

## Sue Larkey Social Skills Knowledge Course Transcript

I'll help you correct the English errors in this transcript without altering the content. Here's the corrected version:

### Social Scripts Course - lesson 1

[00:00:00] Welcome everybody. My name's Sue Larkey. I'm a teacher and educator. I've been teaching for over 30 years, and my passion is to help you help my Neurodiverse children engage. My specialty is autism spectrum disorder, ADHD, ODD and PDA. But any child who thinks or engages differently, we have to teach differently.

[00:00:22] I love that saying, if children don't learn the way we teach, maybe we have to change the way we teach. So this is all about changing the way that we teach social skills or social knowledge, as you're gonna hear it called throughout this course. I'm an academic, which is a practical academic. Basically these three modules aren't gonna have hundreds of pictures of the brain and references, although.

[00:00:45] You are welcome to email me and I can send you lots of those things. What I wanna do is give you practical strategies to put in place, but also reassure you that you are doing the right things. Like some of you are just gonna take some time to reflect and think about what you've already got in place, but also maybe look at small changes.

[00:01:03] Every child with neurodiversity is different and an individual, but so is every school and every classroom. As a teacher, you know, you've had classrooms that are really engaged and really community and they all love each other. And then you'll have a year that there's more cliques and then you know, each classroom is very different.

[00:01:22] So what I need you to do is really take what I'm sharing with you over these three modules and adjust and accommodate on the students, you know, and your class. Because social skills or social knowledge is two ways as a classroom teacher. So often when children come back in from the break is where I start to see what are the challenges students are having?

[00:01:46] What are the skills I need to give them? So if I've got children coming back in year four who are dobbing, well that tells me normally children stop dobbing at about year two. So I might have to talk to my class about when to tell and when not to tell, but I find that's much better as a whole class conversation so children can support each other so they can help each other.

[00:02:09] In my experience when we've got Neurodiverse children, sometimes it's about helping the neurotypical children understand the Neurodiverse children. Anyway, I really wanna thank you for being here, and I am hoping that you're gonna take away some practical tips and strategies to make a difference to you and the children.

[00:02:28] You know, whether you're a teacher, assistant, or I call you Angels Education support staff. I know that for many of our children, the social causes a lot of anxiety. We

do so much collaborative learning and group work. So if we can actually help them with the social connection, we can make the world of difference to them and their engagement in learning.

[00:02:50] So let's dive into learning about social skills for our diverse children. So there are three modules. I would recommend you do each module and take some time in between to actually implement some of the strategies, but it's up to you. So let me just explain how we are going to do it. The first module is all about understanding or lesson.

[00:03:12] It's all about understanding diverse learners and how they socialize and engage differently and learn differently. The second one is actually looking at specific strategies, communication and conversations, and this is one of the ones that I'd love you to actually go back and implement some of the things.

[00:03:29] And the third is around friendships, playground, group work, understanding that collaborative classroom that I mentioned in the introduction. If you haven't already, can I ask you print out the handout? I do talk really fast. I make no apologies for that. I hate courses that stop really slow. So we're gonna go really fast.

[00:03:48] But what I'd love you to do is on your handout, actually think of a specific child or children and write down what you are going to do. The way I look at the course, it's really practical strategies. As I mentioned, I call myself an academic. So in the first module that we're gonna do a deep dive into now, if you haven't already, print out your handout.

[00:04:09] So you can just write notes where I've left some room for notes next to each slide. So I've worked with over 3000 kids with autism spectrum neurodiversity and what I know each child is different. The children I know aren't the children, you know, so I need you to listen, sort of really thinking, well, every child's different.

[00:04:28] You might be with a five year old or a 12 year old, or you might teach a range of ages or parents, you might have an eight year old. The things I wished I'd known when I went to uni though, is that strategies wear out. You might have tried some of these things I talk about and they've worn out. That's okay.

[00:04:44] We can try something new. Not every strategy works for everybody. What works for mom mightn't work for dad. What works for the science teacher mightn't work for the history teacher or in secondary, although this is primary age, so what works for the phys ed teacher might not work for the librarian. And in my experience, most strategies work for one in 10 people, children, students, and we are looking for those one strategies.

[00:05:07] I, there will be things I say that don't work for you because each child is so different. So we need to come from that context. I want you to treat it like you're going shopping, you're looking for a new coat to wear. Imagine if you're looking for a new coat, there would be things. Oh, I've already got a coat like that.

[00:05:24] When you are listening to me in your handout. If you are already doing things, can you put a smiley face or a star next to it? But don't sit there and put a smiley face if you've heard it or know it. I want you to actually be like, I've tried it. It mightn't have worked, but you've tried it. Okay. Or it wore out.

[00:05:41] That's fine too. But I actually want you to think I've done it. It's a bit like having a coat in your wardrobe you're not wearing. This is an opportunity to think about wearing it. You might need to slightly alter an idea. Put it with something new. My aim is you get lots of new ideas to try, not just now, but in the future when you have other children and some of the things will not be for you.

[00:06:02] My mom is the queen of, she loves looking in a catalog. She's not so much an online shopper. She'll find an outfit, you know, a top or something. She'll ring the store, she'll get it put aside, and then she goes in and it doesn't fit her cuz the model wasn't the same shape as her. There are gonna be strategies I say that are not for you.

[00:06:21] Please understand, not every strategy works for everybody, so I don't expect you, like everything I say, each child is different. Each teacher, each adult's different, each educator's different. So please just take the ones that work for you. Now, for those of you who are teachers, we actually do need to include social emotional as part of our program, and I look at.

[00:06:42] Look at those accommodation and adjustments that we need to do as like coats of adjustment that in for some of our children, they need a whole new coat and some just need a little change of strategy. So an extensive adjustment might be okay when you've done module three, we need to think about the playground and maybe setting up a club for this child because they're not engaging in the playground and they're coming back dysregulated.

[00:07:07] Or it might be a small adjustment, like thinking about more, more consciously thinking about who you partner the child with. That's just a small adjustment. It's not a big adjustment. An extensive adjustment might be getting a teacher assistant or education support staff to actually sit with the child and go through a social script.

[00:07:30] So remember there's gonna be different levels of adjustments, and if you look in your handout, I have this, whether you're a parent, teacher aide or a educator. I think this is really important. So for example, setting. So often people are trying to do social skills in a playground where it's socially overwhelmed.

[00:07:49] There's lots of other children and bystanders. I would, you might need to take that to a small group setting. You might need to go into a small room. So often people in the playground for input are doing it verbally. Children on the spectrum are visual learners. You might need to think, well, do I need to carry around a pen and paper?

[00:08:08] This child needs a visual. Now for parents who are on who are listening, and thank you for being part of this program, teachers have an obligation to actually

accommodate your child. And this is our key disability documents. And in Australia it's called the NCCD. Depends where you are in the world, what you call it.

[00:08:27] But parents, when you go to your IEP meeting or whatever you call those meetings, I would love you to think about adding in social emotional learning because so often schools have maths, English, social emotional is so important. In fact, one of the reasons I created my emotional regulation course, I'm just gonna flick forward to this slide.

[00:08:48] One of the reasons I created my emotional regulation course is because I had so many children who weren't in full-time school who were being suspended, expelled, sent to detentions. Because of their behavior, but they actually didn't know how to manage their emotions. So that's why I created my emotional regulation program.

[00:09:08] So for, we're gonna talk a little bit about that in a minute, but this is the social skills, cuz what I realized and what a lot of us are realizing that social and emotional skills go together. So let me explain this. A child learns to play a card game like Uno. They've learnt the skill, the social skill turn, taking, waiting, not yelling and screaming, using appropriate tone of voice.

[00:09:31] You know, these are the social skills. The emotional regulation is when they lose, not bursting into tears or throwing the cards. So all social skills need social and emotion to go together, and what I realized is that I needed to add social skills. To our emotional regulation course. So in Australia we tend to use what's called the CASEL framework and a lot.

[00:09:56] This is used throughout the world and the CASEL framework. See, the SEL is the social emotional learning part. What I love about the CASEL framework, it's looking at the child. But also the home community outside the classroom. So it's looking at all of us working together. I often say to parents, I don't care about their math homework.

[00:10:16] They can get a calculator when they're older. I don't care about their grammar or their English. They can get Grammarly. But if a child is struggling socially, this is really important. Social skills is what helps you get a job in the future. The reason schools have moved to collaborative classrooms, as future employers said we need children with really good social skills.

[00:10:35] So we need to remember that actually to be part of a classroom today. We don't sit in rows anymore. We don't do individual repetitive work. We actually work in collaborative problem solving, but this is a challenge for my diverse students. So we've added a layer of complexity for our diverse students. So, I just wanna go back a sec and say that one of the reasons I've put this course together is that my Facebook community, and if you've never looked at my Facebook, I highly recommend you join it.

[00:11:04] If you want my opinions, listen to my podcast or do my courses or webinars. But on my Facebook, it's more of a community where people share problems and look

for ideas. And I put this up and it was help for a mom who was looking for activities for a 23 year old son. This post had like over 400 comments.

[00:11:25] So many people like got the same problem. My child's finished school, they don't have any social connection. I was like, oh my goodness. We need to do something about this. And what I realized is we needed to go back to the primary, we needed to start to build those skills in the primary schools. Just putting a child in an inclusive school isn't giving them the social emotional skills.

[00:11:45] I then went on to record a podcast, which had the amazing people sharing their social initiatives, and one of the ladies said as a result of their social skills program or their social initiative where they get kids together for trivia nights or go bowling or they had a 21st birthday party for one of the boys that the young people developed social skills or confidence to then go and get a job.

[00:12:12] Can you remember the social anxiety of your first job? Can you remember even starting a new job, how anxious you get? So many of my young people become disengaged because of that social anxiety or having misunderstood social situations or exhausted socially. So in this course, I'm gonna be relying on lived experiences to share their experience of social and Dean Beadle calls it social knowledge, and I think it's really important.

[00:12:40] We understand that children with neurodiversity socialize differently and we need to ensure that we teach it differently. But also that it's about teaching everybody. There is no point teaching a child to say hello if the peer doesn't say hello back. Have you ever had that where you say hello to someone and they don't say hello back?

[00:12:58] Don't you just feel this anxiousness? Well, imagine if you're neurodiverse and you don't understand that. So that's why I really believe this is for your whole class. This is for your whole family. This is for everybody. And why the CASEL Framework looks at the community. So parents, can I get you to think about adding social.

[00:13:17] Teacher assistants, I would love you to really look at how is this child connecting with their community, with their school community? Do they do things outside school? Really think about that social connection. Now, the AARA framework, which is what we use in Australia, I've put in your handout, but wherever you are in the world, I recommend you have a look what your social curriculum is.

[00:13:37] If you're an Australian teacher, I would love you to pause the video and just have a look where your students are at, because this covers all from primary through to secondary. And some of my students, we need to know where they're at to work out where we are going. So this is an important just time to stop and reflect so we can work out what skills we are working on.

[00:13:57] And I'm going to be using that framework throughout this course. Now, you probably heard, I've used the word neurodiversity personally. I love the word neurodiversity and neurotypical as my two frames, but everyone uses different

language. I mean, my name's Susan and I hate being called Susan. I like Sue or Susie or Sues.

[00:14:19] I really don't mind the other ones, but don't call me Susan. That is my personal preference. I highly recommend you ask families or young people themselves what they prefer. There are still many people that like the word Asperger's or autism spectrum. But my experience of autism spectrum, it rarely sits on its own.

[00:14:36] You might have autism spectrum and ADHD. You might have sensory processing and anxiety. So that's why I like the term neurodiversity and neurotypical, but just ask people their personal preference and preferences change. Like I meet parents who like child with autism, but then they might change to autistic child.

[00:14:55] That's okay. You know, I used to be called Susan when I was very little. Then when I could say I wanna be called Sue, I became Sue. And then when I got married, my husband's mom's name Sue. So I changed to Susie with his family. But that's my preference. So it's not up to you to tell me your birth name's Susan.

[00:15:12] You should be called that. So, although the child might have a diagnosis of autism spectrum, they might wanna be called autistic. That is their preference. So please understand, I use the words interchangeably because I have worked in autism for over 30 years and what I've discovered, everyone uses different terms and the terminology changes.

[00:15:31] But what I need to remember is, every, each and every child with autism or neurodiversity has their own personality, their own interests and obsessions, their fears and dislikes. No two are the same. So if I'm saying to, you set up a Star Wars club and this kid loves my little ponies, you need to think about what this child likes, what they would like you to set up if they you know, are a child who loves doing big physical games, what can you do to accommodate them in your social skills in the playground?

[00:16:01] So really remember that I need you to take it from their perspective, but the most important thing to understand is this child learns and engages differently. And if we want to teach this child, we need to teach the way they learn. So, we need to understand that children with autism spectrum particularly have a thing called mind blindness.

[00:16:21] They're literal. Now. The one people always talk about is pull your socks up. I don't see that in my children. I don't see the pull the socks up. What I see are things like kids say, I had a ball on the weekend and this kid imagines it's a big ball. Or students say to this child, no, you can't play, and they hear never again and feel really rejected.

[00:16:42] So Literalness and Mind Blindness is in the ebook, which is in the bonuses at the back. There's a section on Mind Blindness and Literalness. Please have a read of that because a lot of my children, they misunderstand what their peers mean. The next one is the hardest one. Many of my children have what's called a one Track Mind.

[00:17:04] Or black and white thinkers, they only have one idea. So I was in the school last week and I wanna give you this example cuz it just explains perfectly. The one track mind, there's a beautiful little girl in year five and it was Easter and all the children had been given out Easter cookies one of the mums had made.

[00:17:20] And this gorgeous little girl, I dunno what she heard the teacher say, but something tells me she, the teacher said, put the cookie in the bag. But she heard on the bag. Okay. So just the auditory processing was a big open plan classroom. I think that's what happened, looking at it. So she's gone down to the bag rack and all the bags are laid out and she's got her bag off the rack and she's laid her bag down like this and put her cookie on top.

[00:17:45] Okay. And then she sort of thought, that could fall off. So taking her hat off and put it on top because they had to go and do a job in before they had went out to recess. So she's put the hat on and I could see her worried about it. So I, she came back up the stairs and I said, as we're walking around, like something on your mind, and she, I'm worried about my cookie.

[00:18:05] I said, yes. What are you worried about? And she said, I'm worried it's not gonna be there when I get back. And I'm like, yeah, I can see that. What are you gonna do if it's not there? She said, I don't know. She genuinely didn't know. Now, those of you who've done my emotional regulation course are one of the strategies I teach is the plan B, what's your plan B?

[00:18:27] What's your plan C? One of my little boys said to me, lucky, there's 26 letters in the alphabet, Sue. So we need to teach children because of their one track mind. They often don't have a plan B. So I said to her, what could you do? And she genuinely had no idea. Now what I said to her is, well, could we ask the teacher for another one?

[00:18:50] And she, I don't know. She genuinely doesn't know. I said, well, lucky I saw the teacher had extra ones. So if you get back and it's not there, we can go together and ask the teacher for another one. That can be our plan. And the relief on her face, I cannot tell you, she skipped off to do her job. But can you imagine the anxiety building as she went to do that job?

[00:19:13] Then by the time she got back and the cookie was gone, she would've had a meltdown because her anxiety had built so much worried about that cookie that she was looking forward to. Interesting. At lunchtime, she went out to play. The kids had hoops. She didn't get a hoop. Next thing I hear this massive scream.

[00:19:30] Again, she didn't get a hoop. She didn't have a plan B. Plan B could be ask someone else to play, ask if you can have a turn after them. So I spoke to, talked to her beautiful teacher assistant. I said, you need to start talking about Plan Bs. You need to start talking what else she could do. And classic this little girl's a perfectionist and it's often my perfectionists who don't have a plan B.

[00:19:52] Anyway, back to our list of things, so that inflexible thinking and social skills, you need to be flexible. Things change all the time, so hence number three. Many of my children are resistant to new activities. They like routines and repetitions, but games always change. Who wins? Who loses games change when you go out to the playground?

[00:20:13] Who's playing the game? I find with older boys in handball, it depends who's playing what the rules are. So please understand that we need to actually accept that for many of our children. We need to teach that flexibility because of that love of routine and repetition. Number four is really important.

[00:20:30] Temple Grandin and who we're gonna hear from later who has autism. Temple talks about she and I did a course with Temple. We've created this fabulous course. If you haven't done it, put it on your must-do list. I think it's my best course if you ask me, because you've got the lived experience then the personal teaching experience put together.

[00:20:49] Temple said she believes her social skills, challenges are sensory. It's the noise. It's when she goes to a restaurant, all the noise in the restaurant when she's in a busy playground as a child. It's all the noise in the playground. So for some of your children, you have to understand it's the sensory, the open plan classroom when they're working in groups, maybe it's all the noise of the other children that they struggle.

[00:21:12] Because remember, if we look at the next one, often it's the auditory processing. There's a difference between hearing and understanding. A hearing test just goes beep. It doesn't test if you understood. So if I look back at that cookie experience, I think that little girl heard, put the cookie on the bag, not in the bag.

[00:21:32] Can you hear on and in can sound very similar in a busy classroom, but some of my children are selective mute. And imagine if you are selective mute. It's very hard to make connection with your peers. Some of my children are selective mute because of their social anxiety, so we do need to work on that.

[00:21:49] Some of my children talk very loud, particularly my ADHD kids. Yes, they often have trouble with volume control, and we're gonna talk about that in the lesson or module two, and we must understand children with neurodiversity often play and engage differently. They follow a different pattern, and we are gonna do a deep dive into that in this module two, looking at the stages of play.

[00:22:12] So the one thing I wish I'd learned about years ago is a thing called executive functioning. I never learned about this at uni. It wasn't actually until I did my doctorate that I learned about it. So, I know some of you might know about it, but if you don't, please have a look. In the free webinar handout, there's some tip sheets on executive functioning.

[00:22:32] Now, let's just take group work. A child is going to work with a group of children. When they get back to the group, they need working memory. They remember,



need to remember what they're doing. They need emotional control. What if they don't get the first turn? What if they don't get the job they want? What if they don't get to do the activity they wanted?

[00:22:51] So they need to be able to have emotional control. And part of emotional control is flexibility to actually have flexible thinking that I didn't get what I wanted, so I need to do something else. And then self-monitoring, knowing when to talk, when not to talk. How much time have I taken up in the group?

[00:23:10] Should, is it my turn? Yes. And then impulse control. Not calling out your words, bumping into other people. And of course then getting going, the task initiation, actually getting going in the task. So, Executive functioning impacts on all of these things. I'm gonna pop on a video now, which is my favorite explanation of executive functioning.

[00:23:33] It shows young children, but it doesn't matter what age group you are working with. This video is perfect to explain executive functioning. I was trying to find one, a different one for this course, but I wasn't able to find one. So if you've seen it before, I've seen it hundreds of times. I hardly recommend you watch it, but thinking about.

[00:23:51] Social skills. In this situation,

[00:24:00] science tells us that brains minds are built, not born. And at the center of this dynamic architecture are a set of skills called executive function and self-regulation. Children's self-regulation and executive function are key ingredients in their lifetime performance. It's not just about learning language or learning numbers or learning colors.

[00:24:33] We have to be able to work effectively with others, with distractions, with multiple demands. These actually are skills that contribute to the productivity of the American workforce. Look at your shapes. What should you have done next? Educators, I think are looking for just this sort of thing. And when we describe what we mean by executive function, they say, yes, that's it.

[00:24:59] That's exactly, you know, the problem. These kids, they can tell me these rules, but they can't actually use them. What's this? A toolbox, a tool.

[00:25:11] What is executive function

[00:25:16] goggles? Probably the best way to think about it is sort of like an air traffic control system in the brain. Just like an air traffic control system has to manage lots of airplanes going on, lots of runways and really exquisite timing and so on. Child has to manage a lot of information and avoid distractions.

[00:25:40] We really think of it as involving working memory and inhibitory control and mental flexibility. Take a situation where a child is having to take turns. So first of all, the

child has to have inhibitory control. The child has to be able to stop whatever he or she's doing and let the other child take a turn.

[00:26:05] Thank you. But when it's your turn, again, you also have to remember what it is you're supposed to be doing.

[00:26:15] So that pulls on working memory. If the children who are taking the turns after you do something unpredictable. You have to be able to adjust what you're gonna do next, and that requires mental flexibility. Children who are struggling with these capacities often look like children who just aren't paying attention, or children who are deliberately not controlling themselves.

[00:26:45] Oh, nice job. If you don't have self-regulation, you act out and the teacher puts you in time out, and so then you miss part of the learning that's going on. And then you are more upset cuz you're behind and so you act out and so you get this downward spiral. How does executive function develop plus seven, seven and plus four in little children and even, you know, in the infant and toddler years, you begin to see the roots of executive functioning skills.

[00:27:18] What's going on in our brains is unbelievably intricate and complicated. The prefrontal cortex or the front third of the brain is important for executive function, but it's more than just prefrontal cortex. This region doesn't act alone. It's involved in controlling your behavior through its interactions with all other parts of the brain.

[00:27:44] The brain goes from a situation where you've got nearest neurons communicating very strongly with each other and ignoring the rest of the brain to these widespread networks that are connecting these different areas. Executive function changes over the life course. It improves radically over the first few years.

[00:28:09] It continues to improve throughout adolescence. It's not until early adulthood that you have the adult type networks that are very strongly activated, that connect different brain regions together. Let's take notes. Also, we believe that executive functions can be trained. It's just like going to the gym.

[00:28:28] So the more you practice in these areas, the stronger the capacity is likely to become because you're hoping to strengthen those neural connections. I hope you found that interesting. I think the most important part of that video is actually that it's the air traffic control and it's a muscle that we can work on.

[00:28:48] So when we are teaching social skills, we need to understand that executive functioning, but we also need to remember that it needs to be practiced. So every time you take a child out or they're in trouble, they've got less practicing of those skills. So I really believe we need to think about that executive functioning and how it impacts on our children's learning.

[00:29:10] So I'd love you to stop and pause and think about it as far as all of these areas. For the child, you know? But also remember the sensory processing that's added

over the top of that. That for many of our students. I want you to think about your classroom. Is it an open plan classroom? Have you found that child works better off to the side?

[00:29:30] So I'd encourage you to stop and pause the video and just have a little think about executive functioning for the children, you know, If you haven't downloaded the e-book, there's some tips about how to build executive functioning, the tools that we can put in place. So take a moment to do that. If not, if you feel like, no, I'm all over executive functioning, then let's just keep going up to you.

[00:29:55] So once we've actually thought about, okay, what is the child's challenges as far as they're learning differently, we need to think out, well, how are we gonna teach these skills? Sue, you've spent half an hour talking about all the challenges. Let's get on, what are we gonna do? So I believe there's four ways of teaching and it's really important.

[00:30:12] We use all of those and I want you to incorporate them every day in your family or home or classroom or learning support, actually thinking about that. So I'd love you to write down a skill that you would like to teach the child. Is it losing, winning and losing good sportsmanship? Is it saying hello, greeting someone else, sharing a toy or an activity what to do if they don't have someone to play with?

[00:30:38] Having a conversation and staying on topic. Keeping and making friends. What is your goal? So I know some of you might have a few children, so why don't you pause and think what is the goal? Because then I'm gonna talk you through one and then you are gonna have a chance to create your own program for that child.

[00:30:56] So feel free to pause. If not, keep going along and I'll share with you how I do it. So the first thing I do is actually called direct teaching, where I'm actually gonna take a highly structured approach. And teach the skill very specifically. So that might be a social script about losing. We might practice losing with an adult at first because we would need them to actually practice those skills or with a supportive peer.

[00:31:24] But I wouldn't just suddenly start playing a whole lot of games. So if we're gonna do direct teaching, that's what we do. Engineered is where we deliberately set up each situation, so we might play games where there's winning and losing. So I'm working on winning and losing. That's the goal I chose if I wasn't clear.

[00:31:41] So I like to do quick winning and losing games like noughts and crosses. That's really quick. Or scissors, paper, rock. Yeah, that's a quick game we can do. Or quick little races. Yes. Now for a child it might be winning or losing, but for some of my children it shows up as wanting to be first. So you might do lots of activities.

[00:31:57] Yes. That we actually practice. That. Practice what to say. What to do. Yes. And then incidental. When situations come up and there's gonna be winning and losing, I might remind them, remember we're going over to phys ed, but it's gonna be some

games. There's gonna be some winning and losing. We're doing board games after lunch today, or we're going out in the playground.

[00:32:18] And remind them in those situations. And the big one in incidental is catching them doing the right thing. And then there'll be activity based, which is where I use everyday activities that are already in the classroom. It might be group work where they don't get a turn. Again, that's a winning and losing situation when you don't get a turn.

[00:32:37] It might be in the playground, it might be reading books like I just quickly looked what books. We could have, you know, sometimes you win, sometimes you learn lose or if you are talking about having friends, how to be a friend, you know, there's heaps of books out there. And if you ask your librarian, they always love it when I ask for a specific topic, but have a look at maybe, do you have social emotional learning books in your reading corner?

[00:33:00] Have you got books that children can take home that help them understand social emotional? So for me, it's really about choosing that skill. Thinking, how am I gonna directly teach it? How am I engineering it? Incidental, or what are the activities? So if you chose a skill, I would love you now to pause

the video and think about your student and your goal, and then come back and join us for the next part. Okay, so welcome back. I really hope you have paused and had a little think. Now I'm gonna get Dean Beadle. And Dean Beadle I have had out to Australia many times. He is an amazing young man who, I suppose, I love the word neurodiversity, particularly for someone like Dean.

[00:34:09] He has OCD, ADHD, ASD. He, I suspect today would get labeled ODD. Very sadly, his actual label as a child was a childhood monster. Can you believe that is actually on a form that breaks my heart because Dean is one of my dear friends and amazing. Now, Dean and I created a course which I actually made for teacher assistants, but I'm looking at changing it for teachers this year, so keep an eye out.

[00:34:36] But one of the things Dean talks about in that course, is myths and misconceptions. So I'm gonna put Dean on now to share with you about that and he's gonna share some other information later about his social emotional needs. But I'd love you to watch this video and then pause after and have a think about how this applies to the children, you know, or maybe your own personal myths and misconceptions.

[00:35:02] The this on the screen. Is I have put a facial expression next to each myth and misconception to give you an idea of what I might think of them. So here's the first one. Autistic people lack social skills, absolute rubbish. Autistic people have been saying this for decades that we don't lack social skills, but yet the research still seems to keep saying this.

[00:35:28] Until 2019, and this was a real life-changing moment as far as I was concerned. It's nice to have it written in academic literature in 2019, the Department of

Autism Research and Technology, which are affiliated to Edinburgh University, did some research looking at autistic social skills.

[00:35:46] And what they did is they had a group of autistic people. And a group of non-autistic people, and they watched them interact within their own groups and then they watched them interact with each other. And the outcome of the research was that the information sharing amongst the non-autistic group was excellent, and the information sharing amongst the autistic group was excellent.

[00:36:09] Where the problem happened is where the two groups tried to interact, and so the outcome of that research was that autistic people don't lack social skills. They just have a unique set of social skills, different social skills. And so all of this time that we've been enforcing autistic folk to learn social skills, what we've been doing is completely undervaluing the social skills they already had.

[00:36:34] What we've been doing is dismissing the social skills they already had. I know very many autistic adults, for example, who will tell me that they wouldn't dream of socializing in an autistic a non-autistic space. But the, with other autistic people that the social pressures are different. Why is that the case?

[00:36:51] Because they're conversing with people that understand them. You know, I spent my career working with, how can I put this delicately, ladies of a certain vintage. So there'll be ladies if life was a year, they'd be in November or tummy years in the UK. And so, I often work with these ladies who will come up to me and they'll say, Dean, I've been married to an autistic man for 30 years.

[00:37:15] It's always 30 years. One imagines. They're all married to the same one Dean. And I've been married to an autistic man for 30 years and I love him. They always need to point that out, which I always find a bit suspect. And then they say to me, but oh my goodness, Dean, it's not been easy, and they don't look like it.

[00:37:33] When I look back at them and say, and you think it's been a walk in the park for him? Love. Because if you are struggling with him, he's struggling with you. It's both ways. It's just two different ways of processing, two different sets of social skills and abilities trying to make sense of each other. And yet, for too long, the blame for that has been put on autistic people.

[00:37:54] And we're gonna look later on at effective ways of teaching and supporting social knowledge as opposed to social skills, myth and misconception Number two. Autistic people don't want friends. Again, inaccurate. I would say it's about the definition of friends and the way in which we access friendship.

[00:38:17] That may differ, but that need for human connection is always there. I often meet parents that will say to me, my child doesn't leave the house. Okay, so they never leave the house ever? Well, no. They go to school five days a week and on Saturdays we go to the supermarket. But apart from that, they won't go out.

[00:38:34] And I say to them, well, first of all, if you are navigating a social world that is designed very well for non-autistic people, but not very well for the way that autistic people interact, it stands to reason that's gonna take a lot of energy. It's like continuously navigating a world that's not designed for you.

[00:38:50] Is it any wonder that after those six days of going out into the outside world, social unpredictability, having to really process everything that's happening around you, sensory challenges, anxiety, all of that, is it any wonder that so many of our youngsters just want to be left alone in a room with a computer of an evening?

[00:39:09] And I often say to their parents, what do you think they're doing on there? And they say to me, well, they're always playing computer games with their friend around the corner. Well, that's social, that's friendship. Just because it's through a screen. And again, 2020 is taught us all this, hasn't it? Cause most of our friendships and relationships have been lived through a screen this year.

[00:39:28] Just because it's through a screen doesn't make it any less valuable. I know some autistic adults who have incredibly intense, loving committed and loyal friendships with people they've never been in the same room as. They connect through the internet. They connect through Messenger because it's less socially overwhelming, because it's less intimidating because it's in their safe space.

[00:39:50] So whilst the way we access friendships may differ to some. That isn't to say that need for connection isn't there, you know, it's an easy stereotype to fall into to say that all autistic people are antisocial. That's not the case. We might find social tiring. We might find it overwhelming. That doesn't mean we don't want connections with people.

[00:40:11] What can often happen is that in earlier life, and this is certainly true in my life and in the lives of many autistic people I know in early lives, we tried to connect and were rejected. We're treated badly, we're scorned rebuffed by the way that we try to interact. Is it any wonder that makes the person say, actually, I'm gonna opt out of this one's not for me.

[00:40:33] I'm not gonna put myself through that again. So yes, there are lots of issues around autistic folk withdrawing from too much face-to-face social because of the way that we often are treated and the way that people often react to us negatively. And that's something we need to work hard to change.

[00:40:49] But that doesn't mean that need for connection isn't there. It's about valuing the different ways in which autistic folk connect with their peers. But that connection is vital. I have a friend who is one of the most important people in the whole world to me. We are probably in the same room as each other five times a year.

[00:41:07] That's probably my limit. I had a real issue when my peer group from school went to university. I thought, great. They're away for three months chunks of the year. So no one expected social expectations. I will see them during the half terms and holidays

and then they came back from uni and then it was just birthdays and Christmas and I couldn't manage that cause they were the same dates every year.

[00:41:28] And then they started getting married. And then they started having children and their children now have birthdays and suddenly about six days a year for their birthdays, I'd see them and now growing into 12 times a year. And I have seriously thought, shall I engineer a bit of a fallout with them or just so I can get some of those days back?

[00:41:44] Because 12 days a year is a lot for me. That isn't to say that I don't value the connection. It isn't to say I don't value the friendship. I stay in touch with my closest friends through WhatsApp, through Messenger through email. That connection is always there and I stay in touch with folk. It matters to me, but that doesn't necessarily mean I need them to be in the same room as me.

[00:42:06] Let's think about that in a school's context. How much option is there to socialize other than in the same room as everybody? How much of a school day involves there being people everywhere? I hope you found that interesting. I would love you to pause the video and write down your thoughts before I share mine.

[00:42:28] If you don't know Dean, I highly recommend you follow him on Facebook. He shares invaluable insights and information on his Facebook page just as Dean Beadle speaker. So pause the video and write down any thoughts that you have about that.

[00:42:48] Well, welcome back. I really hope you pause the video for me. I love the way Dean shared that research about the interaction between neurotypical and Neurodiverse children. When I worked at a school for children with autism, that was very clear that when we had all autistic children in the playground.

[00:43:07] They played differently, but they all played together and I love that. I love that. The way they enjoyed similar sensory experiences together. So we have to understand that. I love the ba. He's like, it's not a blank canvas. They have skills. They're just different. They want connection. The social exhaustion of school.

[00:43:27] And what is the definition of friendship? So I would ask that you think about each individual child and what their needs are, and parents, this is where I need you to be a strong advocate for your child. What do you think your child wants in our social and friendships? Are they asking for friendships?

[00:43:45] Are they online? How are they making those friendships? But I'd love you to just think about the myth and misconceptions that Dean has shared with us, because as we are going on to think about developing social emotional skills, we need to be informed by lived experience.

[00:44:03] We're going to hear more from Dean in the next lesson and other lived experiences too. I just wanna pull everything together from this lesson. So first we need

to for teachers understand that we have a, we need to include social, emotional in our curriculum, but I'm not asking you to do a big lesson plan every week.

[00:44:24] We haven't got time for that. I just want you to find those different ways of learning throughout your day. Those incidental when children are lining up, maybe this child's, you know, getting upset cuz people are pushing in and that's an opportunity to talk about. Well sometimes friends save a spot for each other, you know, to talk about these things.

[00:44:42] The diverse learning styles that one track mind, the literalists, how social skills are, you need to be flexible and that can be hard for our students, the different ways of speaking of teaching and the lived experience. So I hope we can pull all of that together as our foundation for thinking about social skills in the next two lessons or modules.

[00:45:02] So I'd love you to actually stop, think what is the issue for the children you know, what's happening in your classroom? Have you got a year group that are really cohesive and very accepting of each other, or are they always actually having little tiffs, not just the neuro diverse children, the neurotypical two.

[00:45:20] So what are the issues? Does this child want friends? How's their communication? Like, really think about what are the issues for individual children. Then once you have a think, I want you to think, what can we do? What are our goals? Before we start the next two modules, I want you to come at it with, okay, what are the issues I'm solving?

[00:45:41] Is this child coming in with no one to play with? When we do group work, are they always left to last? I want you to think about what are the challenges this a child who doesn't like winning and losing? What were the things you wrote down? And then I really want to like lay that out so that you get the most value out of the next two modules when I'm talking about different ways of teaching social emotional skills.

[00:46:05] So the next step really is to make that plan. And I've got a proforma for you in the handout or in the bonuses that I'd recommend you use to lay that plan out. And parents, I would love you to do that too. Teacher assistants, often you are the ones who are asked to do this, so maybe you wanna have, think about.

[00:46:24] What are our goals? What are we gonna do? And I like to just keep it very simple. I don't want a big complex plan, just actually I'm pretty sure I'll put it as a Word document so you can type if you're a typer, but I want you to really take a moment to think, what are our goals? Where are we going next with this child?

[00:46:40] Rather than just listening to this as a, like a course, I actually want it to be practical, which is why I call myself an academic. Then I'd love you just to stop and reflect and write down three ideas or insights that you have learned in this last module. Just, okay, what are three things? Was it from Dean?



[00:46:59] Was it the executive functioning? We've actually covered a lot of things. Was it? Oh gosh. Post-school. Of course, children need social connection and this child's sitting on their own in the classroom. I actually need to work on that. Or maybe this child has is socially exhausted, what are we gonna do? So have a think and then I would love you to actually go back and talk to your colleagues.

[00:47:23] Have a think about what's happening socially in your school or playground. Actually take what you've learned, like go back and say to someone, Hey, I was doing the Sue Larkey course and they were, she was talking about executive functioning. And I realized that actually that child might have a problem with impulse control or flexible thinking. That one track mind. So I hope you've got some strategies from this sort of hour of power, as I like to call it and that you are ready to launch into the next session. But maybe take a gap and actually go and talk to other people and have a think what's next for you and the children, you know?

Lesson 2 - social skills course

[00:00:00] I hope you've had a chance to go and look at students engagement and reflect on the things we learned in the last module or lesson. Now we're gonna do a deep dive into actual how to put these things in place. The first thing we're gonna look at is, Communication and conversations, but we are in this, we're actually looking at that body language, tone of voice, eye contact, which is controversial.

[00:00:23] Don't worry, we'll come to that. And personal space, if you think of it, every conversation you are constantly thinking about how loud am I being? Am I looking at the person? How's my personal space? And many of our children, no matter what age, still need help with this. My guess is, you know, different people who engage and think differently to you.

[00:00:43] And you have to accommodate them. So in this module, we're actually going to be looking at those key skills. No matter what age you're working with, you still might need to be working on the child's personal space, but I want you to overlay that with that executive functioning. Because remember in a conversation, are your words bumping into other people?

[00:01:02] Are you maybe not getting to say something you wanted to say? How's your impulse control? So remember the things we learned in the last module. Now, I hope you really enjoyed Dean in the last module, cuz we are gonna have some more of Dean too in this module. But I want to, just to give you a summary of how I see social emotional learning or social skills.

[00:01:23] There's the interaction with other people, your body language, tone of voice. Greetings, comment. Yes. But then there's friendship. There's two levels to social skills. There's just our everyday interactions that require social skills. And then there's another level of friendship or group work or working in a collaborative classroom.

[00:01:40] I mean, I have children who are in a collaborative classroom, but mightn't have friends. So we're gonna talk about both of those things. And obviously whether it's

in a friend or interaction with other people, you need to manage your emotion. Which is that emotional regulation course I talked to you about.

[00:01:55] So doesn't matter what situation, all of these things interact and that's why in the CASEL framework we talk about all of these things together. So the first thing I wanted to do is to get, actually think about the issue. What is the issue? Who has the issue? And I'm gonna hand over to Dean Beadle to share a little bit of his social emotional learning and some insights.

[00:02:18] This is just like a three minute video by Dean. But I think it's very helpful to understand, and again, I'll get you to stop and pause the video after this to think about what Dean has taught us from his personal experience. Wanted to move on to social emotional needs. We talked a little bit earlier about myths and misconceptions around social and emotional needs.

[00:02:43] I want you to look at practical ways to support it now. I think there is a world of difference between teaching social skill and social knowledge. So historically we've given autistic children a script. We've given them a script of what to say in certain situations that could be useful. However, what's problematic with that is that if you give a child a script, you've gotta be sure the rest of the world are gonna get their lines right.

[00:03:14] If we are teaching children to expect a cue, how can we ensure they're gonna get that exact cue? Hand me the ball please, Jack and ball. Now, same meaning, different sentence. If we teach Jack to explicitly listen out for, hand me the ball, please Jack, and nobody says it, is it any wonder that Jack can't respond to that?

[00:03:37] And there's the danger, and that's the difference for me between teaching social skill. And moving across to teaching social knowledge instead of what are they saying, let's teach. Why are they saying it? Why is she asking me for the ball? We've spent so long teaching the what of social, it's my view that we need to move across to teaching and why are they saying it? Why are they asking me for that? And it's about being honest in the teaching, you know, very often If it doesn't make logical sense, our autistic answers will struggle to adhere to it. Certainly true of me. We have to be honest when we teach this stuff because most social rules that the majority in the world live by don't make a great deal of sense.

[00:04:19] So we're honest. We say this social rule is ridiculous. There isn't. It's, it makes no sense at all. However, 99% of people do it. This is why they do it. This is why it's beneficial to you. Be honest. Teach the why and also the question we must always ask ourselves, how can I make this real? Often we teach this stuff across a classroom table and expect our children to be able to replicate it in other environments or the playground's.

[00:04:50] Nothing like the classroom. So our child may get very good at learning it in that context, but may not be able to transfer the skill, make it real, teach things about the playground. In the playground, by all means. You can have a conversation to begin

with in class, but practice it in the real environment so a child can attach what they've learned in the environment they're expected to do it in.

[00:05:12] And be mindful that we are teaching this knowledge of the way the rest of the world does stuff that non-autistic world does stuff. We are doing that so the child isn't overwhelmed and confused. We're not doing that to make them blend in. We're not doing that to make them appear less autistic, heaven forbid.

[00:05:30] What we are doing is we're empowering them to say this is the nonsense that everybody else does. It's helping them to make sense of the environment. It's teaching the knowledge. But I would also say that it's just as important to teach non-autistic young people about the way that autistic people communicate and socialize.

[00:05:48] It's about both ways. I hope you enjoyed that. I do love Dean and I love his sense of humor, and I should have mentioned that after the last video, Dean has a fabulous sense of humor and I think that's one of the things we don't talk about enough. All my children have an amazing sense of humor.

[00:06:07] I've worked with children with limited communication and they are some of the funniest children I know. So I hope that you have the same sense of humor as Dean and myself and enjoyed that, but some amazing tips and information there. I've just realized I will put in your handout, the actual slide. It was a bit hard to read, so hopefully I've remembered to put that in if I haven't send me an email.

[00:06:29] So I'd love you to stop and pause and record your thoughts because there, even though that was a three minute video, there was a lot of great information. So welcome back. I love the way Dean talks about social skills versus social knowledge. I think I really wanted to just call this social knowledge, but I thought the whole course, but I thought most people wouldn't know what I was talking about.

[00:06:52] So that's, I think now you and I can talk the same language of social knowledge. I like the way he talks about we need to teach the why, and that is why. When we talk about social scripts are about teaching children the why. Why do I have to? Why do other people want that? Also, they're not logical.

[00:07:11] Social, social situations are not logical and that we are not trying to get children, be less autistic and blend in. We are trying to make them help make sense of the environment. And most importantly, it's two ways. That's why I'm saying do these activities with the whole class. Because what my doctorate research said is we don't give the other children the credit.

[00:07:32] They deserve that. They are very supportive if we give them the skills and knowledge. So when we are teaching children about tone of voice, we might actually, or not being so loud, actually getting the other children on side instead of them, the child saying sure, shut up. Maybe telling the children use a smaller voice, you know, actually using the right language, because I love it when people say, use an inside voice. So many of my children don't know what is an inside and outside voice. That's a

neurotypical mind assuming children know what we mean. Remember if you're literal while I'm inside and I'm using my voice, isn't that an inside voice?

[00:08:09] Have a think about that over a cup of coffee. So I hope that you found Dean invaluable. I find Dean invaluable. I, every time I hear him speak, I learn something. And again, while I encourage you to follow his Facebook, cuz he shares lots of fabulous ideas. Now, the first thing I wanna talk about is play.

[00:08:27] Because this is where children learn their social skills, that actually social starts with play. So we need to just take a moment and reflect that. Most preschools now use a play-based curriculum, but when I go into the preschool, many of our children aren't playing in the same way. Other children make sense of the world through their interaction and play. And they learn that executive function, those muscles through play, don't they? They learn motor skills. They learned communication and social, but also play is fun. But for many neurotypical children, they play differently to Neurodiverse children. So the first thing I really want you to do, and I'd really love you to pause the video this time.

[00:09:12] And take a minute to imagine if you're with a 12 year old, I want to imagine that child back when they were young and they were part of a preschool or daycare or, and there was a home corner like this one set up. And I want you to think, what would the neurodiverse child be doing in that home corner, and what would the neurotypical child be doing in that home corner?

[00:09:35] I want you to like look specifically what's there and have a think what this child would be doing. So pause the video for a minute, write down your thoughts, because I think this is gonna be very powerful in our understanding what to do next. Next.

[00:09:56] Well, welcome back. I hope you wrote down some things and didn't just stay and listen to me do a big awkward pause. Sorry. I do think I'm funny sometimes. I hope you do too. So here's what we know in the early stages of play, a child would just be in there. They're unoccupied play. They're just lying.

[00:10:14] Remember a little baby. Then in the next stage of play, they move to what's called solitary. So zero to two where the child's playing on their own. I want you to look on your page. Was your child more at that level that they probably would've been playing on their own in their home corner? Are they still like that?

[00:10:32] Now that you've got a child who prefers to be on their own? Even though they're 10, they're solitary, they're still doing their own thing. But looking back at that home corner, often children with autism spectrum are actually doing something different there. So one of my little boys would've been lining everything up.

[00:10:51] He would've got everything and lined it all up. I love that he did that. Yes. But the other children didn't understand it. And what I find is the other children leave this

child alone. So if the child has been left alone in that home corner, how can they move to the next stage of onlooker or spectator?

[00:11:12] Often the child is just left in the sandpit, left doing their own thing in the preschool, so therefore they can't move to parallel play. Because by parallel play, I need to look what you are doing and adjust what I'm doing. This is what a conversation is in the future. You say something, I adjust what I'm saying to link with you.

[00:11:30] Many of my children are back at that solitary play. They're still at the solitary play because this is, that levels of play is based on neurotypical children. And many of my children don't move through those stages of play. And in fact, when I work in the early years, we actually sometimes need to teach children to play.

[00:11:50] We need to teach 'em that turn, taking and sharing to look what other children are doing and adjust what they're doing. By three to four years actually, children are associative play where they're engaging, taking turns. Yes. And by age four they're at collaborative play. Hence we can have a collaborative classroom when they start school.

[00:12:11] Hopefully they are used to sharing, turn taking, working at a desk. But imagine we're asking a child who's gone from solitary play being on their own in that home corner to suddenly sitting at a desk with other children. Can you understand that? In parallel play, it's normally only two children. By collaborative, it can be a group of children.

[00:12:31] So it's very important we understand that we can't ask this child go from solitary to collaborative. We actually need to help them work through this. And remember, the executive functions a muscle. It has to be practiced. You have to practice that inhibition, control. Think back to that video. That's why I'm saying that video is so important.

[00:12:50] So, what, not only do we have those stages of play where the child plays this differently, there is actually some significant barriers to the child working through those stages of play. And that is often, which I'm touched on in the last video, sensory often my children, the other children making noises where their truck, this child's like, no, you know, or the lots of noise.

[00:13:17] That name for sameness. This child wants people to play the same way with the train track, the need for routines or their obsessional interest. If you have a child who's obsessed with Thomas, he's not gonna wanna share his Thomas or a girl who's obsessed with my little ponies that, or reading. They won't wanna share that.

[00:13:35] That's often still solitary or isolated. And if a child has limited language development, which remember I mentioned in the last module. That can make it very challenging cuz the other children mightn't understand them. And guess what? The less social interaction, the less that muscle. But again, we need to think about what Dean said and appreciate this child's wanting to socialize.

[00:14:01] What does this child want? So look at this list. Think about those stages of play. Where's the child at? You know, or the children, you know, have they got an obsessional interest? Do they have a need for sameness? Is it the sensory like Temple Grandin that I mentioned in the last module? So I'd love you to have a little think about that.

[00:14:21] And this module is a lot of stopping and thinking because we can't actually just dive in and write a program for a child, but at actually understanding their different ways of thinking, but also where they're at. I want you to think where this child's at. You know, the school I mentioned that I was in at before Easter one of my boys in year five likes to sit on his own and do his work.

[00:14:45] Now we need to acknowledge that he actually has friends in the playground, but when he is doing his work, the sensory and his executive functioning, he really struggles. So we need to, we can't suddenly put him in a group with four other 10 year olds. We need to think how we are going to do that. And remember what Dean said about the research that actually if we put a whole lot of children who are neurodiverse together, they often engage in a similar way.

[00:15:14] And I have seen that, as I mentioned when I worked at the autism school. But I thought this was really important. And again, I like to use the lived experience. This is about autistic play. This is from the Little Black Duck who I like on Facebook and Instagram. How children learn about themselves, their environment, and the people in it.

[00:15:36] It is vital in developing cognitive, physical, and social awareness as well as concepts of identity and developing relationships. There is a misconception that autistic children do not play or that they do not play properly. The truth is autistic children play and explore their environment in different ways to the dominant neurotype.

[00:16:02] Now, I think that is what I've been trying to say, but summarized much better. Also, this next slide talks about, oh, the next visual. Talks about that many of my children are sensory seekers and when I worked in the autism school, we definitely saw this. We saw children who like to play with the sand, or I had a little girl love to play with leaves.

[00:16:20] So sometimes our children are discovering about their environment through sensory, but I thought this one was really important. Autistic play exploring the sensory world through playing with toys. Everything can become a toy when we're exploring with a sensory perspective, using toys to provide their own sensory experience, such as spinning a coin, watching the light, reflective bubbles, the moving of parts in a washing machine, the sound of a marble running through a PVC pipe.

[00:16:52] Toys can be used to create order, as we can see with those toys. The toy cars repetition and routine. Immense enjoyment can be found in lining up, arranging and

sorting category. So I actually, Dean Beadle calls it autistic joy. We must allow children their time to have that autistic joy. When I worked in the autism school, we were like classrooms for learning.

[00:17:17] The breaks are for them to go and do what brings them joy, whether it's sensory. I had children love riding bikes. I had children like climbing up high. I had children like sorting the TA bark. I had children with the leaves lining things up. One of my little boys would line the bikes up. He didn't ride them.

[00:17:34] But please un we must come from respecting people with autism or autistic people's preferences. But we also must understand that to work in a classroom or collaborative environment or future job, we also need to learn some, so social emotional skills. So I'd love you to think about what is the issue?

[00:17:53] Can you understand how complex it is? The adding the autistic, understanding our and our own understanding and being sensitive to accommodate both of those. So now I want you to think about your environment, whether it's your collaborative classroom, are you an open plan? How have you got your table set?

[00:18:15] Table set up? And when I talk to parents, what I find is most parents send their children to their local school because they want them to make friendships and connection or their siblings are there, they want them to be part of your community. So I think I would, parents and teachers, we need to talk about what is your aim?

[00:18:35] Are you happy your child just goes out in the break and does sensory and plays their way? Or would you like your child to make connections? So I want you to actually come up with what is the goal here? What do we want for this child? Because remember the reason I wrote this course is that mom saying, my child's lonely and isolated, and some children are happy, some are not.

[00:18:56] And we must acknowledge that. So what are we gonna do differently? We need to think about the current situation and think what we are going to do. So we need to address the individual learning styles. We need to create opportunities. And again, I think it has to be home. In school, when I worked in the autism school and we were teaching children to play we actually made little photo schedules to show the children how to play.

[00:19:22] But part of the reason we were doing that play. But part of the reason we were doing that play is because parents said to us they wanted their siblings to play together. They wanted their children to actually do things together. So we were taking the parents' desire and often the child's desire. We saw children going over, grabbing things off their siblings, wanting interaction, especially my children with limited communication.

[00:19:43] So we wanted to actually help them engage. So we use visual schedules cuz our routine repetition, the child could visually follow it. And the difference was amazing. I mean, parents are like, oh my goodness, they're taking turns. They're playing, they're both happy. And we're hearing giggling. Or it might have been blowing bubbles.

[00:20:00] A sensory, if a child was sensory, if we had a child who loved Play-Doh we came from their interests. So the first thing we need to think about is interacting with other people. And remember, verbal communication is only part of it. How else do we communicate? And of course, if you saw the name of this module, you already know that we use a whole lot of things to communicate.

[00:20:22] It's not just our words that any of you who at uni did like people skills. Remember, it's much more than our, what we're saying, it's our tone of voice, it's our volume, it's our body language, it's our facial expression, it's our eye contact and our personal space. All of this is what impacts. So I would love you to.

[00:20:44] Pause the video. As I said, there's a bit of that during this one. And write down where is this is a child who sits on other people. You know, some of my children have at the mat, have no personal space. Are they a child that shows no facial expression? I love Dean Beadle, many years ago when he was out in Australia, told this story that when he was a journalist, which was his, what he studied, he was doing a fitness program and the camera person came to take photos of him for the article in the paper.

[00:21:13] And Dean, this is back when we didn't take selfies, so this generation of children probably better, but Dean thought he was doing like an exhausted and hollowed different facial expressions and like smiling, enjoying, and then when he saw the photos, same face in every photo, he had no idea that he wasn't, he felt like every muscle in his face was smiling or none of that.

[00:21:36] None of that. So he didn't have that. And I had this when I worked in the autism school. Some of my children didn't look at themselves in the mirror. Notice a lot of children are constantly looking at themselves in the mirror when they're little, looking at those facial expressions. And now with cameras, oh my goodness, what a crack up that on our phones.

[00:21:53] So please be aware, some of my children have, you know, I love it when teachers go, they didn't look sorry. Does this child what? Know what looks sorry, looks like probably not. You might need to teach that. So again, remember in the last module we looked at the AARA framework. I'd love you to look at which skills does this child need, but I believe these go across all stages of our curriculum.

[00:22:17] So let's first start with volume control. So, this is from my developing social skills book. In fact, I might just grab it cuz I'm gonna refer to it a little bit if you don't know it. It looks like this. A lot of your schools have it. Sorry cuz I'm using a green screen. That might come up a little bit weird.

[00:22:33] But in this book, are lots of visuals there, lots of great ideas I'll be showing you in this session. And the next one. So, one of the Gavin and I wrote this book together, some children actually having something like this where you can, getting too loud. Just right. Much too loud. Yes. Others are too quiet.



[00:22:54] They're a mouse. Just right or too loud. You might, but one of the things we recommend is actually like a volume control. You could like just create a little volume control, like up and down like they're used to on their TV or computer. Or you might actually have a hand signal to go up and down, you know, have a think.

[00:23:13] It needs to be visual to support the child using the right volume. Body language is complex, isn't it? We have our social expression plus our body posture. One of the things I love to do is get the kids to all line up and you take a photo of them. Happy, sad, relaxed, angry. This generation love photos of themselves.

[00:23:37] By the way, again, this is from the developing social skills book. So I get all the kids to line up and I take photos of them. Don't cut pictures out of a magazine of a child they've never seen before, or Tom Cruise, actual people they know. Because remember what Dean said, it needs to be real. These are real people.

[00:23:55] So we're gonna take photos and then we're gonna make a poster of happy, sad, relaxed, angry. Yes. And then that might be facial expression. Then I want you to do the different body postures. You know, watch your sad look, watch your, and actually take a photo of the whole body and get children to understand what that looks like.

[00:24:16] Or one of the things I love to do is make a game, which comes from this board game. The socially speaking board game, if you have it in your school, go and get it. When the children land on one of the squares, they have to say, I have peas for tea. And when they say that I have peas for tea, they need to say it in a different voice.

[00:24:37] So, oh. In this case it could be body language and facial expression. So when children get up and leave their desk today and walking to the mat, I want them to walk past somebody and maybe. You can make up a different sentence, but let's just use, I have peas for tea and they need to say someone with a sad sound and voice.

[00:24:58] I have peas for tea, or I have peas for tea, or I have peas for tea. Yes. And they're going to say this and walk around saying it, and then we'll sit down on the mat. So it's a one minute activity. Or no talking. Let's just use body posture. I want you to walk in a grumpy way. I want you to walk in an excited way.

[00:25:18] I want you to work in a sad way getting children to move around doing that body language. So what? Remember, it's a muscle. We're gonna practice it. Many of my children just have happy or angry. So let's work on that as we are moving around the classroom. But also, why don't we brainstorm emotions, you know, actually talk to the whole class about these emotions and different body language.

[00:25:43] Some children have probably never thought about this. Not just neuro diverse children, neurotypical children too. As I say, I think it's fun to do with the whole class or maybe when you're walking from the line back into the room, you can do some of these. Everyone walk grumpy, everyone walk happy, you know, just find.

[00:25:59] One minute times to do this throughout your day. Then personal space, same thing that when we are doing personal space, we need to talk about the personal space. We need to explain it to children that, that invisible bubble. So often we assume the child knows. I remember years ago when I worked actually with adults with developmental disabilities that they, there's this program about standing an arm away and then my young adults would walk up and put their arm out.

[00:26:29] It's an invisible bubble, but you need to talk about it. So again, let's walk around the classroom. Getting up too close. Let's walk around the classroom standing away. You know, actually practice our personal space. But remember the space changes depending on what you are doing. Some children like to be up close, some like to be further away.

[00:26:50] When you are with your close friends, you might be closer than when some and an acquaintance. So talking about that. Practice standing at a distance. What's comfortable, what's uncomfortable? Get two children to just stand opposite each other and ask them to keep stepping into the level they're comfortable with.

[00:27:07] You know, just it's a one minute activity. What's your personal space as a class measure? Make it a math activity. What's people's different comfort with personal space? Is it different with the teacher? To a friend. Is it different to an acquaintance or, you know, let's just talk about it. Let's talk about it so we understand it.

[00:27:26] Make sure that the child understands that people do not measure this distance. It's like a, it's more a judgment and sometimes teachers will get a hoop, you know, and do it as a physical just to help them understand that. But really understand how far space can vary when you're in the car or on a bus.

[00:27:45] You might be squashed sitting on the floor lining up. So think about different environments around your school, how personal space can vary. So again, just a quick one minute activity you can do one day this week where we talk about personal space, but we're gonna practice it and remember it. The other thing you might wanna talk about is what to do if someone's too close.

[00:28:07] What to do if they're in too close. And this is one of the ones many of my children get frustrated with. He bumped into me, she bumped into me. So this is a social script from the developing social skills book. When children are walking around in the classroom or getting their bags, sometimes they bump into each other.

[00:28:26] Sometimes they may bump arms or step on someone's foot. Usually this is an accident. The children didn't mean to hurt each other. They were just too close. Sometimes the other children say, sorry, I didn't mean to bump you. If the bump, if you bump into a child, you need to say, sorry, I didn't mean to bump into you.

[00:28:48] When this happens to me, I need to remember it was just an accident. The other child didn't mean to hurt me. I need to take a deep breath and say, be careful. You

are bumping into me. Now remember, this is very different and Dean Beadle would say, you need to find out from your peers what they do. So, this week do a bumping activity.

[00:29:13] If you parent bumping into each other, people bump into each other all the time so we can get up and gently bump into people and practice saying sorry it was an accident and getting children to say that, but also maybe ask your class what language they use. Actually, what we call video modeling. Why not video the children doing it so the child with autism spectrum or neurodiversity can watch it back.

[00:29:38] This is particularly for my ADHD children. They tend to bump into people a lot and forget to say sorry, just that impulse control. They're often focused on something else. And a lot of my children don't like to say sorry, because it wasn't like a, they don't understand why. So remember Dean said you've gotta explain the why.

[00:29:59] And that's what the social script does. The social script helps children understand the why. If you didn't watch the free webinar before this course, I would recommend you go back to that cuz I talk more about writing social scripts and when we use them. So eye contact is the next part of body language now.

[00:30:17] Eye contact is very controversial. People with autism spectrum tell us eye contact is painful and we need to be aware that this actually is a cultural thing. There are some cultures that don't use eye contact. It's rude and inappropriate, but I would not teach eye contact. What I've learned over the years, if you teach eye contact, you'll get this weird staring you'll get all sorts of things.

[00:30:39] But what Gavin and I say in our early years book that actually we're not teaching children to stare at other people. What we are doing is teaching them to actually under, like, look in the direction of the person speaking. And some of my children stare. They don't know to look away and look back like

[00:30:58] This can be, again, as a class, let's talk about what eye contact means. It means very different things and many of my children forget to blink so they're staring like this. So again, videoing that can be really helpful. But I saw this when Lawson who, not when Lawson, sorry, Yenn Purkiss who is someone I've had on my podcast a few times and is an amazing advocate.

[00:31:20] She puts up fabulous memes. She calls them memes from her name Yenn. Make sure you follow Yenn. She's a great person to follow on Facebook too. If eye contact was essential for communication, then nobody would be able to use the telephone. How true is that? But this is important. We need to stop trying to force autistic people to make eye contact for autistic people, it is usually not part of our communication and is often painful and invasive.

[00:31:47] And that is the feedback we get from a lot of our young people. So depending on the child's neurodiversity might depend on the eye contact, but eye contact's very sensory, so, and quite overwhelming. There's so much going on. So please be aware of that. Now what I'm gonna do is hand over to Temple Grandin.

[00:32:07] Now Temple Grandin this is a movie about her life. It's the most fantastic movie. If you haven't seen it, make sure you see it hasn't been on a lot of the free to air, but it was award-winning. Claire Danes does an amazing job. Temple Grandin was deeply involved in the process. Temple is considered one of the top hundred people in the world by Time Magazine, not for her autism, for her designer cattle autos.

[00:32:33] And in this little excerpt from the movie, you're gonna see a social situation and her mom explaining things to her, and I really think this is very powerful. Again, after you've watched it, I'll get you to pause the video and record your thoughts.

[00:32:52] Hello? Hi, Temple. Well, Master of Science and Animal Science. Fantastic. I'll bet you're glad to be back east. I like the west. Oh, so do I. But it isn't home, is it? What will you do with your masters? Your mother mentioned teaching maybe great new school over West Medford way. A lot more research to do 'em.

[00:33:15] Thanks. To write. That's right. You've been published. You remember Scott? Scott? Scott, Scotty over here. I'll be, he's our oldest boy. New York magazine's taken a piece of his, you remember Scott? He used to spit in my job. Oh, I'm sure he didn't Temple. Tell Scott about your writing. I published two articles and the Arizona Farmer Ranch man, the Arizona Farmer Ranch Man.

[00:33:44] One was on good moves and bad moves. Mother was on head restraints and cattle shoes and calving pens are really badly new, designed, these terrible systems just Wow. It's lovely to see you temple. Bye. Merry Christmas. Merry Christmas. I need my squeeze machine.

[00:34:15] There are too many people, no one listens to me and they keep giving each other looks, and I don't know what they mean. They're just uncomfortable. People don't want to hear all those details about cattle, but I do. I wanna be with cattle sweetheart. I don't want you to avoid people. They make me feel bad.

[00:34:37] Well then ignore them. You are the only master of science in the room, and I am so proud of you. Temple. Look at me. Look at me. Do you know what? People tell each other things with their eyes. This is me telling you that I love you and I respect you.

[00:35:13] I will never learn how to do that.

[00:35:18] I know.

[00:35:29] I hope you enjoyed that little excerpt from the movie. I mean, I always get teary. You will need tissues if you watch the whole movie Temple is so inspiring. So pause the video. There was a lot actually in that. You might wanna rewind it and rewatch it. There was so much to unpack. So have a little pause and see what you took away.

[00:35:50] Well, welcome back. I hope you did pause the movie. Remember Temple was trying to engage and that then that she hates parties. Remember what Dean Beadle said

that often it's past experience that means that many of our children have social anxiety. So really understanding for each child it's so different, but also how Temple said I'll never learn to do that.

[00:36:15] What Temple, if you do the Temple Grandin course, actually learned to do is use her skills and knowledge, talking about the cattle and the abattoirs and all the things she's done and revolutionize the world as far as humanity humane abattoirs. incredible. What Temple has done is she used her interest to build connection and relationships.

[00:36:38] So I hope you found that interesting. But also a reminder that eye contact can be very painful, can be very confusing. So when I'm teaching eye contact, this is what I have found work. It really depends on the individual, but demonstrating to look at the forehead or the nose or the ears. I mean, one of my little boys one day said to me, Mrs.

[00:37:01] Larkey, you're doing a 10. I'm like, what's a 10? And he meant I had 10 wrinkles in my forehead. Bless him. Yes. So some of my children even find eyebrows confusing, moving up and down. So just teaching them to look in the direction, not in the eyes. I don't think eye contact is important, but for some of your children who do have been taught eye contact and you're getting that stare, you need to teach them to look away.

[00:37:27] That every three or four seconds look away and you'll need to practice that. But again, why don't you video it so they can see how the other children look and how they look. Now going back to what Dean said, we are not trying to make this child mimic neurotypical children, we are just trying to like Temple.

[00:37:45] She gets distressed. So many of my children get distressed cuz they're confused. I'm trying to help them understand the why. I'm trying to help them understand what the teacher means when the teacher says, look this way, because so many of my children are focused on looking. They can't listen. So what does listening look like for your child?

[00:38:03] So, I highly recommend that you do some quick activities as a whole class. Like I said, you might take photos, you might do it walking to the mat. What about getting children out the front to guess the expression? Guess their posture. What about some volume inside? Outside talking about that actually getting children to go outside.

[00:38:24] Now, I would recommend you do it not when there's 300 children in the playground, but what do we mean by an inside and outside voice? Eye contact. What is it? How much? What are you comfortable with? You'll find even children in your class have different feelings. And then personal space, role, play the personal space, take photos and watch people's personal preference as in a class.

[00:38:46] Remember, do that activity. So lots of fun things to just include. Like I say, none of this is rocket science. It's just being more conscious of it. Not expecting children to just learn it by being part of our schools and classrooms, actually

specifically finding some direct situations. Then maybe those the engineered some situations.

[00:39:07] Some incidental, so when children are lining up, you might point out to them, they're too close or too far away, and then do some activities. But I hope you can see these are really easy. And in fact, some of you might be going remember with the coats. Oh yeah, I used to do that. I haven't done that for a while.

[00:39:22] Oh yeah, these are really easy to include every day in my classroom or my home. So I want you to stop and think what is the issue for this child? They might be fine on volume, but they might need work on personal space. I want you to think what you can do and what are a range of ways that you can address the issue.

[00:39:41] Are you going to be doing direct engineered, incidental, or activity? I would recommend a combination because we want the child to transfer and use these in real situations. In fact, in the Ebook there is my top 10 tips for creating social skills programs that come from here. And one of them is make it real.

[00:40:05] Practice practice. Sorry. The second one's Practice. Practice, sorry. Keep bobbing in and out. So my next step again, is for you to actually make a plan for the child to think about what you're gonna do. Again, I've got that proforma if you want to use that. And then once you've done that, I would love you to stop and write down three ideas or insights that you've got from this module.

[00:40:29] Now, this module's a little bit shorter because I want you to actually stop and think about how you're gonna put it in place. It's not just about listening to me, it's actually about how are you gonna implement it? Can you talk to colleagues about it? This is really important because when they go to other people in the school or in the playground, how are we gonna support this child's learning?

[00:40:50] The next module's probably gonna be a little bit longer. So, this course is aimed to be three hours and it really depends how much you stop, pause, record, write things down. But in the next module, it's quite meaty with information. So I hope you've got some tips and ideas that you're really thinking about how all of this fits into conversations for a child to successfully have a conversation.

[00:41:14] Think about what skills they need, what body language they need. And also to think about, sorry, I just flicked to the other to think about those levels of play. Is the child still at isolated? Well, we can't suddenly move to collaborative, so I hope you've got some good ideas. Flick back through your notes from this module and get ready for our next module.

[00:41:35] I'll see you soon.

### lesson 3 - social Skills

[00:00:00] Well, welcome back. I am hoping you've actually gone back and actually reflected and noticed each child in your class's social skills. Thought about those levels

of play and engagement. In the last module I had that we were doing greetings. I've actually moved it to this one, but because it goes in the levels of friendship.

[00:00:21] But I, even if you might have done that, saying hello in different tones of voice, that would've been a fun activity to do. So, as I say, this lesson is about friendship. Playground group work. We're gonna cover a lot of things that really is the complexity of bringing together everything we've learnt in the last two modules.

[00:00:41] So remember when I talked about social emotional learning, we have the interaction with other people, and then the next level is friendship. And the emotions that cover both of those. So in the AARA framework, teachers go back, look in that first lesson where you thought the student was at, because then I want you to come from where they're at to move forward with our learning.

[00:01:03] So what is the issue? Do they want friends? Are do they get upset if they're not with their friends? Like really have a stop and think about the friendships? Can they work with other people? How do they go at group work? How are they going in your collaborative classroom? How are they going in the classroom?

[00:01:18] How are they going in the playground? So much to think about. So the first thing we need to think about are the stages of friendship. And this is a friendship pyramid that I actually got my daughter Eliza, to draw for me. But I think this is so important that the first stage of friendships just saying hello.

[00:01:37] The second stage is an acquaintance where we on occasionally chat to each other and have a conversation. Stage three is a early potential friendship. And normally you have you know, we come to school together, a shared setting where the friendship grows. Stage four is developing a friendship, which is where you make an effort to catch up outside school, outside the classroom.

[00:02:02] So children might be in a different classroom, but join up at the break, which is the school I was at before Easter. One of my boys, that's what he does. His friends are outside the classroom, so he catches up with them in the playground. Number five is friends. And this is where you make a big effort to spend more time together and maintain your friendship.

[00:02:23] And stage six is where your close friends, where you share things with that person. Now I have lived in four different states, and I can tell you that when you first moved to somewhere new, it's exhausting. You're just at the hello hello phase, and then you might actually talk to people, parents in the playground or drop off and pick up, and you start to have those little conversations and then you start to work out of all those big lots of people, the funnel, can you see it goes down.

[00:02:55] I actually would love you to think of your close friends. Who are your close friends? Go backwards up the pyramid. So one of my closest friends, we went to uni together and did teaching. When we first met, we were just in a lecture together. We're like hello, you know, sort of saying hello to everyone in the lecture.

[00:03:15] Then we actually would start having a little chat to each other and we found we had similar interests. We had some similar friends. We started chatting. Then we would have lunch together. So we'd meet in the refectory or the, you know the lunch area. And then actually we started to catch up outside uni.

[00:03:35] Yes. And then we actually made a big effort. We'd book, going to shows together, go to in Adelaide, the Fringe Festival. And then we became such close friends that we've been for 30 odd years now that we, in fact, gosh, 34 years. That, you know, yesterday he had a funeral of a friend's mom and I rang him to check how he was afterwards and we had a long conversation.

[00:04:03] And that's what friends do. And, you know, he shared his vulnerability and sadness. That is a close friendship where I knew that he had the funeral, that I made an effort to ring. So think of yourself in that funnel of friendship. You probably have friends at all different stages of that. And now I want you to think of your diverse child.

[00:04:24] I'd like you to draw where is this child at on those levels. So if you have a look at that slide, where are they at? Are they just at the hello stage? Well then we need to slowly move. You can't jump from level one to level six. So I actually did this course as a bit of a pilot with 200 teachers, with four to seven year olds, and I surveyed them and asked them where the Neurodiverse child was and where their peers were and look at the outcome.

[00:04:56] So interesting, 38% of children were only at saying hello. 47% were maybe they might have a spontaneous little conversation third, but if we look at their peers, they were at early potential friendship or developing friendships. So can you understand that? That's a big gap to make up? No wonder social's exhausting for my children.

[00:05:23] Remember I said I went to a birthday party where people weren't ready to make friends. Well imagine my children who are at this level up there at the saying hello and other children are forming friendships. Then it's hard to break into those friendships. So this is why it's important, like those stages of play.

[00:05:43] We also need to understand the stages of friendship and where this child is at, cuz we can't ask them to have a close friend, even though they might desperately want one. We need to help them go through these stages. So I want you to think where is your student at and what you can do Now, how do we teach the greetings?

[00:06:04] The first thing we're gonna have to actually do, some of my children aren't even greeting each other. So in the developing social skills book, this is the activity in the book, it says, people say hello when they first meet each other. Some of my children do not like saying hello. They don't even like the morning roll call.

[00:06:23] Can I tell you? So it's a friendly thing to do. People like it when children say hello. When Mary gets to preschool, she says hello to her teachers. Then Mary says



hello to her friends. When Job goes to preschool, he will try to remember to say hello to his teachers. When then, oh, sorry. John is the name.

[00:06:45] Then John will try and remember to say hello to the children saying hello. Good. Good. Sorry, the text hasn't cut and paste across very well, but anyway, it's a friendly thing to do. That's the why we need to explain to children. It's a friendly things to do. But I would love you as a class to brainstorm.

[00:07:07] How do you say hello to people you don't know very well compared to your good friends? And remember we're gonna do the facial expression, the tone of voice. We've gotta add that, you know, like when you see a really good friend, hello, you know, what do we do? We look at their direction. We are like, hi. We don't Hi.

[00:07:25] Hi. Actually practicing that, I want you to ask your kids what, depending on their age, some of them might hug each other might, some of them might high five, some might fist pump. Find out all the ways, cuz often there's a body gesture with a hello. Find out from the peers what language they use. Is it a yo? I don't know.

[00:07:45] What do they say? Hi. Remember Dean said why would we teach that? Hello? If the kids say hi, or do they actually use children's names? It's hi Jack. Hi John. Yes. I'd love you to try it. Have an observation tomorrow of your children in the morning greeting each other. What do they do? I remember when my son moved from one primary school to another, the boys all hugged each other and that was new to him at his previous primary school.

[00:08:15] They didn't. So that, and I mean he just, like I say, neurotypical kids just work it out. But a neurodiverse child might need help with that because then sometimes I get a call from a school going, we've got children kissing everyone. Well, who do you kiss? You know which people do you kiss compared to which people?

[00:08:35] Judas wave or shake hands. So have a think about those greetings. Do what they hug each. You know, nanas might hug each other. Some children go up and hug the teacher. We need to talk about different greetings. Okay. Then the other thing I want you to think about is who cares about friendships? Think of your class.

[00:08:57] Who cares about friendships? Who are friendships important to, I want you to think of the diverse children. Do they want friends? Are they actually, I've got children who, especially my ADHD kids who often have you know, the class clown because they're trying to seek friendship and connection. Or I've got children with, girls with autism often burn out their friends that have, they had friends in the past and burnt them out.

[00:09:23] So I think before we start going, let's make everyone be friends. We need to think, is it important? Remember, Dean said he does, his friends got married and then they had too many birthday parties. How, what level of friendship is this child seeking? Where are they at and where are we going? We can't just run around and make people friends.

[00:09:42] I can't just make you friends with someone on your staff. You remember? It's a funnel. So what I'm hoping you realize that the children care about friendships. In fact, from seven up till seven you can just go up and ask to play. But by year two, children care a lot about friendships and belonging. When we talk to our children after school, that's normally the first thing they talk about.

[00:10:07] When you are doing an activity, children look to their friends, they want to be with their friends. They're moving from playback, dates, sorry, playmates to relationships. And normally those relationships are based on interests, support, and trust. But also at seven years of age, children are very sensitive to social rejection.

[00:10:30] So I need you to check, is the child, the neurodiverse child, have they been rejected and are they now socially anxious? Have they, I watched a boy once in a school go up, he was in year five and he went up the whole playground every say, the whole playtime going up to children. Can I play? No. Can I play? No.

[00:10:49] And I just watched him get sadder and sadder. I had another boy who was ending up in the sick bay with loneliness. So I need you to think for this child, what is the challenges? What is they? What are they seeking? What do they want from their friendships? What do their parents want? We need to actually respect if this child is happy on their own, well, maybe that's right.

[00:11:14] But if they are seeking connection, how do we help them connect? My doctorate research found when children move into a school past year two, we need to do more to help them break into the current friendship groups. Cuz normally the friendship groups have shrunk because, sorry, let's go back to our pyramid.

[00:11:33] By year two, remember they are at that developing friendship stage, and if not moving towards close friendships. So if a child's coming in and they're only saying hello, remember when I move states, I'm still at the hello and everyone else has their friendships. It's very hard to break into the groups and I think thinking about yourself and friendships is really important.

[00:11:54] So who cares about friendships? So I've got a photo there. If you have watched Love on the Spectrum, you will know that people with Autism Spectrum care about love and relationships. I highly recommend you watch Love on the Spectrum if you haven't already. But the other thing I want you to notice that. I highly recommend you watch Love on the Spectrum if you haven't already. But the other thing I want you to notice in Love on the Spectrum, the families care.

[00:12:15] Because the young people want love and relationships. The families are really a big part of that program. And in fact, I did a podcast with Jodi, who's the sex therapist on Love on the Spectrum. Oh, she is just the most beautiful soul. Make sure you listen to that podcast episode. I should have included it.

[00:12:31] They're just Google. Sue Larkey love on the Spectrum or Sue Larkey sex therapist. And she talks, she gives some great hints about relationships and again, levels of relationships that you don't just jump straight to the sex, right? You've gotta go through the levels. Now, and if you watch that, you'll notice she does a lot visually, which is what I'm saying with social emotional learning.

[00:12:54] We need to do more visually. But this is where we need to work together. Does the young person want relationships? Do the parents report? They want relationships and then we need to come from there. Now, the important note, and this is from Birmingham University, it is crucial to understand and respect the social preferences of individual children.

[00:13:18] I don't want you running around making them all have friends. Dean Beadle said they might be exhausted by the end of the day. So joining a social activity after school mightn't be they mightn't have the capacity for that. But parents, I'd say, what about school holidays? You could do a school holiday program in Sydney.

[00:13:36] There's a great film and television. The afters and they have actually done my course because they have many of our young people, and they might be into robotic young people come and do their courses. In the holidays, they might be into robotics. I had a boy who was into origami and their local council were doing origami over the holidays, and that was a chance for him to connect and make friends.

[00:13:57] So it's important that we acknowledge that some children would rather be alone and others prefer larger groups of friends. Some might just want one or two friends. The problem is, though, if they burn those friends out, I think you need friends at all stages. If you think of yourself, you probably have friends at all stages along that friendship pyramid.

[00:14:18] However, there are challenges, and these are what I pointed out in the first module, the sensory. The emotional regulation, the executive functioning, the literalness, the snow knowledge, the social exhaustion that Dean Beadle talked about. And for some of our girls, the masking where they sort of hold it together with the friendships, but then have the meltdown when they get home.

[00:14:42] Or some of my children are like one of my little girls once she was in doing group work and they were drawing a fairytale and a castle, and all the other girls would draw their picture, get to my girl with autism, and she would rub out and put how she wanted it. She didn't know she was upsetting the other girls.

[00:15:00] The other girls started crying and going, no, she didn't understand. In her world, they'd made a mess of that castle and it needed fixing up. So please remember that not only do you need to think about the child with neurodiversity, neurotypical kids worry a lot about their friendship. All children worry about their friendships.

[00:15:20] I mean, have you ever seen when children come back and from play, I didn't have anyone to play with. So this is why I'm saying teach it to the whole class. I think

everybody needs to work on their friendship skills. Do that friendship pyramid with your class. Ask them who's where on your pyramid teach assistance.

[00:15:37] Maybe you could work with a group of children and explain that to them. I think it's really valuable. So I, again, I really think it's important we get some lived experience insight into this. And this is from a Naok who's a 22 year old autistic artist and storyteller, and I love her visuals. You can follow her on Facebook's, but again, like Dean was talking about myths and misconceptions.

[00:16:02] This says there is an assumption that autistic people do not have the desire to have friends. This is untrue and based on misconceptions, autistic people have the same desire for connection as others. Friendship for autistics are different than from neurotypical standards. Autistic people might prefer to face more difficulties initiating, developing and maintaining friendships.

[00:16:32] And really, that's why I want you to work on this and give them the skills, not just dump them in a playground. We'll come to that in a minute. Difficulties might include navigating friendships and social circles due to overwhelming and complex social rules, difficulties processing social information.

[00:16:52] Remember Temple, not understanding what her mom's eyes meant and her saying, I don't think I'll ever be able to do that. Social circle complexities increase in the teenage years and adulthood. I actually think they increase from seven years of age. Social connection is a powerful predictor of long-term physical and mental health.

[00:17:14] I truly believe that is why I've put this program together. This is what it is about ensuring that children leave school with social emotional skills. This is gonna predict more if they have a job in the future, how happy they are, their mental health than maths, English, and all the things that we measure with NAPLAN in Australia.

[00:17:34] Finding an autistic support group and having other neurodivergent friends can be vital for an autistic person's wellbeing. But that being said, I was talking to a mum yesterday whose son really does not like being in an environment with other autistic children at young adults. He actually wants neurotypical friends and I that makes sense.

[00:17:55] Who? Who? You know, Dean Beadle has a range of different friends. I don't think putting, I hate it when people go, oh, put all the autistic together, children together, they'll get along. I don't think that's true. We need to remember, just because a child's on the spectrum doesn't mean they're gonna be friends.

[00:18:10] Yes. Autistic people might prefer to have a few close and intense friendships rather than larger groups. I think that is true. That is my experience. Say like Dean was saying, six friends is enough for him to manage. So I want you to think and talk to parents. They know this child best. So I want you to think about the child.

[00:18:31] What are they currently doing? Classroom, playground and outside the school. In fact, I'd encourage you to just pause the video and write down your thoughts. Now, I'm actually gonna prompt you with some questions because I think this is very important that you think about these challenges for our neurodiverse children.

[00:18:52] I want you to write down where are they seated in the classroom? How is that going? Are they seated near you isolated? Are they in a group? How are they a boy that's sitting with girls? I see that a lot. And when they move to secondary, they actually need to learn to work with boys and girls. Are you always pairing them with the same children?

[00:19:16] Can they work with a range of children in your class? Who are their friends? Do they have a few close personal friends or a range of friends? Are they a girl who masks their social skills? Who watches the other children closely? Many of my girls on the spectrum are very good at imitating, but they find that exhausting.

[00:19:36] Are parents reporting they get home and exhausted or autistic burnout. If you wanna understand more about the girls, the Facebook group I recommend is called Yellow Ladybugs and they actually organize get togethers for our girls and I highly recommend that they do some fabulous ideas and activities.

[00:19:53] Although they're based in Melbourne, they're throughout the world now. I think they even have a group in New York. How does the child go in, partner work in group work? Do you need a teacher assistant there to facilitate that? How are they going in those situations and how are they going in the playground?

[00:20:11] Now, my question is this, are they getting the same outcomes as their peers? Are they building friendship and relationships in your class, like their peers, or think back to that friendship pyramid? Are they still back at the open end where they're only just up to, they get to a group and they just say hello and sit there and not engage?

[00:20:31] I just want you to just sort of take that bird's eye view of what's happening, and then I want you to ask yourself this, how many parties or social activities has this student been invited to? Write that number down, and if the answer's zero, then I believe inclusion isn't working. My doctorate research says inclusion is often ending at the school gate.

[00:20:57] They're working in groups, they're engaging here, but as soon as we get to the school gate, they're not included outside school. And remember, social emotional learning, the CASEL framework is about community. It's about moving beyond that. So we need to remember that actually this is a bit of a question of a barometer of what is happening for your children.

[00:21:18] So if they haven't been invited to birthday parties or social activities, why is that and are they noticing it? I had a little boy that on Mondays, he was always so sad because he knew children had play dates and sleepovers and birthday parties, and he

wasn't included. And all the kids were talking about it and he desperately wanted to be included.

[00:21:39] I've seen children invite other children for a play date and get rejected. So I'd love you to just have a little think. And the other thing I want you to think about is why do we have breaks? Why do children have recess, lunch, morning tea? What is the purpose of that? Can you write down in your handout why?

[00:21:55] Why do we go out there? What? What is the purpose? So the next thing I want you to do, I know I'm asking you to do a lot of thinking in this module. Imagine you're invited to a birthday party. There's a hundred people at the party. The party goes from 12:00 PM till midnight. You know no one. I want you to genuinely stop the video and write down what you would do.

[00:22:22] You know no one, it's in a hall. Oh, there's a dance hall, there's a bar. Okay. What would you do? Would you not go. If you put down not go, this is my child who doesn't wanna go out in that playground, that party or hall is just like your playground. Just cuz there's 200, 300, 400, 500 children doesn't mean the child wants to go out there.

[00:22:52] One of my little boys once had a relief teacher and she said, if you don't do your work, you'll have to stay in. And he was like, yes. Other children have breaks to actually re-energize, relax, have fun. Many of my children do not wanna go out to that playground. It's exhausting. It's isolating. It's socially anxious.

[00:23:13] How many of you were socially anxious about that? I would love you to ask your friends and family or your colleagues over the next week party a hundred people, you know, no one. What would you do? You were gonna get a whole range of responses. I regularly ask this at my workshops and I get so many different responses.

[00:23:31] Would you go late? Yes. Would you turn up at eight o'clock? Probably not. You'd wait till some people were there. Some of my children eat really slow, so they go late. Some of my children do their work slow, so they go late. They don't want to go out in that playground. It is socially and emotionally overwhelming.

[00:23:50] Would you find friendly people? Some of my children are walking around with a yard duty teacher that is a child who wants connection, or they're in year six playing with the kindies or in kindie. Playing with year six, sorry. Depends what state you're in. Kindie, reception, prep, whatever. Wherever you are in the world, they're first year at school and they're playing with much older or much younger kids.

[00:24:13] That's like looking for a friendly person, isn't it? Because often the year six, like, oh, they're so cute and they'll play with you. Or if you're a, you know, either vice versa or would you go to the bar, have a look. Did you write, go to the bar. That is the most frequent answer at my workshops. Go to the bar.

[00:24:33] So we need a bar in our playground. Where is your bar? Can you write down on your page? Where can children go if they know no one? Where can they go if they don't have anyone to play with the bar? You're allowed to talk to people or would you go to the dance floor? This is what a lot of my ADHD kids do.

[00:24:54] They go, they see other kids playing and they like rush over to join in that activity or game, but they get rejected. If four of us were dancing on the dance floor and we were good friends, we were at that close level of friendship and some random just came over, we would all use facial expression. Look at each other.

[00:25:15] Do you know them? There wouldn't be any words and we'd probably move aside. So, a lot of my children are going up to groups who are ever playing, already playing that year five boy who has been constantly rejected. He was going up to people who were already in that pyramid, the reverse pyramid, close friends, they were saying no because they were a close friendship and he was just at the hello stage.

[00:25:39] So how do we help children navigate this? This is so important. I don't know, maybe you wrote down something else, but I want you to think, how does that relate to children in your playground? The party activity is about you thinking about how this child is in their playground. Because remember I asked why do we have morning tea, recess, lunch, so many of my children come back in socially anxious rejected actually get upset.

[00:26:09] So where is the bar? Where can this child go so they can have the same outcome as their peers? In my experience, we need to think about the playground and I've included a tip sheet you can read later and maybe share with your colleagues and think about what you can do. Now, when I was writing this, I had a little aha moment.

[00:26:29] For years, I have been talking about we need to create bars in your playground. We need to think about the playground. And then I thought, well, whose job is that? In most schools, that isn't anyone's job description to be on creating inclusive playgrounds. So if you are have a learning support team, maybe you could talk to them about thinking about some of these things.

[00:26:51] Classroom teachers, I know you're probably at capacity, but what I know is this, when the child comes in, dysregulated, socially anxious, it actually does impact on you as a teacher. And when a child goes home and feels that it impacts on their family. So I actually think we do need to think about how we create a inclusive playground.

[00:27:14] Because remember, parents send their child to your school so they can make connections and friends, and if they're not getting to do that, then, and they're not invited to activities. We need to think about this. It's a very important goal, and as I say, it's why it needs to be on the individual education plan, and so often we don't talk about it.

[00:27:34] I wanna be more conscious about social emotional learning, and the fact you're doing this course tells me you do too. So I love the fact that you have joined this

course and hopefully already seen some improvements in children and noticing their connection and noticing what you can do to put in place.

[00:27:50] I always love the saying it's easier to change the structure than change the child. So what are the structural changes we can put in place? So the child does come back in regulated that they have had the same break, the same connection as their peers, and I believe actually is creating clubs. Now, there's a lovely visual in the ebook that shows how to set up clubs, but I'm just gonna quickly go through that.

[00:28:14] First, you need to name the club, and I asked on my Facebook community a couple of years ago, and they had things like the world of fun, lunchtime club, rest and relaxation games, group Lego builders. Because Dean Beadle said there is no way he would go to an activity that was called social skills, when that's something he lacks.

[00:28:33] So please don't call it the social skills club. You need to call it something that's interesting for the child. Then it can include, and I've made a big list there. It can, I'll make it nice and big for you, but it can include music. I've had children who have a choir, oh, I met this fantastic teacher that said she was doing one of my workshops and she's like, oh, that explains all the children that are in the choir.

[00:28:56] It might be a band, it might be board games, Lego cards, chess, computer jigsaws, art drawing, coloring craft, origami garden group, watering group cuz I've got some children love water relaxation, sensory room, Nintendo Wee Interactive whiteboard club where they do something, iPads and aviary with seating, exercise, bike, mini trampoline, cooking them all.

[00:29:19] They are all from my Facebook community. Aren't they fantastic? All the things schools are already doing. Your school might already be doing those things, but make sure they were set up for this child. Cuz often schools set things up with a specific child, then that child's left and we keep that gardening group and this child's not interested.

[00:29:38] This is from one of the schools I go to and I know it's a little bit hard to age. Sorry it was laminated cuz they have it up. Look at all the things they have out. Recess, library Dolls Place. Skipping Hungry Hips. Art, you need to get a ticket for that one. Chess club, gardening Club. Finger skateboards, coloring competition, basketball hoop.

[00:29:56] Seven days a week. Seven, five days a week. They have a whole lot of different things. What is interesting, the teachers preferred this is their yard duty duty, because it's actually there's less issues and the children are really engaged and happy. Now, this school just started off with some learning support teachers running a couple of activities and they were so popular.

[00:30:19] They added more and more. And not only that, they aren't getting parents coming to school saying, my child doesn't have anyone to play with. Remember, we need a bar. We need to think about what are the structural changes we can add in. Now you can have a thing. It doesn't have to be open every day.



[00:30:36] It doesn't have to be both recess and lunch. Have a think. What would work. My doctorate research found though, a lot of children are going to your library because a library is supervised, quiet, less sensory, overwhelmed. But maybe all you're gonna do is add to the library some board games and activities so children can be doing that.

[00:30:55] Executive functioning, practicing winning, losing emotional regulation, that you're actually gonna create a, some rather than books in the library and they have to be quiet. Maybe there's a little room that you can set up the club where the librarian can watch it. But have a look. I've got lots of libraries that already have these things set up.

[00:31:15] The other thing I'd encourage you to do is have a set number of children who can attend, because remember the sensory and an age range. In primary school, most children play with their age peers. And I want this child to make connection with their peers. But again, what's the goal for this child? And decide how they're gonna join the club.

[00:31:36] Again, I asked on my Facebook, some schools self-selected, some teachers selected some bring a friend, some are just open door or teachers identify on the day who would benefit from the program. So the reason I've included all of these is to help you think about what would work for this child or your school have.

[00:31:56] If you've got children ending up in the office every day in trouble, then I, and I hate the word trouble, but you know what I'm saying, I would actually be thinking that might have be teacher identified. Because remember, the task in actually choosing can be a problem for some of our children. That task initiation.

[00:32:15] So you might, what we found at the school that does this program, at first, some of the children actually were sent to those groups to have a go with their teacher assistant and then we found they love them. The beautiful thing about this, we've actually found the children have found each other now and they'll often not come to the clubs and be playing spontaneously on their own, which is so cool.

[00:32:40] But I wanted to show you this. This is the I Can Network who are another group I would follow on Facebook. Sorry, I'm recommending all these things, but I'm hoping this is just the beginning of you thinking about social emotional learning. Now they run groups for young people on the spectrum to connect.

[00:33:00] And what did I get out of the I CAN program? I can express myself, I can find friends with common interests. I can have fun, I can be cool. I can discuss my favorite Marvel characters. I just love that. This is what I'm aiming for. All of your children, when they go out in the playground, they can feel connection, they can find friends with common interests, they can have fun, they can be cool, and they can talk about the things they love.

[00:33:30] Wouldn't that be a beautiful outcome of your playground? So you need to think about what you're gonna set up. Is it a Marvel group? Is it a craft group? Is it a one

of my girls loves horse riding and they've got a horse riding group where they talk about different horse activities and Oh, sorry, I went a little bit blurry there.

[00:33:49] I think I moved too fast. So have a think about what you could do to help this child create connection. What are their interests? One of my little boys said to his mom, driving to school on a Thursday, I love Thursdays. And his mom said, why? He said, because the gardening club's on and I know what to do on Thursday.

[00:34:12] Breaks your heart every other day. He's just wandering around the playground with no one to play with. I love, like often Coles and Woolworths or supermarkets do little you know like giveaways with your shopping. Like Woolworths in Australia recently had like a Lego thing. Well that can be a club.

[00:34:30] Or they did the little Woolworths gardening years a couple of years ago. Well, we created gardens, you know, what are the trends with the children? Because I wanna create connection with our neurodiverse and other children. And it's not just Neurodiverse kids who are struggling with friendships or friends are away, or they might have had a breakup with their close friend.

[00:34:49] Okay? So I believe inclusion is all about adapting and modifying the task for success. It's thinking about the strategies to develop those social skills and understanding by everyone. And that's why I need you to really set up those clubs, think about what this child's needs are. So again, do, what are we gonna do?

[00:35:11] So I'm gonna pop on a beautiful little boy called Alexander, who's gonna share with you. He actually made this video to talk to his class about his Asperger's, as he calls it. I want you to watch it actually to understand his social emotional and just to get some insights and understanding in that lived experience.

[00:35:32] Again, my name's Alexander and I'm in year five and I'm 10 years old. I'm, I like the same things that other kids like in my age. Like, I like bouncing on the trampoline. I love playing Nerf wars. I also like to play it with a football. I love playing chess. Check, mate. I also love playing video games.

[00:36:11] But I'm also different from other people because, well, I have Asperger syndrome. Asperger Syndrome. You can only be born with, it's not a disease and you can't catch it. And also it, when I was little and I didn't used to have these tablets, I, my head went really spiny and sometimes like things would flash up to do and I couldn't think straight.

[00:36:44] Just like, you can't catch Asperger's, you can't cure it. And, but though there are ways that people can try to help, like I go to Peter L, Dr. Peter Lilly, and she and we talk about controlling our temper and how I should act around other people. And then also I take tablets. When I was in year two, I made bad choices.

[00:37:06] I hid under desks. I was bad at school, and I ran away, and I also got tempered very easily by the smallest things. But then my doctor, Dr. Mick, talked to my

mom and dad about it. And they talked and talked about tablets. They would help me to to yeah, to make better choices and make maybe able to make good choices.

[00:37:34] Okay. I suppose. Have trouble communication. And they also like, don't really pick up on the feelings or body language. And they also should don't listen as well as they should. So when I wanna be a good friend, it's hard because I like my friends a lot. Like other people will, but they're like, I really need them.

[00:38:00] Because I'm almost some, I'm a lot of the time lost without my friends and I got some really good ones like my Hailey aunt and Emma and Oscar and all my other friends from five d h. And I don't always like being not with my friends because it's hard to talk with them sometimes. And

[00:38:34] I wanna be a good friend, so I talk about what other people talk about, but sometimes it's hard to talk about what other people wanna talk about. So, cuz when I was young I used to talk about what I wanted to talk about. And also I, cuz it's so hard because like cuz I don't know really what they like sometimes and I really wanna talk about what I wanna talk about and I don't really wanna talk about what they wanna talk about.

[00:38:59] And it's just hard. Okay. People with Asperger sometimes get like obsessions. When I was really little, I had lots and lots of dinosaurs. Then when I was about three, I started liking transformers. I know everything about 'em.

[00:39:25] Then when I was about five, I started liking Star Wars. I had all the movies

[00:39:37] and I have some books,

[00:39:44] and I also have Lego of them, and then I have my Star Wars guys. Well, I have a lot, but this is in all of them. I have about 300 more in my book. Just adorable. I absolutely love that video. So I'm gonna ask you to record your thoughts. You know what to do. We've done this enough time, so write down your thoughts and then I'll share mine.

[00:40:16] What I love about that video, you can see how important his friendships are, that he wants to talk about what other people are talking about, but he finds that really hard. But for someone like him, you can see his interests have changed and we must remember the children's interests will change and this is why it's important.

[00:40:32] Home and school work together, and we find out what's of interest to this chart at this point. Some of my children's interests change daily, you know the young boy I was saying had friends outside the classroom. He loves playing soccer with his friends, but they're not allowed in that area every day.

[00:40:49] And guess what? The days he can't play soccer, which is his big interest. Is the days he ends up actually having a lot of problem with executive functioning, impulse

control, chooses the wrong things to do, gets in trouble. And I really feel for him because we, I think he's a child that needs more structure.

[00:41:07] Because without the structure, he starts climbing the fence, climbing trees, doing all sorts of things. Anyway, back to Alexander. With him, one of the things that worked really well was in the developing social skills book. There's this keeping on topic. So if someone says, like, what are you gonna do in the summer holidays?

[00:41:28] Are you staying home, going overseas, going to the beach? So this would be a direct teaching. But I love to do this as the whole class. A teacher in Canberra many years ago showed me, she used my developing social skills book and she just had like a scrapbook. And in the scrapbook she would actually write down the social skills they were working on so the child with autism spectrum could refer back to them.

[00:41:51] So let's pretend we are working on conversations. So let's say the children are talking about the weekend. So what could you ask? What did you do on the weekend? Oh, in Alex played rugby. Did you win? Did you lose what position? So it's like a mind map, but it's a conversation map. Okay? The other thing that I've done with children like Alexander is, so that's for keeping on topic, but often knowing what to talk about.

[00:42:19] And this is where in our, the book, we recommend you actually make conversation starters. So you could ask Mrs. Larkey about her cat. You could ask Mr. Jones about his dog. You know, you can ask, what are topics your friends are interested in? So we call them conversation books. So with one of my little boys, he, you know, knew to ask his nana about bridge and his papa about bowling.

[00:42:45] What are you know, or fishing? What are interests for that person? And again, in your class, maybe you could have a list of things children are interested in so they can have conversation starters so they know what to talk to that child about. So there's an activity you could do this week. You could actually get children to write down what are their interests, you know, that those sort of get to know you activities, but make them visual.

[00:43:13] That is so the child can refer back to them. So one of the things I love to do is create that poster. We are all fish, but we are all different fish, but in this school we might swim together. Those of you who have done my course would've seen that visual. But what I've done over the years is actually every child has a fish.

[00:43:30] And in that fish they write down their interest. Yes. Or if you go on teachers pay teachers, there's like a backpack that do, you know, me or an iPhone. You know, like instead of apps, they write in their interest, you could make a display so the child with autism spectrum can go over and see oh, okay.

[00:43:49] They like pasta. I like pasta. Or you could ask, when did you last have pasta? Oh, your favorite takeaways. Japanese what's your favorite Japanese restaurant. So how about you do that as a visual? So the child has some anchors for conversations. Or you could do a more direct instruction like the activities in the developing social skills.

[00:44:10] Now the other thing I really hoped you noticed was when he talked about his friends, he was really sort of went quiet about them compared to his enthusiasm over his special interests. So again, I agree with Dean Beadle. People like Alexander need his things that bring him joy. His Star Wars, like you could see his passion, but you can also see his friends are important.

[00:44:36] It was just a little bit confusing. So this is where I want you to take where the child's at and think what they need. Now, if you had a kid like Alexander at your school, setting up a Star Wars club. There's lots of kids who love Star Wars. In fact, Star Wars have just said they're gonna come out with three new movies, or Harry Potter, whatever, take their interest and move from there.

[00:44:56] The other thing I like to do when we are teaching friendships is talking about that, what I call the Can I play flow. Can I play flow. So, oh, I hope you can see that. But what it is, many of my children go ask someone to play and people say Yes, then you can go and play something together. But sometimes children say no.

[00:45:18] So what can they do next? They can actually play on their own if they want to, or they can ask someone else to play. But what I've learned over the years, not just neurodiverse children, neurotypical children don't know what to play on their own. Often, this is where they go and choose to play with sticks or go outta bounds or, I don't know, go back into the classroom, all sorts of things.

[00:45:41] So one of the activities I'd love you to do over the next week is make a list. What can you do if you don't have anyone to play with? Now, one year I had a tricky class and I had a lot of parents coming. My child didn't have anyone to play with, so I made a list as a class and I actually took photos, things to do.

[00:46:00] You can play on your own. Yes. Activities you can do on your own. In the playground, I took photos and I put it in my classroom window so the parents could see that children, there were a range of things they could do in the playground on their own, because I think a lot of the parents were like, just go and ask someone to play, and that wasn't working.

[00:46:19] And then the child was becoming anxious and socially isolated. Of course, I prefer you had a club, but why not do that? But what I found with my class that year when children were playing on their own, then other children would come over. So actually when they were playing on their own rather than wandering, because if you are just wandering around, you can't find each other.

[00:46:40] So that worked out really well. I did also on the table, outside my classroom, I had a box of books so children could sit and read a book. Some of my children had specific books they like, so I'd let them take it out cuz we didn't have a library. We were a small school, like a library open. So that can be something to do.

[00:46:59] The other one is a playground plan. Now if you have children who get in trouble or do the wrong thing, please be particularly oppositional and pathological demand avoidance. Children, the worst thing that can happen is a teacher telling them off or yelling at them in the playground. When I teach ODD and PDA children, I say to my colleagues, if there's a problem in the playground, let me know.

[00:47:23] So if they went outta bounds, let me know and I will talk to them in a quiet classroom, or my teacher assistant will talk to them. And this is our playground plan. Okay? What it says is this, when they go out at the next break, I'll say to them, what will I play? Who will I play with? Where will I play? How will I play?

[00:47:43] What are the rules they need to remember now that might be that there's certain days they're allowed on equipment. I mean, how many teachers can't remember what days they're allowed on equipment? And remember, my children, because of their stage of play, they might notice the year six on the equipment and they're in year one.

[00:47:59] So actually creating a specific playground plan, writing it down, rather than just telling the child they're not allowed in that area or they're not allowed to do things. So these are my playground plans and my flow charts. I find these incredibly helpful for the whole class. Yes, I know I keep saying that, but I truly do.

[00:48:21] Then friendships, I would love you to think about those conversation starters, the mind maps, but also the socially speaking board game that I mentioned earlier is really fun to do with the whole class. So what I like to do is take the cards out of the board game and as a whole class, I mean, you can play it as a board game.

[00:48:43] But turn to the person next to you. Suggest one person you could talk to if you're upset. Now, what you'll find, a lot of my children, it's the adults, but past year two, they're talking to their friends. So find out from your class, who can you talk to If you're upset, someone says to you, I had a great weekend.

[00:49:02] Suggest two questions you could ask them. So see, that's like the mind mapping. Suggest one way you could end a conversation. So again, you could write these out in your scrapbook and write down ways to end a conversation. I am terrible at parties. My husband Andrew's really good at like, ending a conversation and moving on.

[00:49:23] I feel horrible. I don't like saying rejecting people or just walking off and I'm, I, we've all been through that. But imagine children in the playground. I had one little boy one year. One boy said, oh, his way of ending a conversation was to say, oh, I'm gonna, I need to go to the toilet. And my ASD kid went, oh well I'll come with you.

[00:49:42] Can you understand? Actually the child was trying to finish the conversation. I'd love you to write a list, ways to finish a conversation and social scripts to support understanding. So again, there are lots of social scripts in my developing social skills book, but there's also this other fabulous book by Anna Tallman and Rhonda called How to Stop Your Words From Bumping If You Have Any Children, probably under seven.

[00:50:07] This book is ideal for them. Sorry, this is gonna blur again. I like to use this book to get children ready for school. It's got things like, you know what to do if your friends don't wanna play. How to say, sorry. A whole lot of fabulous social skills. Carol Gray, you'll see her book. The Social story book is the original.

[00:50:29] Person who came up the idea of social stories. And that's why we have to call them social script cuz she trademarked the language. And there's another book there. Why Do I Have To Which I love and that for children with mind blindness that why do I have to is a fabulous, like why do I have to talk about, listen to people talk about things I'm not interested in.

[00:50:50] I particularly love it for my ODD children. So remember though, social knowledge goes both ways and Dean Beadle said that when we heard him talk. Now there's this fabulous thing on friendship. I found that's exactly about that. I'll include the link in your handout, but I highly recommend you find it.

[00:51:12] It's really lovely little book. It's free to download and talk to the whole class about. As people have their own unique personality. So every friendship is different, and it talks about the sensory needs and using, like, remember I said one way of teaching about friendship is by using books, but I'd love you to use some books like this that are about autistic children's way of engaging and making friends.

[00:51:39] And I think this book is a perfect one. If you just Google autistic friendships Otto and Ruthie, or neuro inclusive story I think you'd really enjoy that to read to your whole class. So there's a direct way. Now I'd love you to stop and reflect. Think about what you could do to support social skills.

[00:52:01] What clubs or activities, do you have a buddy bench? Is it being used? Are children just sitting there and feeling isolated? What friendship skills or activities could you do as a whole class or a group? Could you do that? Getting, you know, getting to know activities is a visual. Do, could you practice conversations as a class?

[00:52:20] So on Friday, get children to ask what are you doing on the weekend? And then on Monday, go back to that same child and follow up practice. Those social conversations. Could you use social scripts? And if you wanna understand more about them, watch the webinar. Where I go a deep dive into that. So what's your goal for your student?

[00:52:40] Are you gonna use direct engineered, incidental or activities? How can you use those different ways of teaching to achieve that goal? Are you just gonna send them out into the playground or are you gonna be more direct with your teaching? Are you gonna engineer situations, which is really what those clubs are, creating those situations.

[00:53:01] Again, if you wanna understand more about writing social scripts, I do have a podcast on that episode 189. And in the free webinar and handout, there's some more information. Social scripts aren't for everybody, particularly as Dean Beadle said. You

have to make sure the child actually can use them across a range of settings and make sure the peers do the same things.

[00:53:24] I like to use a thing called video modeling. Again, I have a podcast on that with a mum and a principal who uses that for her child, where she'll actually video a play date and play that back and explain to him what was going on and it allows him to re-watch it over and over again. That's a bit like taking the photos.

[00:53:43] I said I highly recommend videoing games in your playground. Oh, that reminds me. I had a boy who was really struggling with basketball in the playground cuz basketball in the playground is different to basketball with an umpire on the weekend. You know, when the kids are playing, they don't worry about those travel rules.

[00:54:01] And I don't know, hitting it, what's that called? Like intercepting? Oh no, it's got a word, but fouling, they don't worry about those things in the playground. So what I did, I videoed basketball in the playground. And then I sat with him and explained, so direct teaching how the rules in the playground were different to the rules on the weekend.

[00:54:20] And one of my other little boys or the weekend being when he played competitive basketball, one of my other little boys, Finn, he, oh, well, he was an adult when he explained it to me, but when he was younger, he told me, he called it different levels. So when the kids played handball one way, that was like Mario Kart level one.

[00:54:38] When they played another way, Mario Kart level two. So like that was handball level one. Handball level two. Can you see the logic there that as the game changed, he called it a different game. So I'm hoping that you are inspired to do some different things. Here's some examples of social scripts in my social skills book like.

[00:54:59] How to ask someone to play, how to be a good friend. These are all really important skills that we often need to teach directly. And again, make sure you add the language your children use. The other way I absolutely love and the whole class loves is teach using micro games. So there's a fabulous teacher who sent me seven fabulous micro games that he'd played with the whole class.

[00:55:25] They are all less than three minutes each. So you can do your social emotional learning in three minutes. Check it out, episode 139, and I've got all those micro games on there that he gave me to share with my community. So if you're doing winning and losing, the child can do these practice quickly.

[00:55:46] Winning and losing. Some of them are 15 seconds. So remember, executive functioning's a muscle. We need to practice that impulse control. I think micro games are a great way for learning all that. Flexible thinking, impulse control, and all ages. Love them throughout the primary ages. So they're quick, they're fun, and you can get lots of goes at them.



[00:56:06] The other way I love to teach social emotional skills is through board games. And if you have a look on my at episode 126 and 127, I talk about using board games to teach social skills. And, but it's not just social skills, math, literacy. You can learn so many things through board games, but I think more than anything you're learning executive functioning that you are actually learning to wait for a turn to.

[00:56:34] But it's more structured. And that's why I like board games. But a game of Uno, the rules can change. It can be your turn and then you have to skip a turn or it reverses. I love UNO because the rules change that creates flexible thinking. Some of my children will see they're about to lose and have a meltdown.

[00:56:53] So we need to work on that. We need to work on the winning and losing. So I told you this episode was go or lesson was gonna be one of the longer ones. I would encourage you to think about greetings. What have you noticed with this child? Do they have other children to play with? Could you include micro games or social scripts?

[00:57:14] How are you gonna support the child? What are the direct engineered, incidental and activities you could do to support the child to make friendships, to build their conversation skills, their connection, but most importantly, achieve the goals that their parents and they want from coming to your school or being in your classroom?

[00:57:36] Remember, it's two ways. Getting your whole community involved is really important, that if you are setting up a club or activity, we don't just want neurodiverse children in there. We want a range of children, and that's why I like to do the activities with the whole class. My guess. There's other children who struggle on Monday to remember, oh, they were going to a birthday party and to ask them about it.

[00:57:58] So last one to stop, to think and do, and I'm hoping from these three modules, you've got lots of great ideas to try and implement. So your next step is to go to that proforma, add in some more ideas. I'm hoping you've got lots of ideas in this module. And then to pause the video and just write down three things you're gonna do.

[00:58:22] Remember the coats were trying on? To think about which of the coats you're gonna try. What are you already doing? What else could you do? Do you need to go back and talk about, well, who is responsible for the playground? Do we need someone who's actually responsible that talking to the librarian about having out some board games or activities?

[00:58:40] So I'm hoping I have not overwhelmed you with ideas, but I truly hope you've got some ideas to make a difference to you and the children, you know? But I wanna sort of finish off with this. Diversity is having a seat at the table. Inclusion is having a voice. Belonging is having that voice heard. I want you to think about what does this child want socially and emotionally?

[00:59:06] Do they want connection and friendships? Do they just want a few close friends or lots of friends? I want you to actually think, how do we ensure this child does

belong to our community? Or is inclusion finishing at the school gate? Like my doctorate research found for many of our children. Sorry, I get a bit upset.

[00:59:26] Next thing, obviously I would love you to evaluate the course, give me feedback, what to leave in, what to add. I'm always reviewing and taking that information and I film these courses based on that feedback. At the time of this filming, I have put in for accreditation for NESA and TQI. That is a complex and slow process.

[00:59:47] I'm hoping that we will be accredited by the time you do this video, but can you check my website for current information? And if we are accredited, you will need to send us your TQI or NESA number so we can register your hours. If not, you can just do it as an elective. The rest of Australia, you can just log this as elective that you have done professional development around social emotional learning.

[01:00:13] So back to our very first visual. Remember this has been about the developing social skills, social management, and social awareness. The emotional regulation course looks at self-management and self-awareness. So if you haven't done the emotional regulation course, I would recommend you think about that being your next step.

[01:00:36] This is what's in the emotional regulation course. Now, I know that's hard to read. I'll just try and make it bigger, but basically, and I'm grabbing the folder to show you. The emotional regulation course is a bit different. It basically is a whole folder of resources and activities for you to do with the child or children that you can print out.

[01:01:00] They're all like fabulous, like wheel of calm, whole lot of activities that you can do with the child. Again, some of these you can do with the whole class or with groups of children. Because emotional regulation's a muscle. Remember that executive functioning. So for those of you that have done the emotional regulation course, this is a great opportunity to go back and look at some of the activities in there and actually think about, you know, printing out and sharing and doing those activities.

[01:01:30] So, yeah, it's a hefty folder of activities. I've laminated a lot of mine, so it makes it a bit bulkier. But if you want to do the emotional regulation course because you've now done this course you're gonna get a little bonus of \$50 off that course. So just email us. Say I just finished the social skills.

[01:01:46] Sue said I could have \$50 off, which it's normally \$149, it'll be \$99. Or if you've done both emotional regulation and social, maybe think about doing Tony Attwood temple Grandin, if you enjoyed that bit on Temple or the Tony Attwood or the Dean Beadle teacher assistant course, which, or maybe when you watch this, I've actually repurposed that to be for teachers.

[01:02:10] Join my Facebook group or Instagram, listen to my podcast. And of course there's lots of courses and resources on my website. The bonuses that I'd recommend if you didn't watch the webinar, the free webinar what we've done is included this in your

bonuses as well as a handout from that webinar, which has information writing social scripts, the ebook.

[01:02:32] I'd highly recommend you download that cuz there's extra tips about setting up your playgrounds, mind blindness, and some other things on friendship. So there we are. We have finished. I hope that you have got some valuable information from this course. Please email me, let me know how it went. There is so much more I obviously could have put in.

[01:02:54] I always find with writing these courses, it's thinking about what to leave out cuz you are committing. I really appreciate you giving up three hours of your time and I'm sure you didn't wanna give up a hundred hours around this topic. Well, some of you might have. Thanks again, really appreciate you being part of my community.

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