

Lesson 13 Transcript
Engaging the Social Environment
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I want to just remind you that in this workshop we have been throwing a lot of information that again is intended to give you some depth of understanding about the principles and the strategies and the methodologies that as we come on site we can help you implement further. So it's not a workshop that we can take each section and come up to that high level of competency that facilitates application immediately but we're willing to come in again and help you apply some of the principles that you have learned in this workshop that seem applicable to your program.

When Mike, just before lunch, was showing you all of the possible adaptations, modifications, and the ways to arrange the learning task for students, I want to just dovetail and comment before we start social skills and tell you one story about a student. His name was Michael and when we looked at how do we get kids to engage in the regular curriculum, we also look at motivation using some of their special interests as topics perhaps for getting them motivated and interacting with the curriculum. It often means a separate but related topic that dovetails in with the classroom topic. Michael was a student. He was in fourth grade. He personified his 72 year old dairy farmer grandfather. If you can imagine this little fourth grader. He would talk in two or three very limited kind of sentences and phrases. He'd wander. He'd just get up and leave class and he'd wander down the hall and whoever would talk to him he'd want to talk about the weather. He'd talk like, "Boy it looks like it's going to rain today. What do you think?" He was very intelligent and we kept trying to engage him in the curriculum. So repeated strategies, nothing had really taken hold until I'm back in Boise and I get a phone call from the school principal and she says, "You're not going to believe this." And I said, "What?" And she said, "Are sitting down?" "Yeah." She said, "Well we had an assembly with the dairy, Tillamook dairy. And the dairy people brought a cow over to the playground. And they were doing this presentation on dairies. And at the end when they said, 'does and body have any questions,' Michael stands up and he takes the microphone and he proceeds to give the entire school population a lecture on the artificial insemination of cattle." You can imagine I'm sitting there going, "I'm glad I'm sitting down. He did what?" And then I asked the principal, I said, "Was it correct?" And she said, "How would I know if it was correct? It sounded correct." So we took his curriculum and then engaged him. Math was figuring out how much feed he would need for how many cattle, etc. So that theme was implanted around to get that motivation gong. Well I was back in Tillamook two weeks ago and I did a follow up on Michael. He's now in high school and he's president of the state FFA group. Believe it or not, he gives presentations on Future farmers of America. Who would have thought? I just thought that was a good example.

We're going to talk a little bit right now about teaching social skills. When we look at the kids in our classes and in our schools, is socialization something that just happens because they are there? Most likely not. It's one of those inclusion bloopers. When we think just because we have kids in proximity to each other is not necessarily a guarantee that they will learn good social play skills and socialization skills.

What we're going to focus quickly on today is some ideas about teaching play skills, group skills, and social skills. There are three general skill areas when we look at the development of social skills. There's that young child as they start to play with objects with things, starts first with exploring and then into simple motor actions. Then you get into functional play. And then you start to get in into representation play so that stick can become a telephone that they use to call mom etc. And as they go through that developmental sequence, it results in more elaborate and creative solitary play. You'll see that young toddler playing with objects in a more creative way up to the representational stage. The second level comes in. Now I know what to do with those objects. So I'm interacting with my peers and starting to do shared play activities. That's followed by the actual acquisition of what we call social behavior following those social rules, norms, and manners of the typical population in the schools.

We come up with some broad social goals for our kids. One of them being to maximize the child's social and communicative competence. It's certainly the level of communication; the level of socialization is certainly going to impact their ability to acquire skills and to work in productive situations in a lifelong basis. We want our students to mirror the social and communications skills of their same-age peers. As much as possible given that the same-age peers behavior is appropriate. Mike had an example this morning where he was showing you how on task the student was in the classroom, following the routine for completing assignments, but the other kids were over pasting and gluing. My comment I almost made, "Well the next step is to teach this kid how to paste and glue inappropriately just like the other kids are so that they fit in." Mike gives the example sometimes of being out in the parking lot at high school level smoking a cigarette with the guys. Increasing spontaneity in that play and then building on generalizations so it transfers across environments.

So the core skills when we start to look at how do we go about doing that, we're not going to be able to teach higher level social skills unless we've covered the prerequisites which are all about that nonverbal social communicative interaction. Can that student establish social attention? Do they have any kind of reciprocal interaction in a nonverbal way where if I want something to continue, I'll make an action that indicates more, do that again? Bouncing on a ball. Stop the ball. More. Do it again. That's the beginning of reciprocity in social interactions. Social regulations. Can I handle somebody coming in and entering my play space without losing my emotional stability? Do you ever feel like that when you're highly intense on a task and somebody starts to disrupt you? Social regulation and then that shared attention. Can we actually start to share materials, look at materials, do that joint attention. That's followed by imitation. We often try to teach social skills, but we go back and say he doesn't have anything to play with. He doesn't know what play is. He has may just repetitive single action movements with toys that don't represent the functional outcome. So we go back and look at imitating actions with toys, imitating a motor sequence with the toys. Now I know that I can run the car back and forth but now the car is going to go up the hill and it's going to go down the hill and it's going to crash into somebody else's car. Starting to link those together. To imitates spontaneously with toys in natural contexts to generalizing across multiple novel contexts, and then the final stage is interactions with both adults and peers. So there's a lot about teaching socialization. And as much as we study in school about how to teach academics, how to break down tasks, etc., there's not a lot of pre-training we've had in teaching those required social skills.

We look at what constitutes the mastery of a social skill? Acquisition is demonstration that skill without prompts. So the social skill is not mastered until they can do it to the level of social acceptability without adult prompts which means, where's the aid? We've talked a lot throughout today about that critical role of the aid and we'll talk more in our teaming section later this afternoon. How many times do you have a student in the classroom, peers come up to interact with the student but who do they really interact with? The aid. So again the aid becomes the interpreter. Generalization across adults, peers, and social groupings. And generalization across multiple familiar contexts.

Here's a framework that I found to be very helpful when I start to look at how do I want set up programs that teach social skills to the students that we work with. It's an intervention that comes from a woman. Her name is Kathleen Ann Quil. She has a book that we had back on the table called Do, Watch, Listen, and Say and I was impressed with the way that she broke down this teaching sequence for teaching social skills. It will work for just about any skill you want to apply to it. The Do represents the cognitive part. In a play situation, interaction situation, the Do refers to what do you do with the objects. And then transcending into the Watch. The Watch part is, I'm observing what the peers do. I'm actually attending to their play. I'm watching what they're doing and I'm beginning to imitate the play of others. The language comes in under the Listen component. Now I'm playing with the peers. I know what to do with the objects. I watch what they're doing. I'm imitating. They start to talk to me and I respond back. So I'm listening to what they're saying and then the last one, the communication, is that now I respond back. So you can see that that creates a whole circle of social interactions. What happens with all kids...let's say that John who is typically developing, he's doing the Do, Watch, Listen, and say all at one time in this very rich play that's elaborating on the object. But what is your child with an autism spectrum disorder most likely doing? Under the Do, they might be just taking those blocks and lining them up in a repetitive fashion. We had one student that we worked with that loved Legos and what he would do with Legos is he would dump them out, and then repetitively put them in rainbow order of color, and then start connecting them together. So his whole play with the Legos was just about what he had invented doing was repetitive stereotypic play. The interesting thing is, that we found huge behaviors happening all of a sudden. We couldn't figure out what is going on? It would be with the white Legos. We got down to that part. Midway through the sequence he would just escalate, get very frustrated and mad and usually escalate to a huge temper tantrum. Well it was the aid who noticed and you may not know this about Legos, but if you turn them over, they're number sequences, so they have little numbers on the back. And what we didn't know until then is he was linking them together in a number sequence and numbers 9, 10, and 11 were missing. So it was like, "Send an aid out to go get a new set of Legos that will take care of this problem right now." Many kids can do the Do part. And a lot of kids can do the Watch part without having to do the Do. We have a lot of kids. Think about some of the children you serve who in a play situation they'll sit and they'll watch what people do but they don't do anything themselves and they don't interact. A child with autism may do all parts of this in isolation but not able to put it all together. So that's where the instructional piece comes into play.

Social mastery can be defined as the ability to do, watch, listen, and say in a play activity within that social context. When you look at, how do we break that down into some skill teaching sequences.

When we look at the Do part, starting with functional close ended activities is usually required. Now a functional close ended activity is one where a play object has a limited object. What do you do with a bicycle? You ride it. What do you do with a car? You roll it. So we look at these activities that are pretty clearly defined as a single function for an object. The functional open ended activities are next and that's where we get into linking those schemas. So now we're in the housekeeping corner. It's more open ended. Where ever the play goes is where the kids are going to take it. We'll start to teach the linking of single action close ended into more complex play situations. For example, if I'm in the housekeeping corner, and I know that I can take the pan and the spoon, and I can stir something in the pan. I'm stirring in the pan, single action. But now the concept of I'm stirring to make food. Now I'm going to scoop the food and put it into a bowl. Next I'm going to take the food in the bowl and serve it to a peer. Then we're going to pretend to eat it. Then we're going to put it away. It's called linking single schemas into more complex play activity. Those sequences have to be taught. The fun thing is that you get to step into these play sequences. We write them up in that routine format of whom much prompting etc we're going to do. And teach them through that play sequence. Once the sequence is learned, then they can take and start to adjust and modify that sequence into more creative play ideas.

With the Watch we have to teach the kids sometimes in isolation to share physical space. Mike's going to show you a video this afternoon in the motivation challenging behavior section where a little guy that wasn't too excited about sharing physical space with his brother. Sharing toys and materials, that turn taking, my turn, your turn, is very important which then goes into the turn taking. Listening and responding to the gestural messages of others. When he says, "Come here, come on," What does that mean? Teaching to the nonverbal prosocial behaviors and responding to those verbal messages that kids will say. He just asked you to play what can you say back. All of this is facilitated by the adult.

Under the Say category, initiating nonverbal prosocial messages. Now I'm going to invite you to play. Initiating nonverbal requests. Let's play with this. Initiating verbal requests and comments. And maintaining that conversational exchange. So just some good ideas of how to break that play session into some teachable, doable tasks that can be chained together.

Then we look at who are the social partners? Adults or peers? Sometimes the play starts in an intensive training session with the adult, gradually bringing in the peers. The adult backs out. The play sustains with the peers. We do a lot of teaching in highly structured settings with adult led facilitated interactions, changing it up, mixing it up, making it a little more generalized, again backing the adult out, moving the play or the social skill activity onto more the natural environment, and then facilitating from a distance. Then we look at those child characteristics. Do they have the core skills? Are they able to do the social observation, imitation, and the organization of the play?

When we teach solitary play skills, when the child's at that level, how do we use exploratory toys and activities? What's the repertoire of that? How do you use physical toys and activities? How do you use the manipulative toys? What are the different variations of the theme you can do? And on down the list up to social games. Teaching that solitary play in isolation.

Teaching social skills should focus on mutually enjoyed toys and activities that foster peer acceptance.

So what are the other kids doing? Can the activity actually sustain the engagement of the peers while train the social behavior of the target student. So picking up on activities that all kids will enjoy. We often advise our parents that when you're ready to invite a friend over to a house to play that make sure that it's an activity that will sustain the peer involvement instead of it relying just on the social skills of the target student.

Social intervention should emphasize rule based play activities that allow for parallel play. So we teach what are those rules that turn taking, that sharing. And more emphasis given to teaching social responsively to peers rather than initiations. So in those initial stages can they play, tolerate, interact, participate, then moving into initiation. Then more emphasis given to teaching the use of those nonverbal social behaviors. Drawing attention to what those gestural systems means.

So those social play partner skills: Encourage peers to use nonverbal cue to gain the child's attention. Encourage peers to use verbal and nonverbal cues to wait for the child's response. And supporting the peers in trying to interpret the child's behavioral response. That's the role of the facilitator. Providing peers with the reminders of what to do. So doing a lot of peer prompting during that play. And helping the child to succeed.

When we look at group skills, Mike covered this a little bit this morning. The ability to attend to adult and peers has to be taught in advance. The ability to wait, to take turns, the ability to follow group instructions. We just wrote a sequence for a student the other day that goes into the classroom group activity, the first very familiar activity of singing The Wheels on the Bus Go Round and Round. So when she goes in, joins the group, sings that song for the comfort level, and then we've imbedded the ability to wait, take turns, and follow group instruction before that session is over. So success in the group is a lot about the predictability of the group activity. Knowing in advance, knowing the social requirements, looking at the language requirements that the student is going to need to participate in all those different activities.

So one way that we start to do this that has been pretty successful and popular is arranging play dates. We pick a playmate. Now how do we get our kids to pick a playmate. If you take your class composites and put the kid's pictures on a little poster then the student is able to go up, pick two kids out of the pot. Or maybe the teacher has said, "We have a rotating schedule. Monday, Wednesday, Friday of group of peers." So the student actually goes up and selects a playmate from the pictures on the wall. Matches the playmate to the person, does some kind of an invite to play, verbal or nonverbal, let's go, then they can go to the board that has all the play activities on it, jointly choose what activity to play, set up the play situation facilitated by an adult, and when they're finished, terminate and put the things away, and tell somebody what it is that they've done.

The example, we call it plan-do-recall. So you can see there. Who will you play with? John and Susie. Select the activity. What will you do? Will you color or do you want to go outside and play ball. When you do it, the skills might be to interact, ask questions, make comments. For recall, how can we tell what that was like? So I played crayons with Mary. Those little phrases can also go home in the home communication book so the parent can say, "So tell me something you did at school today." "I played with the crayons with Mary." And then we do some kind of evaluating success. So how was it? Was it a good thing? Was it an OK thing? Or was it not so good of a thing?

Another example of a way that we start to work and track our child peer interaction is to look at as we facilitate these interactions: location of the child. Is he with the child alone? Is he with an adult, a peer or group being two or three. And then what happened within that? Was there an interaction with an adult? Was it prompted or unprompted? Did the child approach the peer? Did the peer approach the child? That can be coded with a C or a P. Did the child observe the peer during that interaction? Did he imitate the action? Was there some kind of reciprocal play? Was it goal directed play? And then within that, was there communication? If the child initiated, did the peer respond? Did the child respond back to the peer? Offer giving materials. Was there some mutual sharing? Was there inappropriate behavior by the peer, physical or verbal? What was the child's reaction to the peer? Was it positive, negative, or neutral? And then the peer's reaction to the child. Was it positive, negative, neutral? So what we'll often do is we'll use this just as your task analysis and baseline in a peer interaction what's happening. It helps you target which part of that you're going to really directly teach and then put into the larger play schemas. So this has been a really helpful tool. Also in the book of your books, there are a few more examples of some of these kinds of sequences.

Ultimately teaching those play skills leads into the value of friendships and that's a major issue, is it not, for some of the kids on the autism spectrum disorders. In order to have friendships, these are some of the critical friendship skills: We learn alternative perspectives and solutions. That's why in that beginning play sequence, we don't have the student just pick the play activity, and tell the kids what they're doing. How do we start to mutually negotiate a joint play? We help them facilitate appropriate conflict resolution. When something happens, what will you do? Tell them to go away. Tell them to stop. How do we give them the power of facilitation? Acquire team skills for employments. We know friendships are very important in the workplace. The basis of adult personal relationships. We talked yesterday about how it's really the social skills and the generalized skills that lead to future success in the teenage and adult years. It can be for many the antidote to depression.

Characteristics of friendships; the student has to have motivation for friendships. Do we have some kids that you work with that really aren't motivated for friendships. So how do we increase that motivation? I think I shared just briefly the student that was in your school district that said the comment, "I hope you weren't trying to get me friends in there." Well and it was fairly easy to resolve at that point because what we said is, "Well I'm sorry didn't work out with Tony. That must have been the kind of friend that you don't want to spend time with. But there's a lot of other friends out there." And he that about it for a while and was like, "Oh there's more friends?" How we teach a lot of motivation for friendships is again through those shared activities and interests. That why you've got to have that mutual sharing within the activity that sustains. Immaturity, characteristics of our kids, very immature in their friendships, very dominating, very my way or the highway. Controlling the activity, describing what a friend should and should not do.

Now I had an observation of a student, two weeks ago in Oregon on the coast where he came in and the referral had been: We've got this new little kid in the kindergarten. He's got some really challenging behaviors. And when I watched him on the playground, he's engages in the play, etc. And then when the bell rings, he throws this immediate escalated temper tantrum of, "No. No. No. I'm not going to go in!" Well the staff is interpreting this as a challenging behavior. I mean it is, but he just doesn't want to go in.

So then they encourage him, calm him down. He goes to get in line and what do you think the next social error is that he might have made in line? Push, shove, because he has to be where? In front. So that was another one. His teacher was going, "Look at this kid. He won't come in when the bell rings. He won't hold his place in line." So he's in trouble, and the teacher looked at me and said, "I want you to take him and talk to him about that inappropriate behavior. You know I'd love to. And this is a very bright little guy. So after they come, we into the classroom, I looked at this little guy and I said, "So why don't you and I go chat." And immediately he goes, "No. No. No. I can't do that." And he runs away yelling and screaming. Then he stops and he comes back very calmly and he says, "I haven't met you." Don't talk to strangers rule, right? So see how we were just violating his rule structure. So I said, "Well that's simple enough to fix. I'm Mrs. Hall and I'm here to visit your classroom." And he told me who he was. He readily went with me. Then in this little talk, I was doing the comic strip conversation of these are some things that are happening and here's your teacher and your teacher tells you what to do but you're not doing it. And then I stated, you'll love this, "the rule at school is, first you do what the teacher wants you to do, then you get to do what you want to do." What response do you think I got? He escalated. He goes, "No. No. No. That's not my rule. My rule has to be first I do what I want to do and then maybe I'll do what you want to do." So violation of his rule. Then as we put him back into the group, the group's all joining. He was about ten minutes behind the group. He had to sit in the group exactly like how he always sits even though there were kids in the way and then he had to go through the sequence of his group activity that he'd missed before he could catch up and be comfortable. So you tell me where you think that kid's going. So when we teach these social skills, he had all of those violations of what will constitute friendships. On my second visit, the teacher reported, "Oh he's made so much progress." So I go in and now he's tolerating the kids, but in this little wait time before instruction starts, talk about controlling the activity. He's going, "You do this. You do this. You do this. This is the way we do it." He grabs the materials from another student and says, "These are mine." So that controlling the play. So those are skills that we can't just talk and say, "You know it would be a good idea if you didn't do that." You have to teach the replacement skill.

When we look at stages of friendship development. Level 1, at three to six years, there's a recognition of turn taking. The play is very egocentric. It's one-way assistance usually. Proximity and physical attributes. This is typical development. So the summary of that is: Why is John your friend? The answer would be because I like him. He lives next door. Think of your own childhood experiences. This kids that you're friends with, it was proximity who your parents knew. You didn't know exactly why you liked them but they were available to play with. Level 2 happens at six to nine years where we have reciprocity and being fair starts to come into play. Mutual assistance with each other. Liking the same activities. Aware of the preferences feelings and thoughts of the other person. Start to form in. And so that summary might be something to the effect of: Mary comes to my party and I go to hers. She's nice to me. So you get that mutual benefit starting. And then as you look at stage 3 which is the middle school years. Aware of the other's opinion, shared experiences and interests constitute friendships. Greater selectivity and durability of the friendship. So now you've got lasting relationships. They can shift but they last for a while. Gender splits is usually girls and boys in groups. And trust, loyalty, and keeping promises.

And then the last stage, for thirteen and on up we get peer group acceptance is more important than parents. That's what Mike was alluding to with his own kids the other day. When they start to not like you very well. Greater depth and breadth of self disclosure so they're going to really start sharing at a deep level. Desire to be understood by friends. And different types of friendships. So now we're at that more mature level of He accepts me for who I am. We think the same way about things. So as we teach friendship skills, it's important that we know that developmental sequence and that we stay within those guidelines.

So here's just an example of some of those entry level skills for friendships, requirements for friendships. Take a moment and think about a student you work with and what are the skills up here that they tend to violate. Are they able to make complements? Able to accept suggestions. Show any kind of empathy for another person. Reciprocity and sharing. Conflict resolution. So these are the elements that we have to start to assess. Of course where do we start to teach those replacement skills so that socialization can occur?

When we look at teaching social skills. It's beyond that exposure. There's a lot of work that needs to happen in this area. Placement alone does not result in increased acceptance by peers. Or the modeling of appropriate peer behavior. We have to work and teach to those skills just like we do the other areas. The frequency of social interactions is greater in inclusive settings than in segregated, self contained classrooms. That's kind of a no brainer. But it's not that just being in those classrooms is what's going to teach social competency.

When we teach social skills we look at those social skill groups. I remember one of the first social skill groups, I facilitated for a student, I failed to tell the teacher that I wanted this student with a couple of typical peers who demonstrated social competency. So it was a student who the big issue was tantruming, escalating at a very high level when he didn't win a game. Now this kid was a national chess competitor. And where this became a real problem is that you know how those chess competitions can have a pretty wide audience. They can be televised and so he would be playing this game and when he didn't win, do a full meltdown right there in front of the cameras etc. So the goal of the program was to start to teach what's the behavior you should do when you don't win the game. So the teacher sent me my target student and about three peers who all had incredibly low and poor social skills. And so when we tried to set up this group, trying to get modeling an appropriate replacement behavior for the tantrum was almost impossible. So it was like whoa we have got to clarify. When you do a social skill group and you pull kids out into a teaching setting to teach the skill, make sure that your peer support has appropriate social competency for the task. How that progressed is that we did teach him through examples and non examples. So we set up low strategy games that didn't have much of a probability of being able to predict whether you're going to win or not. So we used things like frogger and candyland. Although this kid...candyland almost backfired on us. Do you know that there is a strategy to candyland? You can figure out. He would calculate the color of squares and then he got towards the top he know how many more opportunities he had to get to the top and if another student got the color that he needed then we'd get an escalation because he know he wasn't going to win because that color wasn't going to be available and that's what he needed. Talk about stress! This is supposed to be fun. We took that group to the point where he could model the appropriate response in the sheltered setting. Then we moved the group, still in the sheltered setting but with less facilitation. Pretty much now it was Johnny and the peers playing.

And then we moved it from the sheltered situation into the classroom with less structure but with facilitation, in the classroom without facilitation, and then finally stand back and let's see what happens. Here was the end point of all this teaching. When he was playing chess and he didn't win, his strategy was to look at the peer, shake their hand, say good game, excuse himself, and go out in the hallway and throw his tantrum. We never got rid of the tantrum completely. But it's like, "Hold it. Wait it. Do the right thing. Then get the heck out of there before you blow apart." So it was a successful social skills training program.

Sometimes you use the strategy to try to emphasize the right behavior of slow down the action, freeze the cue. So the child can focus on the cue. There was some research a while back that looked at kids with Asperger's and typical peers when they watched a social scenario and they measured with infrared beams the eye gaze. And what happened with the eye gaze is that the typically developing peers scanned the entire scenarios. So watching sitcom, they were looking at mom, at dad, at the kids, what they were doing. And the child with Asperger's was just focused on the mouth, what they were saying. So it's like freeze the frame, look at the cues. You can use the cue cards from the second step program. They're often very good at freezing that cue.

Teach theory as well as practice. Make sure that kids not only just learn how to do it but start to understand why you would do it. Some of you may have heard Temple Grandin in one of her statements, I always appreciate is she says, "You know I do this stuff. I've become a very social person. I don't understand why you do it. But I do it because I know I need to become successful." And then there was one presentation she added on, "However I just can't relate to that Romeo and Juliet stuff. Why would it ever get to that level?" So try to teach the theory as well as the practice. Social stories. We've probably all have experience with the social stories, the mini social chains that set the rule for the group. They're very effective. Comic strip conversations. Drawing it out. The nice thing about a comic strip is you can do it right there and then and because it is kind of stick figures, even I can make some meaning out of that. Drawing it in frames, the speech bubbles. I find when I do it with kids, it's the think bubbles that really get the attention. So when you did this what do you think John was thinking? He was thinking oh that's weird. It's very effective. Friendship diaries. Writing about friends. Experiences with friends. Matching similar interests. That's probably one of the biggest most successful, again. Computers. But then taking the computer game, doing more of the turn taking, starting the friendship there, moving it on to other activities. Local and penpal registries. We have a lot of kids that are emailing friends. A good way to do the written language. So write John and tell him what you did at school today, in doing the email. Adult support groups. There's actually a website for adults with Asperger's called Whoops Wrong Planet. Has anyone seen that one? Where they can write and tell about what it's like. Hobby and interest groups. Academia. Internet chat lines. But of course beware of that. Monitor that very carefully for your kids.

You know when we look at those adult support groups. I have a sister who is a counselor and she had clients who were a husband and wife. The husband was a doctor. In this counseling they were deciding whether they should terminate their relationship because things just weren't working, she started to figure out that maybe the doctor was living life on the spectrum somewhere. So she had a private meeting with the doctor and said this is some of the stuff that I'm thinking. What do you think? And he says yeah that's probably true. Kind of a rigid thought. Not really able to emphasize with his wife's needs.

Well would it be OK if we share this with your wife. So then the wife comes in and she's explaining this kind of phenomenon and what it is and she said the wife took a deep cleansing breath and said Ok then what do we do. Because it put that understanding around it. It's like ooh he's not just being insensitive and uncaring. This is where he says from the perspective.

Teaching social skills. Videotaped role plays help. Years ago before we even knew what we were doing, when I was in Alaska, a friend and I took our two sons and we videotaped appropriate behavior on the playground. Now the interesting thing is people thought it was funny because we were videotaping our sons demonstrating appropriate behavior but we would use those videotapes to show the visual of when you swing on the swings, this is what you do. When you take turns, so we spent quite a bit of time. However that was for the purpose of the video. After we had completed it, about three weeks after that, I get an emergency call from the school nurse explaining that Brady had been swinging with his hat over his eyes and hit the crossbars and now had a good cut on his forehead. Didn't we just do the videos of appropriate methods of using the swing? Hmm I wonder if that backfired?

Realistic books. There's a lot on the market if you go to the Tony Atwood website. They have a lot of materials for books on teaching social skills through story characterization. Choosing an animal to represent somebody's personality. That strategy, when we do self regulation training for kids and you look at that escalation cycle. What's your body doing when you are calm? When you are kind of attentive and working well? When you're frustrated? When you're angry? What this is referring to is that those feelings are so abstract that it often works to apply to something concrete that they have experience with. For example not too long ago. A little guy, he was a first grader. He really could relate to trains. So when he was calm, is when you're just starting the train up. And when he was attentive, that was like you're just rolling down the track and everything is going OK. Because he could relate to what the train was doing and then transfer it back into his feelings and emotions. And then he decided that when he was frustrated and upset, well that's like when the train's moving down the track and it starts to go too fast because they loaded it with too much stuff. And then when he's frustrated and over the top, no surprise, that was a train wreck. We try to apply it to something concrete that has meaning. Heroes with a similar character. Those sometimes work. Initiation and drama, acting it out, role playing.

So here are the questions to ponder when you're teaching social skills in your program. Are there children without disabilities available for daily interaction? Are class activities structured to promote social interaction? Are children without disabilities offered specific instruction to foster interaction with peers with disabilities? Are interactions mostly child directed not teacher directed during free play? Are social skills and goals included in children's IEPs? Does the staff provide children with positive feedback when they're playing appropriately together. So we're not going to take the time to do that right now but that's another one of these self evaluation of when we talk about social skills, how well are we really setting up and creating the opportunities for one of these social skill clusters that kids need to be successful throughout their lives. A lot of times the answer is we've gotten pretty good at including some social skill goals on the IEP but they don't get taught very specifically. It's like we hope and train. Put them in the environment and hope that it works. So when we come on to your site we would love to help you with some specific social skill teaching programs that can enhance the social skills of your students.