your hands
• Discrete Trial Components
  — Instruction
  — Response
  — Feedback

DISCRETE TRIAL TEACHING: DO THAT

Video: Do That with play materials

DISCRETE TRIAL TEACHING (DTT)

• Clinical Outcomes And Research Studies Show Children with ASD Do Learn If Information Is Presented In A Systematic Fashion And They Have Repeated Opportunity To Practice The Skill
  — Lovaas, (1987); McEachin et al. (1993); Leaf et al. (2011).
• Not Just Repetition But Closely Spaced Practice.
  — One Trial Per Day In A Classroom; Batting Cage

DTT IS EVERYWHERE

• It’s A Much More Natural Process Than Many People Recognize
• Many People Use DTT Without Even Knowing Learning Theory
• They Are Just Naturally Good Teachers

Video: Borat
DTT IS EVERYWHERE

- It’s So Fundamental Even A Child Can Do It

USING DTT TO TEACH CHILDREN WITH ASD

- DTT Exists On A Continuum Of Structured Vs. Naturalistic
  - Natural reinforcer vs. extrinsic and/or arbitrary
  - Natural cues vs. instruction
  - Naturally occurring opportunity vs. contrived opportunity
  - Formal vs. informal
  - Simple response vs. complex response

- Often Used To Teach Language, Cognitive And Self-Help Skills
- Can (And Should) Also Be Used To Teach Social Skills.

TEACHING SOCIAL SKILLS

- Social Skills Range In Complexity And Progress Developmentally
- We Target Easier Skills First.
- We Recognize That Developmental Age Is Associated With Likelihood Of Success

TEACHING SOCIAL SKILLS

**Beginning Level Skills**
- Do that
- Responding to your name
- Follow a friend
- Initiate greeting
- Taking your turn in a game
- Joint attention (give something to someone)

**Advanced Level Skills**
- Don’t bore your friends
- People don’t always mean what they say
- Persuasion
- Giving and accepting compliments
- Winning and losing gracefully
- Keeping secrets

**Video:** Follow a Friend

**Video:** Joint Attention
**DISCRIMINATION TRAINING: COOL VS. NOT COOL**

- **Why:** Important To Establish Exactly What Behavior We Are Talking About
  - Feedback, Praise And Consequences Only Make Sense If Student Actually Understands What Is The Offending Behavior.
- **Allows For A Bit Of Brainwashing To Occur.**
- **What:** Useful For Promoting A Wide Range Of Social Behaviors
  - Personal Space
  - Over The Top
  - Racing to be first in line
  - Being Bossy
  - Walking Cool
  - Grabbing Toys

**COOL vs. NOT COOL: HOW?**

- Start By Observing Other Actors
- Student Gets To Be The Judge
- Start With Easy To Discriminate Categories
- Steps Can Include Matching, Receptive Labeling, Receptive Performance, And Expressive Labeling
- Modes Of Responding Can Include
  - Verbal
  - Written Word Or Symbol On A Card
  - Gesture

**COOL vs. NOT COOL**

Hints:
- Some Students May Need Very Concrete Behaviors In Order To Understand The Process Of The Role Play, E.G. Is “John Standing Or Sitting?”
- Ease Your Way Into Behaviors That May Embarrass The Student
- Allow Student To Demonstrate The Correct Version Of The Skill

**IMPORTANCE OF SOCIAL INTEREST**

- Impaired Social Connectedness Is A Hallmark Of Autism
- Low Social Interest =
  - Important Natural source of reinforcement not operating =
  - Important learning opportunities are missed
**MAKING SOCIAL INTERACTION**

**REINFORCING**

- Pair neutral with positive
  - External reinforcement paired with social activity (noncontingent)
  - Tangible reinforcer comes from peer (noncontingent)
  - Experience fun together
- Operant:
  - Peer necessary to carry out desired activity
  - Play is more fun with 2 or more people

**BUILDING REINFORCEMENT:**

**SHARED ENJOYMENT**

**SOCIALLY ENGAGING ACTIVITIES**

High affect activities
- Punch each other with Hulk hands
- Tug of war
- Couch jumping: Jumping off a couch together onto pillows...saying ready, set, go to the peers
- Snickers and Hoots

**SOCIALLY ENGAGING ACTIVITIES**

High affect activities
- Water balloon toss
- Water guns
- Nerf guns
- Stomp rocket
- Pillow Fight

**SOCIALLY ENGAGING ACTIVITIES**

Cooperation
- Building something that requires 2 people
  - e.g. build a fort together with a blanket
**BUILDING REINFORCEMENT:**

**SHARED ENJOYMENT**

- Video: Fort

**SOCIALLY ENGAGING ACTIVITIES**

Cooperation
- Building something that requires 2 people – e.g. build a fort together with a blanket
- Bucket line like for a fire (passing items in a timed race)
- Seesaw
- Jump rope
- Zoom Ball

**BUILDING SOCIAL INTEREST:**

**COOPERATION**

- Video: Zoom

**SOCIALLY ENGAGING ACTIVITIES**

Cooperation
- Sitting back to back and having to get to a standing position
- Jumping together on trampoline to get maximum height
- Having to complete a task, but with a "disability" (i.e., blindfolded, no hand/feet, etc.)

**SOCIALLY ENGAGING ACTIVITIES**

Music:
- Rolling ball back and forth with music, when music stops, tickle whoever has the ball
- Freeze dance: when music stops, hold hands with a friend
- Ring around the rosie

**SOCIALLY ENGAGING ACTIVITIES**

Turn taking:
- Blanket drag: peer drags student on a blanket and take turns
- Push each other in wagon
- Hide and Seek
- Hands-to-hands game (Snickers and hoots)
**SOCIALLY ENGAGING ACTIVITIES**

**Language based:**
- **Guess what friend is holding** (under a blanket)
- **Charades**: guess what friend is pretending to be
- **Drawing** w/o looking (one person draws, one dictates picture that must be made)
- **Manding**: “The Robot game” - tell a friend exactly what to do and have them do funny stuff (knock over blocks, give you a snack, etc)

**Language based:**
- “**What am I?**” Put an index card with a noun on it tagged on each player’s back, the partner must (with words) give clues as to what they are.
- One person is blindfolded and the other has to tell them how to get through an **obstacle course**.
- **The HOT & COLD game**
- **ACTOR/DIRECTOR** (aka **SIMON SAYS**)

**Pretend:**
- **Dress up** – scare/surprise friend in the other room
- take on characters in a story
- take pictures of each other and make a photo album or something
- **Wrap up your friend in toilet paper like a mummy**

**Pretend:**
- Building a “**FORT**” together out of boxes, etc. Be creative! One child can direct the other where to place items. Kids can then run from adults and hide in the fort.
- **ICE CREAM SHOP** – different flavors and toppings. One has to request what they want from the other.
- Talking on **WALKIE-TALKIES** to each other – older kids can pretend to be spies.

**Pretend:**
- “**Newscaster**” (Two people in front of a TV screen, one can see it the other cannot, the one that can see it has to describe, to the partner where they are).
- **ROLE PLAYING GAMES** such as Cops & Robbers, PIRATES, Cowboys & Indians – or for older kids, pretend to be superheroes from Star Wars, Power rangers, etc and act out basic storylines.

**Art/ Cooking**
- **Silly art**: put stickers on friend’s body
- **Halloween makeup** on a friend’s face/body
- Drawing funny faces on friend with **“clown crayons”**
- **Pudding Toss**: Put ingredients for sugar free instant pudding in a Ziploc bag. Toss the bags back and forth to mix, and then share the pudding you made. No refrigeration needed.
- **Style each other’s hair**
SOCIAL ENGAGING ACTIVITIES

Art/ Cooking

- **Cooking** something together, where one person has to get materials from the other person.
- Put **nail polish** on each other or make-up (One can hold the mirror while the other applies make-up or if no mirror then the other peer puts the make-up on).
- **Blocks**: One person getting to look at some kind of pre-built structure and then coming back and having to tell the next person about it and having a time limit to get it built together.
- **Body Drawing**: Laying down on paper and drawing around the body.