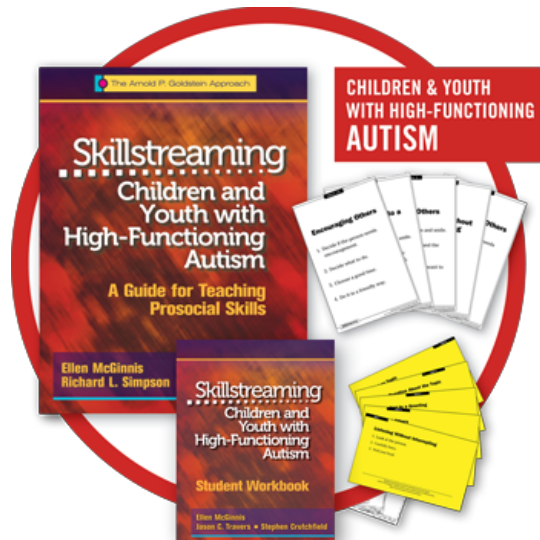


Skillstreaming the Children and Youth with High-Functioning Autism Program Bundle Overview



This PDF represents an overview of the product components contained in the Skillstreaming Product Bundles.

The descriptions are intended to introduce the general characteristics of the items. By reading the Introduction to the program books you will gain a better understanding of Skillstreaming and how to implement the program.

Skillstreaming is designed to be flexible. There is no requirement to work in a linear fashion with this curriculum. If a counselor has had experience conducting interventions with a small group, they will be able to implement the Skillstreaming program.

The program book is foundational to the curriculum. It is essential for successful implementation of this curriculum to first have the program book before attempting to utilize other Skillstreaming products.

We recommend purchasing the product bundle so every practitioner has immediate access to Skillstreaming's numerous components that can be utilized to achieve desired outcomes.

More information can be found on the product web pages at researchpress.com.

Program Book Overview

Skillstreaming is a prosocial learning program designed to help children and youth learn positive ways to have their needs met.

This guide employs Skillstreaming’s evidence-based four-part training approach—modeling, role-playing, performance feedback, and generalization—to teach prosocial skills in a small-group context.

The book includes a total of 80 skills specifically tailored to the needs of learners with high-functioning autism and related disorders.

The introduction offers a framework for understanding high-functioning autism disorders, defines unique characteristics of this population, and emphasizes the role of individualized coaching and the assistance of supportive peers in helping these learners meet their unique challenges. The remainder of the book presents skills and related materials.

Skill Groups

- **Group I: Relationship Skills (Beginning and Advanced)**
Sample skills: Listening Without Interrupting • Staying on Topic • Sharing • Ending a Conversation • Communicating Preferences
- **Group II: Social Comprehension**
Sample skills: Reading Others • Giving Information Nonverbally • Respecting Another’s Boundaries • Taking Another’s Perspective
- **Group III: Self-Regulation**
Sample skills: Regulating Your Attention • Dealing with Anxiety • No Means No • Dealing with Boredom • Affirming Yourself
- **Group IV: Problem Solving**
Sample skills: Determining Private Information • Planning for Stressful Situations • Considering Alternatives • When a Rule Doesn’t Work • Making a Complaint
- **Group V: Understanding Emotions**
Sample skills: Knowing Your Feelings • Feeling Different • Showing Affection • Recognizing Another’s Feelings • Understanding Another’s Intentions
- **Group VI: School-Related Skills**
Sample skills: Ignoring Distractions • Taking a Break • Following Adult Directions • Organizing Materials • Dealing with Transitions

Each skill includes an outline for group leaders with helpful advice for teaching specific skill steps and a listing of appropriate role-play situations. Two reproducible homework reports are provided for each skill. Appendixes provide skill checklists and other evaluation forms, as well

as dialogue from two sample Skillstreaming sessions. Reproducible forms and handouts for this title are available on our downloads page.

NOTE: It is essential for successful implementation of this curriculum to first have the high-functioning autism program book before attempting to utilize other related Skillstreaming products in the high-functioning autism category.

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Introduction

High-functioning autism disorders are neurologically based conditions (Myles & Simpson, 1998) characterized by social skills deficits (Zager, Wehmeyer, & Simpson, 2012). Children and adolescents with high-functioning autism and similar disorders such as Asperger disorder typically possess normal cognitive and language abilities but struggle with a variety of social skills deficits in interactions with others (American Psychiatric Association, 2000, 2013). Social interaction deficits include difficulties reading subtle social cues, forming and maintaining age-appropriate adult and peer relationships, understanding nonverbal behavior, social reciprocity, and following fundamental social standards. These learners also tend to engage in stereotypic activities, including fixating on narrow areas of interest. It is not unusual for such youth to be described by others as socially stiff and uncoordinated, inflexible, and lacking in tact and empathy (Baron-Cohen, 1995; Simpson & Myles, 2011).

As these children become older, and especially during their adolescent years, social difficulties are often intensified by changes with puberty and complicated by teenage social norms and expectations. While these youth often improve their skills in basic communication, they frequently continue to struggle with social communication (Schall & McDonough, 2010). As a result, even when they actively try to engage with others, they often experience rejection and social isolation. These social challenges have a profound impact not only on the individual who is struggling, but also on teachers, peers in the classroom, parents, and the community.

WHY TEACH SOCIAL SKILLS?

Despite the challenges children and youth with high-functioning autism disorders face, there is strong reason to believe that, with appropriate education and support, they have the potential to lead effectively normal lives (Simpson & Myles, 2011). Indeed, many attend college and have successful careers (Harpur, Lawlor, & Fitzgerald, 2004).

Research and experience tell us that individuals with high-functioning autism disorders who receive training in social skills and who are provided support in doing so are better able to respond to social demands, interact with greater social ease, and become more resilient (Baker, 2004; Garcia Winner, 2008; Koegel, Kuriakose, Singh, & Koegel, 2012). Specifically, learning socially desirable skills has been shown to positively impact academic and school-related success, employment success, independent living, and overall quality of life (Chan et al., 2009; Cotugno, 2009; Stichter, O'Connor, Herzog, Lierheimer, & McGhee, 2012), while the failure to learn and use appropriate social skills is associated with more negative outcomes (Lee, Odom, & Loftin, 2007; Simpson, Ganz, & Mason, 2012).

Skillstreaming has been employed successfully with a wide range of individuals and in a wide range of settings. This volume extends the Skillstreaming approach to social skills instruction to address the specific social learning needs of this group of children and adolescents. The same skill-learning procedures as for other Skillstreaming programs—modeling, role play, feedback, and generalization—provide the foundation for instruction with this population. However, a

significant difference concerns the presumption that Skillstreaming instruction will be integrated into existing overall educational and therapeutic plans for these learners, and that, to the degree necessary, they will receive individualized skills instruction and one-to-one coaching from mental health providers, teachers, peers, and families.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

In 1943, Leo Kanner first identified what he called “early infantile autism” in 11 children in whom he observed high intelligence, a profound preference for being alone, and an obsessive insistence on the preservation of sameness. In 1944, Viennese physician Hans Asperger observed a group of children who displayed some typical autistic behaviors, such as self-stimulation and insistence on environmental sameness. In his description, he identified these individuals as socially odd, socially uninformed, and awkward, but with at least average intellectual ability and normal language development. Asperger contended that this newly identified disorder had a neurodevelopmental cause.

Through the 1960s, psychiatrists continued to view autism as a form of childhood schizophrenia. Also popular through the 1960s was the now-debunked idea that autism resulted from emotionally distant mothering. The 1970s brought understanding that autism stemmed from biological differences in brain development. Objective criteria for diagnosing autism followed in the 1980s, as did increased interest in Asperger disorder, when Wing (1981) brought the disorder to the attention of researchers and clinicians by translating Asperger’s original work into English. Wing further clarified the disorder through extensive clinical descriptions and case examples.

Until recently, Asperger disorder and other high-functioning autism disorders were included as subcategories of pervasive developmental disorder in the two common diagnostic manuals used by mental health clinicians and others: the fourth edition of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM-IV; American Psychiatric Association, 2000) and the corresponding interna-

tional classification system, the *International Statistical Classification of Diseases and Related Health Problems* (World Health Organization, 2007).

Although some have advocated approaching these two disorders as separate and distinct (e.g., Polirstok & Houghteling, 2006), over time the two conditions have been increasingly viewed as existing within a single classification. Today, autism, Asperger disorder, and other related disorders are commonly included on the continuum of autism-related disabilities known as the autism spectrum. The fifth edition of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM-V; American Psychiatric Association, 2013) lists Asperger disorder as a component of the autism spectrum, no longer identifying it as a separate diagnosis.

It is important to note that this diagnostic reclassification is somewhat controversial among those who feel that Asperger disorder is in fact a separate entity. However, as is consistent with the most current conceptual understanding and usage, Asperger disorder, high-functioning autism, and related disorders are referred to throughout this book as *high-functioning autism disorders*.

POPULATION CHARACTERISTICS

Each child and adolescent with a high-functioning autism disorder is unique, with highly variable intellectual, cognitive, language, behavioral, adaptive behavior, and social abilities (Heflin & Alaimo, 2007; Thompson, 2007). However, learners with high-functioning autism disorders do tend to express their differences across the following main areas.

Social Skills

By definition, children and youth with high-functioning autism disorders demonstrate social excesses and deficits that frequently persist into adulthood. These youth are typically socially motivated and are interested in interacting with others. Their interactions, however, tend to be unskilled, and often these individuals struggle in carrying on age-expected social interactions, including participating in organized group activities and appropriate play. These deficits appear to be more a func-

tion of a lack of understanding of social customs and poor skill in participating in social interactions than a lack of interest in or fear of social contact. Learners with these disorders, for example, may appear ill-mannered or odd because they do not take turns in play and conversations or fail to understand a peer's social cues. These individuals, whether school-age or adult, are often easy targets for bullying and teasing (Simpson & Myles, 2011). Often by the time they are adults, these children and youth have become unwilling to engage socially with others, perhaps due to social rejection and other negative responses to their attempts to connect with others.

Some individuals in this group may be socially gregarious and socially active; others may withdraw from social interaction. Still others are often able to participate in routine social interactions (e.g., join and participate in an assigned cooperative group in a classroom) yet find it difficult to engage in extended contact and unstructured social interactions or form close friendships based on shared interests. Wherever they fall on the social continuum, they are typically perceived as socially stiff, emotionally blunted, self-centered, rigid, and lacking in social understanding. In spite of their frequent lack of social awareness, many of these individuals are aware of their social differences, and as a result may suffer from feelings of poor self-worth.

Emotional and Behavioral Characteristics

It is common for those with high-functioning autism disorders to experience emotional vulnerability and high levels of anxiety and stress, and to communicate these feelings through inappropriate or aberrant behaviors. A variety of stressors impact emotions and behaviors, including changes in routines and schedules, being unexpectedly thrust into unfamiliar social surroundings with unknown people, pressure to perform within a set time or within a performance standard, and feeling a loss of control or inability to predict what may happen (e.g., in unstructured or new situa-

tions). In other words, when persons with these disorders experience behavior problems it is most likely due to social ineptness, obsessive interests, high stress, or anxiety. Furthermore, these feelings and problems are likely to reduce their motivation for further social interaction and contact.

As these individuals get older, they are also likely to develop additional social and mental health problems, such as depression (Attwood, 2007; Barnhill, 2001; Tantam, 2000) and increased distress and anxiety in social situations (Cesaroni & Garber, 1991; Ghaziuddin, Weidmer-Mikhail, & Ghaziuddin, 1998). Other conditions that commonly co-occur with high-functioning autism disorders include obsessive-compulsive disorder, bipolar disorder, anxiety, affective disorders, attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder, and psychosis (American Psychiatric Association, 2013; Bregman & Higdon, 2012; Volkmar & Klin, 2000). Such comorbid conditions may further complicate social performance.

Language and Communication Characteristics

Unlike children and youth with classic forms of autism, those with high-functioning autism disorders typically do not display clinically significant language delays (American Psychiatric Association, 2013; Thompson, 2007), and, in general, they acquire and use words and phrases within generally expected developmental norms. Their communication, however, may be described as "odd in its use" (Frith, 1991, p. 3). While there is some disagreement among professionals related to language delays and deficits (American Psychiatric Association, 2013; Mesibov, Shea, & Adams, 2001; Wetherby & Prizant, 2000), there is little argument that these children and youth manifest a variety of abnormal communication characteristics, particularly in their pragmatic, social, and conversational language skills (e.g., one-sided monologues). For example, a child may repeat the same phrase over and over; talk with exaggerated inflections or in a monotone; discuss at length a single topic that is of little interest to others; or have difficulty sustaining conversation unless it

focuses on a particular, narrowly defined topic of their interest. The adult-like, pedantic speaking style of some children and adolescents may further lessen their appeal to their peers.

Nonverbal communication deficits such as standing closer to another person than is customarily accepted, making unusual gestures or movements while talking, intensely staring at another person for long periods, maintaining abnormal body posture, failing to make eye contact or displaying an inexpressive face, failing to use or interpret conventional gestures and facial expressions, and paraverbal deficits (abnormal voice quality, monotonic voice) further impact the social acceptance of these individuals.

While a child with a high-functioning autism disorder may develop language commensurate with his or her nondisabled peers, other language and communication challenges exist that further complicate both social and academic learning. For example, learners may have difficulty comprehending theoretical, conceptual, and abstract ideas; understanding and correctly using figures of speech such as metaphors, parables, and idioms; and grasping the meaning and intent of rhetorical and metaphorical questions (Shore, 2003). Because these conventions and language styles are commonly used by teachers and occur in school texts, these deficits may have a negative effect on students' academic success. Inappropriate behaviors, anxiety, or avoidance may also be responses in reaction to the lack of understanding and confusion in both academic and social situations.

Cognitive Characteristics

As previously noted, a defining characteristic of high-functioning autism disorders is average or above-average intellectual capacity (American Psychiatric Association, 2013; World Health Organization, 2007). Several researchers have reported that these individuals display an uneven cognitive profile on measures of intelligence and cognition, including the widely used Wechsler intelligence scales (Wechsler, 1989, 1991). For example, significantly higher scores on performance

items (and thus Performance IQ scores) when compared with verbal performance and Verbal IQ scores have been noted (Ehlers et al., 1997; Lincoln, Courchesne, Kilman, Elmasian, & Allen, 1988). More specifically, the individuals assessed obtained their lowest scores on the Comprehension subtest, which assesses understanding of social mores and interpersonal situations and is related to one's social judgment, common sense, and grasp of social conventionality.

Several theories have been proposed to explain the uneven cognitive performance. One theory suggests that individuals with high-functioning autism disorders have a theory of mind deficit (Baron-Cohen, Golan, Wheelwright, & Hill, 2004; Baron-Cohen et al., 1985). "Theory of mind" refers to an individual's ability to think about and use information related to one's own and others' intentions, beliefs, and mental states. A theory of mind deficit may also help explain the weaknesses in perspective taking and empathy characteristic of individuals with these disorders.

Academic and Learning Characteristics

While the vast majority of these learners have average intellectual abilities, they often experience difficulties in academic performance (Zager & Dreyfus, 2012). Specific difficulties include communication deficits, in combination with obsessive and narrowly defined interests; concrete, inflexible, and literal thinking styles; poor problem-solving ability; weak organizational skills; and difficulty in discriminating relevant from irrelevant information. As a result, some children and youth with these disorders are diagnosed with learning disabilities (Attwood, 2007; Frith, 1991; Siegel et al., 1996). These learners also have a tendency to resist academic subjects that don't align with their special interests, further impacting their academic success.

Students with high-functioning autism disorders may demonstrate notable capability to comprehend factual material (Church, Alisanski, & Amanullah, 2000), yet this strength does not always translate into high academic achievement. For example, Griswold, Barnhill, Myles, Hagi-

wara, and Simpson (2002) reported that academic achievement scores in their sample of youth diagnosed with Asperger disorder and high-functioning autism ranged from significantly below average to significantly above average. Relative strengths were found in oral expression and reading recognition; relative weaknesses were identified in listening comprehension and written language. Low mathematics scores were also found, especially in using math skills to solve application problems. Students who participated in the study also had significant difficulties in the areas of critical thinking and problem solving.

Finally, these learners also frequently have difficulty applying and generalizing previously learned knowledge and skills to new situations and problems. Thus, even when they have mastered specific subject matter such as math facts and principles, they frequently have difficulty using what they have learned to solve problems.

Sensory Characteristics

Kanner (1943) and Asperger (1944) both observed that children with autism and those with Asperger disorder were prone to unusual responses to sensory stimuli. These reactions have been validated by researchers (Dunn, 2008) as well as regularly confirmed by countless teachers and parents who watch, sometimes with anguish, as students struggle to deal with loud and unpredictable sounds, unanticipated touch from others, and so forth. Some children have an obsessive insistence on wearing a particular type of clothing (e.g., comfortable sweatpants), prefer certain foods or food textures, or engage in self-stimulatory responses such as repeatedly spinning objects, especially when they experience stress, fatigue, or sensory overload (Myles, Cook, Miller, Rinner, & Robbins, 2000). Such behavioral excesses impact both their ability and willingness to participate in planned school, family, and community activities.

Physical and Motor Skills

Wing (1981) observed that children with high-functioning autism have a tendency to have

poor motor coordination and balance problems. These observations have been confirmed by others (Attwood, 2007; Dunn, 2008; Smith, 2000; Smith & Bryson, 1994). Thus, many children and adolescents with these disorders are clumsy and uncoordinated, making it difficult for them to participate successfully in games that call for good motor skills. These problems significantly affect their ability to interact in social situations and may contribute to poor self-esteem and lack of acceptance from others. Fine motor skill problems have implications for a variety of school activities, such as handwriting and art (Todd & Reid, 2007).

NEW SKILLS AND SKILL GROUPINGS

Existing Skillstreaming curricula have been used successfully with a variety of children and youth, including individuals with Asperger disorder and high-functioning autism (Lopata et al., 2006, 2008; Tse et al., 2007). Why, then, are new skills presented to guide work with learners with high-functioning autism? In brief, youth with these disorders respond best when complex social behaviors are separated into small amounts of information. For example, when teaching how to deal effectively with anxiety, a youth must first recognize anxiety, decide what has created this emotion, and then plan to deal with it. It is more effective for these youth, then, to learn three discrete skills: Recognizing Anxiety (Skill 34), Deciding What Causes Your Anxiety (Skill 35), and, finally, Dealing with Anxiety (Skill 36).

In addition, the skills included in this curriculum have been designed to relate directly to the needs of learners with high-functioning autism. Specifically, skills are organized according to the following six groups: Relationship Skills (Beginning and Advanced), Social Comprehension, Self-Regulation, Problem Solving, Understanding Emotions, and School-Related Skills. Table 1 lists the 80 skills in these categories; the rationale for teaching the skills in these groupings is next discussed.

Table 1: Skillstreaming Curriculum for Youth with High-Functioning Autism Disorders

Group I: Relationship Skills

Beginning Relationship Skills

1. Listening Without Interrupting
2. Greeting Others
3. Responding to a Greeting
4. Asking a Question About the Topic
5. Staying on Topic
6. Responding to Questions
7. Taking Turns
8. Complimenting Others
9. Helping Others
10. Encouraging Others
11. Cooperating with Others
12. Sharing
13. Asking a Favor

Advanced Relationship Skills

14. Starting a Conversation
15. Continuing a Conversation
16. When to Introduce a New Topic
17. Accepting a Topic Change
18. Ending a Conversation
19. Responding to Offers to Join In
20. Asking to Join In
21. Communicating Preferences
22. Accepting Another's Opinion

Group II: Social Comprehension

23. Reading Others
24. Reading the Environment
25. Using a Friendly Voice
26. Using a Respectful Voice
27. Giving Information Nonverbally
28. Attending to a Model
29. Respecting Another's Boundaries
30. Showing Interest in Others
31. Understanding Differences
32. Taking Another's Perspective

Group III: Self-Regulation

33. Regulating Your Attention
34. Recognizing Anxiety
35. Deciding What Causes Your Anxiety
36. Dealing with Anxiety
37. Checking Your Voice and Interests
38. No Means No
39. Using Self-Control
40. Dealing with Change
41. Dealing with Boredom
42. Responding to Authority
43. Checking Your Behavior
44. Affirming Yourself

Group IV: Problem Solving

45. Determining Private Information
46. Understanding Rules of Swearing
47. Understanding Rules of Touch
48. Planning for Stressful Situations
49. Defining a Problem
50. Considering Alternatives
51. Choosing an Alternative
52. When to Change Strategies
53. When a Rule Doesn't Work
54. Giving Feedback
55. Seeking Attention
56. Accepting Attention
57. Making a Complaint
58. When You Don't Understand

Group V: Understanding Emotions

59. Knowing Your Feelings
60. Feeling Different
61. Expressing Your Feelings
62. Calming Your Feelings
63. Showing Affection
64. Recognizing Another's Feelings
65. Showing Concern for Another

- 66. Understanding Another's Intentions
- 67. Dealing with Another's Anger

Group VI: School-Related Skills

- 68. Asking for Help
- 69. Ignoring Distractions
- 70. Contributing to Discussions
- 71. Taking a Break
- 72. Setting a Goal

- 73. Completing Assignments
- 74. Following Adult Directions
- 75. Asking for Information
- 76. Organizing Materials
- 77. Making Corrections
- 78. Preparing for Class
- 79. Dealing with Transitions
- 80. Interrupting

Relationship Skills

Relationships with both peers and adults are hampered by the social characteristics of high-functioning autism disorders. Interactions with others are often one-sided, with the learner's attempting to control the play or conversation. When a peer desires to change the topic or engage in another play activity, the learner often becomes distressed and may act out or withdraw. Social rules, when learned, are often applied universally. Lacking the social nuance of "tact," the learner may make comments that offend or irritate others without understanding that doing so creates embarrassment for the other person. Friendships are a protective factor and help build resiliency to deal effectively with life's stressors. However, while improvements in many areas have been found as youth with these disorders grow older, friendships are the area with the least improvement (Seltzer et al., 2003).

Social skills within this group, organized into beginning and advanced categories, focus on improving a range of prosocial behaviors. Beginning relationship skills include Listening Without Interrupting (Skill 1) and Sharing (Skill 12), whereas more advanced skills include Communicating Preferences (Skill 21) and Accepting Another's Opinion (Skill 22). Skills included are intended to provide learners with new behaviors in order to successfully participate in a variety of social activities and settings.

Social Comprehension

Social comprehension is defined by Weiss (2013) as "the complicated social responses and initiations that are part of navigating the social world. Individuals are required to understand social rules, engage in behaviors that are expected in given contexts, and interpret social nuances" (p. 36). Often, as a result of misinterpreting social cues and nonverbal messages, learners with high-functioning autism disorders have difficulty understanding and adapting to differences in people, situations, and settings. Lack of social comprehension leads to communication challenges for these learners, including the tendency to interpret simply what was stated versus considering the context and other variables (Bolick, 2001). In other words, these individuals interpret what was said rather than what was meant. This deficit may be due in part to their inability to understand nonverbal language or nonverbal social cues. These learners further find it challenging to focus on more than one thing at a time and as a result often miss salient nonverbal information (Moyes, 2001). For example, they typically find it difficult to attend to an event, activity, or object that a social partner is attending to and at the same time monitor the other's attention to the object (Jones & Carr, 2004). Two components are included in such "joint attention": following the gaze of another person to an object or activity (responding to joint attention) and using the direction of one's gaze to direct another's attention

(Mundy et al., 2007). Other social communication challenges noted by Bolick (2001) relate to lack of abilities in “reading between the lines” of an exchange, knowledge of unspoken rules, and expression of modesty and discretion.

As previously discussed, theory of mind refers to an individual’s ability to infer the mental state of another person—the other’s feelings, desires, beliefs, thoughts, and perceptions (Bolick, 2001; Weiss, 2013). Through theory of mind, we are able to make sense of the world around us to better understand various social situations and predict the behavior of others (Bellini, 2006; Ozonoff & Miller, 1995). Some consider deficits in theory of mind as defects in the drive for coherence, or the way in which pieces of information are shaped into coherent pictures (Baron-Cohen, 2001). These deficits contribute to the challenge in determining what is useful information versus what is not useful. Also referred to as “mindsight,” this ability is often absent in youth with high-functioning autism disorders (Goleman, 2006). These youth often appear “mind-blind,” or insensitive to what others are thinking or feeling (Baron-Cohen, 2001).

Addressing deficits in theory of mind involves teaching learners perspective taking, thus addressing what is perhaps the central social deficit of autism (Weiss, 2013). Without this skill, it is quite improbable that learners will express empathy toward others. Grizenko et al. (2000) found more lasting improvement from social skills instruction when social perspective taking was added. Specifically, students who are able to show empathy and understanding of others and their perspectives are less likely to act out aggressively toward others, are more accepted and sought after in social situations, are more able to participate in resolving interpersonal disputes, and tend to be more satisfied with themselves.

The purpose of this group of skills, then, is to teach “social thinking skills,” such as understanding and reacting to others on the basis of their thoughts and perceptions. Skills within this section emphasize nonverbal (e.g., Skill 24, Reading

the Environment) and paraverbal (e.g., Skill 25, Using a Friendly Voice) communication, as well as perspective taking (e.g., Skill 32, Taking Another’s Perspective; Skill 30, Showing Interest in Others).

Self-Regulation

Learners with high-functioning autism disorders are often hypersensitive to sound, sight, taste, smell, and touch (Rosaler, 2004) and show strong preferences for certain foods, types of clothing, or textures. Many are also fearful that they may be exposed to unpleasant stimuli (Foley & Staples, 2003) and may therefore respond in a negative manner even without direct exposure. Myles and Southwick (1999) refer to this type of response as a “defensive panic attack,” resulting from a lack of social understanding, high stress level, lack of environmental control, or perseverating on a certain interest. Such attacks may occur without obvious warning. Safran, Safran, and Ellis (2003) further note that problematic behaviors in need of self-monitoring include off-task questioning, lack of monitoring voice level, not attending to personal space, and frequent interrupting. Toward the goal of dealing with these and other issues, the skills in this grouping therefore focus on behaviors that teach learners to self-monitor and manage their own behaviors.

Skills to develop and improve self-regulation include Checking Your Voice and Interests (Skill 37), No Means No (Skill 38), and Dealing with Change (Skill 40). Other skills, such as Recognizing Anxiety (Skill 34) and Affirming Yourself (Skill 44), help mitigate internal emotional states that contribute to dysregulation.

Problem Solving

Learners with high-functioning autism disorders tend to see issues and events as bound by rules such as “right or wrong.” This characteristic poses stress and confusion when dealing with complex feelings such as embarrassment or sexual feelings. Such learners also tend to desire rules without exceptions, which creates challenges in problem solving through difficulties, holding onto the facts

of a situation, and mentally testing possible solutions to the problem (Bolick, 2001). Furthermore, it is typical for these learners to have only one strategy to solve a problem. They may persist with this strategy, even though unsuccessful, which may result in a behavioral outburst (Myles & Simpson, 1998). As stated by Weiss (2013), “Children with [these disorders] often have difficulties with deciphering the ambiguity of social problems and evaluating options for a course of action. They may fail to see the range of options or respond impulsively” (p. 44).

Social problem solving skills permit learners to function in a variety of settings and circumstances and with different individuals (Garcia Winner, 2008). Examples of problem-solving skills include Determining Private Information (Skill 45), When a Rule Doesn't Work (Skill 53), and Making a Complaint (Skill 57).

Understanding Emotions

Many learners with high-functioning autism disorders deal with their feelings in inappropriate ways. Understanding the emotions of others, as well as their own, proves challenging, and expressions of feelings often are incongruent with their behavior. For example, a learner who is frustrated may have a meltdown and become aggressive toward property. Another learner who has positive feelings about another person may invade personal boundaries and appear aggressive. Just as these youth have difficulty recognizing and interpreting social cues, they are challenged in understanding and responding appropriately to the context (or “big picture”) of an interaction or feeling. Learners need both motivation and opportunity to use these types of skills (Flavell, Miller, & Miller, 1993).

This group of skills focuses on the emotions that create stress for the individual learner and contribute to negative behaviors and interactions. Skills such as Knowing Your Feelings (Skill 59), Calming Your Feelings (Skill 62), and Feeling Different (Skill 60) help to mitigate this concern. Other skills in this group create a basis for some of the skills included in the Social Comprehen-

sion group, such as Recognizing Another's Feelings (Skill 64) and Showing Concern for Another (Skill 65).

School-Related Skills

As previously noted, learners with these disorders are often challenged by classroom and learning expectations. Executive functioning skills such as self-management, organization, and regulating one's attention are often lacking. Shonkoff and Bales (2011) refer to these skills as “air traffic control” in the brain. As these authors state, “Being able to focus, hold, and work with information in mind, filter distractions, and switch gears is like having an air traffic control system at a busy airport to manage the arrivals and departures of dozens of planes on multiple runways” (p. 1). The lack of such skills creates difficulties in a variety of school and classroom-related behaviors, such as regulating or shifting attention and identifying what to listen to or look for (Bolick, 2001), transitioning, changing routines, sensitivity to stimuli, organization (Batesko, 2007), revising plans as needed, and controlling impulses (Shonkoff et al., 2011).

Because these learners generally have strong skills in some academic areas, teachers and others in the school setting may not understand why their requests to make corrections on assignments, contribute appropriately to class discussions, or follow adult directions are not easily achieved. They may make the assumption that these learners “could do it if they wanted to.” This is a faulty assumption, inasmuch as the skills that enable these learners to accomplish these goals are not within their repertoire.

Skills such as Organizing Materials (Skill 76), Dealing with Transitions (Skill 79), and Completing Assignments (Skill 73) are included for instruction within this skill group.

Skill Combinations and Context

Many learners experience negative reactions from others when challenged with complex social situations. Single-skill responses, even when

performed correctly, prove inadequate. Suppose, for example, Keisha wants to have a conversation with a classmate and uses Starting a Conversation (Skill 14) effectively. However, when the classmate becomes bored with the discussion and changes the topic, she becomes angry and frustrated, walking away while remarking, “I didn’t really want to talk with that stupid kid anyway! He knows nothing!” In another example, Jordan has successfully learned to communicate preferences (Skill 21) but remains socially isolated because he is unable to accept another’s preference or opinion (Skill 22). Or in her desire to be accepted, Isabel frequently offers to help others (Skill 9), but often invades the other person’s boundaries by touching them or standing too close (Skill 29).

Some useful skill combinations include the following:

- ▶ Listening Without Interrupting (Skill 1) and Responding to Questions (Skill 6)
- ▶ Starting a Conversation (Skill 14), Continuing a Conversation (Skill 15) and Ending a Conversation (Skill 18)
- ▶ Reading Others (Skill 23) and Showing Interest in Others (Skill 30)
- ▶ Understanding Differences (Skill 31) and Taking Another’s Perspective (Skill 32)
- ▶ Recognizing Anxiety (Skill 34), Deciding What Causes Your Anxiety (Skill 35), and Dealing with Anxiety (Skill 36)
- ▶ Using Self-Control (Skill 39) and No Means No (Skill 38)
- ▶ Using Self-Control (Skill 39) and Dealing with Change (Skill 40)
- ▶ Defining a Problem (Skill 49), Considering Alternatives (Skill 50), and Choosing an Alternative (Skill 51)
- ▶ Defining a Problem (Skill 49) and Making a Complaint (Skill 57)
- ▶ Knowing Your Feelings (Skill 59) and Expressing Your Feelings (Skill 61)
- ▶ Recognizing Another’s Feelings (Skill 64) and Showing Concern for Another (Skill 65)
- ▶ Using Self-Control (Skill 39) and Dealing with Another’s Anger (Skill 67)
- ▶ Ignoring Distractions (Skill 69) and Completing Assignments (Skill 73)
- ▶ Staying on Topic (Skill 5) and Contributing to Discussions (Skill 70)
- ▶ Reading Others (Skill 23) and Checking Your Voice and Interests (Skill 37)

The context for skill use is also important. For example, the target of skill use (parent, teacher, peer, etc.) may not respond in a manner that helps the learner resolve the conflict or otherwise meet the learner’s needs. At other times, the learner may use a skill proficiently but attempt it with a person not in a position to accept this skill (e.g., starting a conversation with an adult in a manner more appropriate with a peer). In still other cases, a learner may correctly use a skill but choose a poor time or misperceive the appropriateness of the social context. Skill instruction must therefore involve not only individual skill competency but also coaching to perform the skill (or skill combination) at the right time, in the right place, and with the right persons.

SKILLSTREAMING PROGRAM ARRANGEMENTS

Because the needs and abilities of each child and youth with a high-functioning autism disorder are unique, it is impossible to present a standard set of required training supports or to specify hard-and-fast guidelines for the duration or intensity of instruction and generalization efforts. However, the following discussion outlines some important considerations for those implementing Skillstreaming with these learners. Readers may also wish to consult the other Skillstreaming program guides (McGinnis 2012a, 2012b, 2012c) for additional detail, as is appropriate for their learners’ age and developmental level.

Instructional Settings and Team

Skillstreaming instruction may take place in either the school or clinic setting. Typically, in a school setting, the Skillstreaming team consists of a person in a school leadership role, one or two support staff members (e.g., school psychologist, school counselor, paraprofessional), a classroom teacher, a special educator (if the learner receives special education services), and parent(s). If the learner receives special education services, the intervention team may include members of the learner's Individual Education Program (IEP) team. Many youth with high-functioning autism disorders attend treatment clinics outside the school setting. Health centers and autism specialty clinics often provide small-group Skillstreaming instruction in the form of "friendship groups," with the goal of fostering peer interaction and friendships among these learners. In some cases, learners' behavior, attention span, and learning needs indicate that instruction is initially best in a clinic setting. In other cases, if a learner with a high-functioning autism disorder is one of few in the school or has particular needs (e.g., requires low level of distraction or activity), a clinic setting may be the only option. In a clinic setting, a member of the treatment team (e.g., therapist), parent, and a school representative (e.g., support staff member) usually compose the team. In either setting, individuals with high-functioning autism disorders can serve as self-advocates and can be encouraged to participate to the greatest extent possible.

In general, it is the responsibility of the intervention team to do the following:

1. Gather and review Skillstreaming assessment data
2. Determine the learner's social goals (if not selected by the IEP team)
3. Suggest the specific social skills, or sequence of skills, to meet the learner's social goal
4. Monitor the learner's progress in skill learning and skill use
5. Suggest opportunities for the generalization of skills

The Skillstreaming leader plays a central role in the success of intervention efforts. Teachers, counselors, and psychologists in the schools; youth care workers in treatment facilities; and social workers and therapists in mental health and other community agencies have been successful Skillstreaming group leaders. Typically, with this population, the primary group leader will be a school- or clinic-based professional—that is, an individual who spends the majority of time in the school or clinic. This is necessary to observe and develop a relationship with learners and to communicate with others regarding the learners' skill performance. Often the primary group leader is a special education teacher, school psychologist, therapist, or case manager.

The individuals working directly with the learners, as well as others who have regular contact with them, should receive training as needed to provide support within the scope of their roles. The intensity and comprehensiveness of the training will depend more on the function or type of involvement they have in Skillstreaming, rather than on their school or clinic role.

Program Implementation

As noted previously, Skillstreaming instruction for these learners will be highly variable due to the wide range of individual needs and depending on the context of existing therapeutic and educational plans. However, some general steps in implementing a program are as follows:

1. Establish and prepare the instructional team
2. Select participants
3. Assess participant skill need
4. Determine logistics: setting, time factors, and materials
5. Conduct individual orientation sessions
6. Determine group and individual supports
7. Conduct Skillstreaming sessions

8. Provide ongoing learner support
9. Assess skill acquisition and program effectiveness

It is important to note that this sequence is not invariable and that steps are not necessarily discrete. For example, the need for learner support and assessment of skill acquisition and program effectiveness are ongoing.

Establish and Prepare the Instructional Team

The first step is to establish and then prepare the individuals who will be involved in Skillstreaming instruction. It is presumed that each learner will have a team composed of those who interact with him or her on a regular basis: classroom teacher(s), support staff, families, Skillstreaming group leader, and peers. Team composition will vary based on the setting and learners' individual needs; there may be overlap with existing IEP or clinical teams that provide service.

Select Participants

If only a small number of youth with high-functioning autism disorders (i.e., up to five) attend a school or reside on a unit, all may be included in the same Skillstreaming group, as many will have similar skill needs. If a larger number (i.e., more than five) attend, skill groups may be planned based on common, priority learner skill needs. The Skill Grouping Chart, listing all 80 skills and included in the appendix, is helpful for this purpose. One benefit of this chart is providing a visual for the Skillstreaming leader to select skills for instruction needed by the majority of group members.

The participation of peers from the general population will be essential to the success of Skillstreaming instruction for this group. Across several settings, peers have been successfully used in modeling and prompting social skills (Chan et al., 2009; Matson, Matson & Rivet, 2007; Owen-DeSchryver, Carr, Cale, & Blakeley-Smith, 2008). In particular, they have been found to accelerate the learning of prosocial behaviors by youth with

high-functioning autism disorders (Simpson et al., 2012; Thiemann & Kamps, 2008).

Peer strategies include teaching peers to initiate interactions, respond to social overtures, and sustain social interactions. In addition to increasing learners' prosocial skills, use of such strategies has been found to increase peer acceptance and development of helpful peer relationships (National Autism Center, 2009). In fact, peer involvement may be the single most significant factor in generalizing skill use and long-term learner outcomes (Thiemann & Kamps, 2008).

It is best if the peers selected for Skillstreaming groups are those the learners like and want to emulate and are included in the learners' same classroom, unit, or social group. In addition, they should display positive social skills; be supportive of individual differences and the needs of learners with high-functioning autism disorders; be able to initiate, respond, and support social interactions with peers with disabilities; and be willing to participate in training and direction from the Skillstreaming team. A small number of peers may initially be recruited to participate, with additional peers included at a later time or to substitute for some or all of those initially selected. However, the more who are trained as supportive peers, the more opportunities learners will have to receive positive and encouraging feedback for skill use.

Assess Participant Skill Need

Prior to instruction, the specific skill needs of the learners must be identified. A variety of tools are helpful in pinpointing these needs for instruction, including direct observations and skill checklists. Checklists specific to Skillstreaming are included in Appendix A. The Teacher/Staff Checklist is completed by a teacher or another person in the school or clinic environment who has ongoing contact with the learner in multiple situations or settings. The Parent Checklist is completed by one or more parents or guardians. With both checklists, the rater (e.g., parent, teacher) is asked to gauge the frequency of the learner's use of each of the 80 Skillstreaming

skills according to a five-point scale from “almost always” to “almost never.” These checklists also provide an opportunity for raters to identify situations in which skill use is particularly problematic, information that will be useful for later modeling scenarios. The numerical value assigned to each skill prioritizes the most important skills for the learner. The Learner Checklist assesses participants’ perceptions of their own skill use by asking how often they use the skill. The five-point rating scale is the same as that used in the other checklists. Ratings for each learner may be summarized on the optional Skill Checklist Summary. This summary form reveals strengths, needs, and rater discrepancies.

Determine Logistics: Setting, Time Factors, and Materials

Skillstreaming leaders, along with other members of intervention teams, will next need to decide on the logistics necessary for group instruction. Where will group instruction occur and when? What is an appropriate time frame for instruction? What materials are necessary? These considerations include desirable settings in the school, when to implement Skillstreaming in a clinic setting, frequency of sessions, when to introduce new skills, program duration, and options for support materials.

Conduct Individual Orientation Sessions

Many youth with high-functioning autism disorders will likely be reluctant—and perhaps even resistant—to learning new social behaviors or participating in a group setting to do so. Therefore, it is productive to meet individually with group members to explain why they need to learn alternative skills, describe the purpose of the group, and discuss the activities in which they will participate.

Determine Group and Individual Supports

Structuring both group and individual learning supports is necessary to maximize the effectiveness of instruction. These supports, important

to include in not just Skillstreaming but all learning opportunities for these youth, may include environmental structure (e.g., clear expectations and routines); group supports (e.g., journaling, visual cues, supportive peer networks); and individual supports (e.g., visual schedules, social narratives, reinforcement, consequence maps, self-management strategies, priming, video modeling). The specifics of such efforts are highly dependent on individual learner needs and beyond the scope of this book; each learner’s intervention team will be instrumental in defining necessary supports.

Conduct Skillstreaming Sessions

Core Skillstreaming learning procedures and specific steps in conducting Skillstreaming sessions are detailed in subsequent sections of this introduction. Two sample Skillstreaming sessions, one for an elementary group and one for an adolescent group, are provided in Appendix B to illustrate these learning procedures and steps. As shown in these sessions, a co-leader is a desirable (if not essential) part of instruction.

Provide Ongoing Learner Support

During Skillstreaming instruction, learners receive a great deal of support, encouragement, and reward for their efforts. However, between sessions or after instruction ends, many learners receive far less support for skill use. As a result, the social skills learned in the group often fail over time, with new people, and in varied situations and settings. Therefore, continued adult support at a level individualized for each learner will be critical to continued use of learned skills.

Assess Skill Acquisition and Program Effectiveness

Ongoing assessment of both learners’ skill acquisition and program effectiveness is a requirement for Skillstreaming program success. (Discussion of assessment concerns appears at the end of this introduction.)

CORE SKILLSTREAMING LEARNING PROCEDURES

The individual Skillstreaming learning procedures of modeling, role-playing, feedback, and generalization are strongly supported by research and have been successfully employed when teaching prosocial behaviors to both children and older youth with high-functioning autism disorders (Gerhardt & Crimmins, 2013; Simpson et al., 2012; Stichter et al., 2012). Briefly, these procedures may be described as follows.

Modeling

Modeling is defined as learning by imitation. Learning from modeling typically involves an individual's acquiring the skill to perform a new behavior or strengthen an existing behavior by watching someone perform the response. There is strong evidence that individuals with Asperger disorder prefer and learn best when shown such visual stimuli (Ganz, 2007). Therefore, a visual demonstration of a skill is a necessary tool for these learners.

Research on modeling has successfully identified a number of modeling enhancers, or circumstances that increase the degree to which learning by imitation occurs. These modeling enhancers are characteristics of the model, the modeling display, or the observer (the learner). Such variables affect learning, as does illustrating a coping model.

Role-playing

Role-playing, the "practice" component of Skillstreaming, involves having learners enact the skill steps under the supervision of group leaders. As Mann (1956) noted, role-playing is helpful when an individual is asked to demonstrate behaviors that are not typical or that do not already exist in the person's existing repertoire. Learning is improved when the learner has the opportunity and is encouraged to rehearse or role-play the behaviors and is rewarded for doing so. The use of role-playing to help a person change behavior or attitudes has been proven useful over many

years. However, as for modeling, behavior or attitude change through role-playing will occur and be more lasting only if certain conditions are met. Specific role-play enhancers include choice on the part of the group member regarding whether to take part in the role-play; public commitment to the behavior; improvisation in enacting the role-played behaviors; talking oneself through the skill (verbal mediation); and reward, approval, or reinforcement for performing the behaviors.

Feedback

Feedback is defined as providing the learner with information on how well he has done during role-playing. It may take such forms as constructive suggestions for improvement, reteaching, material rewards, coaching, and social reinforcement such as praise and approval. Social reinforcement has been shown to be an especially potent influence on behavior change. In addition, positive feedback from peers has been shown to increase peer acceptance as well as appropriate behavior (Jones, Young, & Friman, 2000; Moroz & Jones, 2002; Skinner, Cashwell, & Skinner, 2000). In addition, many learners with high-functioning autism disorders would welcome positive comments from peers instead of the many negative ones they typically receive.

Generalization

The main interest of any intervention program and where most programs fail is not the performance of the learner during instruction but, instead, to what degree the learner uses newly learned skills in natural contexts and experiences to improve his or her quality of life. The goal of Skillstreaming is successful social functioning in school, at home, and in the community.

In brief, generalization training assists the learner in identifying where, when, and with whom skill use is desired or necessary. Although a detailed discussion of the principles involved in this complex topic cannot be provided here, program planners may find the suggestions listed in Table 2 helpful in planning for and evaluating the success of skill generalization.

Table 2: Methods for Enhancing Generalization in Skillstreaming Instruction**Before Instruction**

1. Group members include peers with whom the learners interact outside of the group.
2. One instructor has ongoing, regular contact with the learners.
3. Additional supports are implemented to reduce the likelihood of competing behaviors hampering learning and generalization.

During Instruction

4. Learners know the specific behavioral skill steps and can perform them well.
5. Attempts made to create similarities between the instructional and real-life situations and settings.
6. Numerous trials of correct skill performance provided.
7. Variability of situations (range of settings, various people, variety of reasons for skill use, various cues) provided.
8. When possible, instruction occurs in the real-life environment where the skill is to be used.
9. Some flexibility allowed in order to meet individual learner needs and settings.

10. Positive reinforcement provided often, then gradually reduced as the learners gain proficiency.
11. Prompts (e.g., cue cards) are gradually faded as the learner gains skill proficiency.
12. The learners are taught self-reinforcement for skill performance (e.g., positive self-talk).

After Instruction

13. Homework assignments provided after learners competently perform role-plays.
14. Skill use prompted or coached when daily situations suggest skill use, then gradually faded.
15. Skill use continues to be reinforced with gradual thinning and delaying of reinforcement.
16. Instruction in self-mediated generalization (e.g., self-recording, self-reinforcement) provided as appropriate to learner need.
17. When needed, booster sessions (e.g., group review, individual coaching) are provided for skills not frequently used.
18. Natural opportunities for skill use planned and implemented.

STEPS IN THE SKILLSTREAMING SESSION

Carrying out the core Skillstreaming teaching procedures—modeling, role-playing, performance feedback, and generalization—involves leading the group through a specific nine-step procedure. These steps are summarized in Table 3 and described in the following discussion.

Step 1: Define the Skill

The Skillstreaming leader presents a skill poster, skill card, or both, on which the name of the skill and the skill steps are listed, then leads the group in a discussion of the skill to be taught during the remainder of the session. The goal of this discussion is to help learners understand the meaning

of the skill, its corresponding skill steps, when, where, and with whom the skill could be used, and the potential positive consequence that will result from skill use. This process can typically be achieved in just a few minutes; a long lecture is not required. The following dialogue shows a group leader briefly defining Skill 45, Determining Private Information.

Leader: Good morning. I'm so glad you are here today because we are going to work on another very important skill. It's called Determining Private Information. Can anyone tell me what private information is?

Josie: Is it something not to tell?

Table 3: Skillstreaming Session Outline

Step 1: Define the skill

1. Select skills relevant to the needs of the learners.
2. Discuss each skill step and any other relevant information pertaining to each step.
3. Use skill cards and/or a poster or white board or easel pad on which the skill steps are written so all group members may see the skill and skill steps.

Step 2: Model the skill

1. Use at least two examples for each skill demonstration.
2. Select situations relevant to the learner's real-life needs.
3. Use clear, brief modeling displays that demonstrate all the behavioral steps of the skill in the correct sequence.
4. Use modeling displays that depict only one skill (or skill sequence) at a time. (All extraneous content should be eliminated.)
5. Show the use of a coping model.
6. Have the model "think aloud" steps that ordinarily would be thought silently.
7. Depict only positive outcomes.
8. Reinforce the model who has used the skill correctly by using praise or encouraging self-reward.
9. Use modeling supports (e.g., simplify the information as needed, point out the skill steps as they are modeled, use supportive peers as model).
10. Follow the modeling with supports (e.g., draw attention to nonverbals and to reinforcement received by the model).

Step 3: Establish learner skill need

1. Elicit from learners specific situations in which the skill could be used or is needed.
2. List the names of the group members. The leader (or co-leader) may then list the situations identified by each learner and record the theme of the role-play.

Step 4: Select the first role-player

1. Select as the main actor a student who describes a situation in his or her own life in which skill use is needed or will be helpful.
2. Provide encouragement and reinforcement for the learner's willingness to participate as the main actor.

Step 5: Set up the role-play

1. Have the main actor choose a coactor who most reminds him or her of the other person involved in the problem.
2. Ask the main actor to provide relevant information surrounding the real event (i.e., describe the physical setting and events preceding the problem).
3. Use props when appropriate.
4. Review skill steps and direct the main actor to look at the skill card or the skill steps on display.
5. Assign the other group participants to watch for specific skill steps.

Step 6: Conduct the role-play

1. Instruct the main actor to "think out loud."
2. As needed, assist the main actor (e.g., point to each behavioral step as the role-play is carried out; have the co-leader, if included, sit among the group members, directing attention to the role-play).
3. As needed, use supports (e.g., carefully guide the selection of the coactor, coach the learner through the skill steps, make sure the environment is encouraging and pleasant, allow learners to show their uniqueness).

Step 7: Provide feedback

1. Seek feedback from the co-actor, observers, leader(s), and main actor in turn.
2. Provide reinforcement for successful role-plays at the earliest appropriate opportunity.
3. Provide reinforcement to the coactor for being helpful and cooperative, and praise the coactor's use of a prosocial skill.

4. Praise particular aspects of performance (e.g., “You stood an arm’s length away from the person. Good for you!”).
5. Provide reinforcement in an amount consistent with the quality of the role-play.

Step 8: Select the next role-player

Ask, “Who would like to go next?”

Step 9: Assign skill homework

1. Assign homework to the main actors who have successfully role-played the skill.

Leader: Yes, it’s information you shouldn’t just tell anyone. Anyone else?

Donovan: Maybe you should never, ever talk about it.

Leader: Yes, you shouldn’t talk about it with whom?

Max: Um. Maybe anybody.

Leader: Thanks for participating, Max. Private information is something that is personal to you or someone else. It’s not public information, to be shared with just anyone. But if it’s related to your safety or someone else’s, you could tell a trusted adult, like a parent or a teacher. Who would you tell if the information could hurt you or someone else?

Lucy: I’d tell my mom.

Leader: Yes, she would be a good person to tell. What if the information isn’t a safety concern, but just something people don’t have a right to know? One example would be how much money your parents make. Is this anyone else’s information to know?

(The group shake their heads “no.”)

Leader: Good. When we learn this skill, we’ll be able to decide what things are pri-

vate and shouldn’t be shared with others.

Step 2: Model the Skill

Before the session, leaders should plan their modeling displays. Displays that relate to the group’s real-life concerns and needs will always be most effective as long as these displays incorporate the following guidelines:

1. Use at least two examples for each skill demonstration. If a skill is used in more than one group session, develop two new modeling displays.
2. Select situations relevant to learners’ real-life circumstances.
3. The model (i.e., the person enacting the behavioral steps of the skill) should be portrayed as an individual reasonably similar to the group members in age, socioeconomic background, verbal ability, and other characteristics.
4. A coping model should be portrayed with skills that typically elicit strong emotion.
5. The model should “think aloud” what would normally be thought to oneself as the modeling display unfolds.
6. Modeling displays should depict positive outcomes. In addition, the model who is using the skill well should always be reinforced.

7. Modeling displays should depict all of the behavioral steps of the skill in the correct sequence without extraneous or distracting content.
8. Modeling displays should depict only one skill at a time.

Group members are asked to watch and listen closely as the modeling unfolds. Particular care should be given to helping learners identify the behavioral steps as they are being modeled. The leader can do this by pointing to the steps in the course of the modeling. As the model follows the behavioral steps, he or she “thinks out loud” what would normally be thought silently. At the conclusion of each modeling vignette, leaders ask “Did I follow the first step?” and “How do you know I did this?” The model may also provide self-reinforcement, such as “Yes, I followed all of the skill steps! I think I did a good job using this skill!”

Learners with high-functioning autism disorders may find focusing on more than one element of a modeling display or attending to relevant details difficult. If so, modeling supports are necessary for these learners. These supports include simplifying the information, pointing out specific key behaviors that need to be learned, using supportive peers as models, drawing attention to non-verbals (e.g., facial expressions, tone of voice), and drawing attention to potential reinforcement.

Step 3: Establish Learner Skill Need

Before group members begin role-playing, it is important to identify each learner’s current and future need for the skill. Reenactment of a past problem or circumstance is less relevant unless the learner predicts that such circumstances are likely to reoccur in the future. Current learner needs will likely have been established earlier as part of the selection and grouping process through use of the Skillstreaming Checklists. Nonetheless, an open discussion within the group is needed to establish realistic and meaningful role-plays. If a learner is unable to identify a situation in which the skill could be used, infor-

mation from the parent and teacher Skillstreaming checklists may help provide prompts. For example, “Many students have challenges staying on topic in a conversation with a friend. Is this a time when the skill of Staying on Topic (Skill 5) could be used?”

Each group member in turn is asked to describe briefly where, when, and with whom he or she would find it useful to use the skill just modeled. To make effective use of this information, it is often valuable to list the names of the group members on a whiteboard or easel pad at the front of the room and to record next to each name the theme of the role-play and the name or role of the person with whom the skill will be used.

Step 4: Select the First Role-Player

All members of the Skillstreaming group will be expected to role-play each skill taught, and therefore it is not of great concern who does so first. Typically, group leaders ask for volunteers to begin the role-play series. If there are group members who appear to be reluctant to role-play a particular skill on a particular day, it is helpful not to ask them to role-play first or second. Observing other learners do so first can be reassuring and may help ease their way into the activity. For a few learners, reluctance may turn into resistance and refusal. In such cases, coaching the learner through skill performance on a one-to-one basis (priming) prior to role-playing in the group may be helpful.

Step 5: Set Up the Role-Play

Following the selection of the role-player, he or she is designated as the main actor. The main actor chooses a second person (the coactor) to play the role of the other person (e.g., teacher, peer, parent) with whom he or she will use the skill in real life. The main actor should be encouraged to select as the coactor someone who resembles the significant other in as many ways as possible—in other words, someone who most reminds the main actor of the actual person.

The group leader then elicits from the main actor any additional information needed to set the stage for the role-play. In order to make role-playing as realistic as possible, the leader should obtain a description of the physical setting, the events immediately preceding the situation, and the mood or manner the coactor should portray, along with any other information that would enhance realism. Initially, providing such information may be challenging for the learner, as he or she may not be used to attending to these characteristics. The group leader may need to provide more concrete prompting, such as “Does the person’s face look more like this (angry), or this (neutral)?” It may be helpful to some learners to plan their description of the role-play setting and target person prior to the group session. Props may be used if available and appropriate.

Role-play supports may include coaching from either the Skillstreaming leader or co-leader, in the form of verbally guiding the learner through performing the behavioral steps to the skill as the role-play unfolds. Coaching behaviors should be individualized to fit the needs and preferences of each learner. For example, some learners prefer or learn best when a coach uses a “physical prompting” approach that walks the learner through the required actions. In contrast, a learner who is hypersensitive to touch or grimaces when another person comes into close proximity would respond best to a coaching approach relying on no or minimal physical contact. In this case, for example, placing tape on the floor to mark where the student should stand when role-playing would be helpful. Other learners may be more receptive to coaching from a supportive peer. Still others may have certain sensitivities (e.g., noise level; difficulty performing two actions simultaneously, such as “looking at someone while talking”) that must be taken into consideration.

The leader should also be very active in making sure the main actor (and the coactor, as appropriate) does not deviate from the skill steps. Instead, the leader should intervene as necessary with verbal or physical reminders (e.g., “The next

step is to...” or pointing to the written step on a skill poster or skill card).

Step 6: Conduct the Role-Play

At this point the group leader reminds the learners of their roles and responsibilities:

- ▶ Main actor: Follow the behavioral steps and “think aloud” what would normally be thought silently.
- ▶ Coactor: Stay in the role of the other person and be helpful to the main actor.
- ▶ Other learners: Watch carefully for the enactment of the behavioral steps.

It is useful to assign each observer a specific behavioral step, have observers watch for the display of the skill step, and then report on the performance of the step during the feedback session that follows. Observers will also need to be coached regarding the kinds of cues to observe (e.g., posture, words chosen, tone of voice, facial expression). It is helpful to ask the observers to attend to specific cues that they themselves have been working to improve.

Then the role-players are instructed to begin. It is the leader’s responsibility to provide the main actor with any help or coaching needed to keep the role-play going according to the behavioral steps. Learners who “break role” to offer other information should be urged to get back into the role and explain later. If the role-play is clearly going astray from the behavioral steps, the scene can be stopped, needed instruction provided, and the role-play resumed. If both the group leader and a co-leader are present, one should be positioned near the skill poster, if one is used, and point to each of the behavioral steps as they are enacted. Doing so will help the main actor, as well as the observers and coactor, follow each of the steps in sequence.

Role-playing should be continued until all group members have had an opportunity to participate in the role of the main actor. Sometimes this will require several sessions for a given skill.

Each session, however, should begin with two modeling vignettes for the selected skill, even if the skill is not new to the group. It is important to note that, although the framework (behavioral steps) of each role-play remains the same, the content can and should change from role-play to role-play. Each learner should display a level of proficiency in performing the skill as the main actor (e.g., follow all the behavioral steps in sequence; understand the purpose of the skill and when, where, and with whom the skill can be used; display acceptable nonverbal behaviors throughout the role-play) before being asked to complete a homework report.

Other strategies may be used to increase the effectiveness of the role-plays. For example, role reversal is often useful. If the main actor has a difficult time perceiving the coactor's point of view, having the two exchange roles and resume the role-play can be helpful. On occasion, the group leader can also assume the coactor role in an effort to give learners the opportunity to handle types of reactions not otherwise role-played during the session. For example, it may be important to have a difficult adult role realistically portrayed or to help less verbal or more hesitant students. The leader, serving as coactor, may also be indicated with particular skills such as Understanding Another's Intentions (Skill 66) or Dealing with Another's Anger (Skill 67), which otherwise would require the group member to engage in inappropriate or attention-getting behaviors as the coactor. Finally, in some circumstances it is also helpful for a supportive peer to play the role of the coactor, particularly if the supportive peer is a part of the same classroom or unit as the main actor.

In many cases the coactor is also role-playing a skill. For example, when the main actor attempts Greeting Others (Skill 2), the coactor in turn should greet the main actor (Responding to a Greeting, Skill 3). And when the main actor uses the skill When to Introduce a New Topic (Skill 16), the coactor will use the skill of Accepting a Topic Change (Skill 17). If there is not

a group participant who can effectively perform a companion skill in response to the main actor, a supportive peer or group leader should initially serve in this role.

Step 7: Provide Feedback

Feedback follows each role-play. The purpose of the feedback is to let the main actor know how well he or she followed the behavioral steps, evaluate the impact of the role-play on the coactor, and give the main actor encouragement to try the behavior in real life. For this population of learners, it is particularly important that feedback also be provided regarding the main actor's use of nonverbal behaviors.

Feedback is presented in the following order: The coactor is asked to react first. Asking questions such as "How did you feel when she said that to you?" and "What were the facial expressions and manner that showed you she was friendly?" may be needed to prompt the coactor's feedback. The coactor should be thanked for being helpful to the main actor and also praised for positive behavior displayed during the role-play, including the specific skills he or she may have used.

Next, each observer in turn comments on whether or not the skill step he or she was assigned to watch for was followed and on other relevant aspects of the role-play. When asking for this feedback, it is useful to ask questions such as "Did he follow the first step?" and "How do you know he did this?" If the first step is to think about the situation, many group members will likely explain that they heard the main actor talk about his or her thinking (think aloud).

Then the group leaders comment in particular on how well the behavioral steps were followed and provide social reinforcement (praise, approval, encouragement) for close following of the skill steps and other aspects of the role-play as appropriate (e.g., nonverbal behaviors, voice tone).

After listening to the feedback from the coactor, observers, and group leaders, the main actor is asked to make comments regarding the

role-play and, if appropriate, to respond to the comments of others. In this way, the main actor can learn to evaluate the effectiveness of his or her skill performance in light of others' viewpoints.

Leaders should provide enough role-playing for each group member to have sufficient opportunity to be reinforced. The leader should not provide reinforcement when the role-play departs significantly from the behavioral steps (except for "trying"). However, reinforcement may be provided for an individual learner's improvement over previous performances.

In all aspects of feedback, group leaders must maintain the behavioral focus of Skillstreaming. Leader comments must point to the presence or absence of specific, concrete behaviors and not take the form of general evaluative comments or generalizations. Feedback may be positive or take the form of suggestions for improvement. Positive feedback should always be given first; otherwise the student may be concentrating on the suggestion or what the learner may feel is a negative comment and not hear other feedback. Group leaders will need to model constructive comments before allowing group members to give this type of feedback. Teaching the skill of Giving Feedback (Skill 54) will also help the group learn how to provide helpful feedback.

Whenever possible, learners failing to follow the behavioral steps in the role-play should be given the opportunity to repeat the same behavioral steps after receiving constructive comments. At times, as a further feedback procedure, the role-play may be videorecorded. Doing so gives the learners the opportunity to observe themselves, enabling them to reflect on their own verbal and nonverbal behaviors in a private setting with the Skillstreaming leader.

Because a primary goal of Skillstreaming is skill flexibility, role-play enactment that departs somewhat from the behavioral steps may not be "wrong." That is, a different approach to the skill may actually work in some situations. Group leaders should stress that they are trying to teach

effective alternatives and that learning the behavioral steps as presented will increase positive outcomes.

Step 8: Select the Next Role-Player

The next group member is selected to serve as main actor, and the sequence just described is repeated until all members of the group are reliably demonstrating proficiency in using the skill in the group setting.

Step 9: Assign Skill Homework

Skill homework constitutes the generalization component of Skillstreaming and is key to facilitating skill use outside the training situation (Frankel et al., 2010). Following each successful role-play, learners are instructed to try in their own real-life settings the behaviors practiced during the session. It is most useful to begin with relatively simple homework assignments using situations that occur in the training setting. Doing so will allow for providing the support needed (e.g., coaching) to assure this practice is successful. As mastery is achieved, more complex assignments can be given (e.g., using the skill in the home or community setting). This sequence provides the leader and others who have been trained in Skillstreaming with the opportunity to reinforce each approximation toward proficiency. The learner should not be expected to perform the skill perfectly when first using it in real-life contexts. Reinforcement should be given as the learner's performance becomes closer to the ideal. Successful experiences when beginning to use the skill in the real world and rewards received for doing so are critical in encouraging future attempts to use the skill.

Homework assignments begin with the leader and learner together deciding when, how, and with whom the learner will use the skill and progress to the stage where the student independently records the skills practiced. One of three levels of homework can be assigned. It is best to begin with Homework Report 1 for each skill and gradually

progress to more independent levels, providing help for those who may have difficulty with reading, writing, or comprehension as needed.

Homework Report 1

When using Homework Report 1, the learner thinks of a situation (either at home, at school, or with peers) in which he or she feels the need to practice the skill. For some learners, especially initially, the group leader may need to suggest situations and allow the student to choose one. It is especially useful if the selected situation is one the learner has role-played, as having prior practice will likely increase the learner's comfort level in trying the skill. As shown on the sample in Figure 1, the learner or leader lists the learner's name and the date the assignment is made. Together, the leader and learner decide on and enter the name of the person with whom the skill will be tried and the time the learner will make the attempt (e.g., during recess, in a specific class, at home). The leader may decide independently the supports that are needed to facilitate a successful practice attempt or may make this decision jointly with the learner. The support to be provided is marked in the second section of the report. Typically, both coaching and practice with a supportive peer are the supports most often used and are therefore listed here along with space to identify the name of the coach or peer. Other supports may also be noted. It is important for this section to be completed prior to the practice opportunity, lowering anxiety for the learner and assisting the leader in planning additional homework assignments and reporting learner progress.

After skill use, the learner writes what happened, then evaluates skill use by circling a number corresponding to one of evaluative comments on Homework Report 1. In many cases, it is initially helpful for the learner and leader to discuss the reason for this evaluation. The learner then writes or dictates the explanation on the report. It is important to convey to learners that this evaluation pertains to how well they performed the

skill steps, rather than how well the skill actually worked.

Group leaders may also use the blank Homework Report 1 form in Appendix A. Having the learner list the skill steps on the blank form can be a good way to enhance skill learning, provided that handwriting is not a struggle.

Homework Report 2

The learner who has nearly achieved mastery of a given skill (i.e., who knows the steps well and shows success with the assignments on the first level of homework) is ready to attempt self-recording, or monitoring skill practice more independently. Following a Skillstreaming session, the learner is given a Homework Report 2 (see sample in Figure 2). Then, throughout the course of the day or week, the learner lists the times of skill practice and completes the self-evaluation portion of the homework report according to the same criteria used in earlier homework assignments. It is important to note that supports (e.g., coaching, prompting) may continue to be necessary at this level. Therefore, the section at the end of this report lists the supports provided during homework and should be completed by either the learner or leader. Again, this record provides data to assist with monitoring progress, as well as provides reinforcement. A blank version of this form is provided in Appendix A.

Homework Report 3

Following mastery of each of the skills independently, it's time to put them together for a more complex social interaction. Homework Report 3, therefore, provides for practice of a sequence of skills. The learner's name and date of plan are noted on the form. Then the situation in which the skill sequence is needed is described and written. The most appropriate skills needed for the situation are then defined, with the steps to each skill listed. As in the other levels of homework, supports necessary to facilitate success of the practice are

Figure 1: Sample Homework Report 1

Skill 30: Showing Interest in Others

Name Sammi Date 11/18

SKILL STEPS

1. Look at the person or group.
2. Describe what the person or the group is doing.
3. Decide what to do next.

FILL IN NOW

With whom will I try this? Kids in my class

When? Recess

SUPPORTS

Coaching with (name) Ms. Crawford

With supportive peer (name) _____

Other (specify) Choices for Step 3 listed on cue card

None

FILL IN AFTER YOU PRACTICE THE SKILL

What happened? I watched, I got closer, I said hello.

They asked if I wanted to play, I said yes.

How did I do? (circle the number) 4 3 **2** 1

Really good! Pretty good. So-So. I need to try again.

Why did I circle this? I said it but didn't play with them.

I will try again.

Figure 2: Sample Homework Report 2

Skill 36: Dealing with Anxiety

Name Sebastian Date 3/1

SKILL STEPS

1. Think of your choices.
2. Make a plan.
3. Say, "I can follow my plan."
4. Follow your plan.

	How did I do? (circle the number)			
	Really Good!	Pretty good.	So-So.	I need to try again.
When did I practice?				
1. <u>School assembly</u>	4	3	2	1
2. <u>Substitute teacher</u>	4	3	2	1
3. <u>Noisy classroom</u>	4	3	2	1

SUPPORTS

	Practice Situation (circle)		
	1	2	3
With prompting	1	2	3
With coaching	1	2	3
With supportive peer	1	2	3
Other support (specify) <u>Video modeling</u>	1	2	3

None	1	2	3

decided upon and noted. Following homework practice, the learner writes what happened, evaluates how well he or she followed all of the steps to the skill sequence, and writes why this evaluation was made. Figure 3 shows a sample Homework Report 3. A blank form is provided in Appendix A, with skill names and steps to be added as appropriate.

Recording Progress

Two tools to document and record Skillstreaming progress include the Homework Data Record and the Group Self-Report Chart, provided in Appendix A. Following completion of each homework assignment, the Skillstreaming leader records the learner's performance on the Homework Data Record. Both the learner and leader are identified, along with the skill (or skill sequence) and date the practice was completed. Then the level of the homework assignment is circled and the learner's self-evaluation and specific supports provided are noted. Finally, a space for comments is provided. This record is a useful way to share data with individual student support or IEP teams, monitor the learner's social skill progress, and plan future homework assignments.

Following learners' successful skill performance on Homework Reports 1 and 2, the Group Self-Report Chart may be used in the classroom or other group setting to enhance continued use of learned skills. The teacher or other staff member assists each group member in making a tally mark on this form next to each skill he or she practiced that day. Teachers or staff members praise skill use liberally; as time permits, learners may be asked to describe the specific situations in which they used a skill or skills. As group members become used to this self-reporting method, they may be record their skill use on the chart independently. If group members do record their own skill use, it is important for teachers or staff members to continue to comment on the self-reporting, thus providing reinforcement. Although the primary purpose of this chart is to encour-

age the continued use of skills taught in earlier Skillstreaming sessions, the chart also provides a record of the skills learners are continuing to practice. If learners do not report using specific skills, leaders will know which areas need review or reteaching.

ASSESSMENT

Because each learner's Skillstreaming experience will necessarily be highly individualized, assessing variables in skill acquisition may be complex. However, when administered before and after instruction, the Teacher/Staff Checklist, Learner Checklist, and Parent Checklist—or similar checklists derived from them—will be helpful in gauging skill learning. The Skillstreaming Rubric, also included in Appendix A, provides another measure from which to assess the degree of learners' skill proficiency.

Measuring implementation integrity is necessary to derive accurate conclusions regarding the effectiveness of an intervention and to understand outcomes such as the behavior change of the target individuals (Lane, Menies, Barton-Arwood, Doukas, & Munton, 2005; Wood, Umbreit, Li-aupsin, & Gresham, 2007). To know whether the Skillstreaming program is producing the desired behavior change, monitoring the quality and quantity of the instruction is essential.

Both the Leader's Session Implementation Checklist and the Observer's Session Implementation Checklist, included in Appendix A, are helpful in ensuring that Skillstreaming session procedures are conducted as intended. The leader's checklist is completed by leaders at the completion of each session when first beginning Skillstreaming instruction. When leaders are consistently implementing all of the steps, this checklist may then be used every two or three weeks. The checklist may also serve as a planning guide to coach leaders through a Skillstreaming session. The observer's checklist is designed for use by a highly skilled trainer of Skillstreaming leaders to provide feedback to improve performance in implementing Skillstreaming

Figure 3: Sample Homework Report 3

Name T.J. Date 3/1
 Situation (describe) My little brother keeps bothering me and I cannot think.
 With whom will I try this? Joshua my brother
 When? On Saturday when he comes home

SKILLS NEEDED AND SKILL STEPS

Skill <u>49</u> <u>Defining a Problem</u>	Skill <u>50</u> <u>Considering Alternatives</u>	Skill <u>51</u> <u>Choosing an Alternative</u>
Steps 1. Think about what happened. 2. Decide on your part in the problem. 3. Say, "The problem is _____."	Steps 1. Think of options to help resolve the problem. 2. Think of the consequences of each option. 3. Decide whether the consequences are positive, negative, or neutral for you and others.	Steps 1. Decide on one alternative. 2. Decide if you can do this. 3. Make a plan to do this. 4. Follow your plan.

SUPPORTS

- Coaching with (name) My mom
- With supportive peer (name) _____
- Other (specify) _____
- None

FILL IN AFTER YOU PRACTICE THE SKILL

What happened? I said I would play a game with him at 4:00 PM if he would not talk to me until that time.

How did I do? (circle the number) 4 3 2 1
 Really good! Pretty good. So-So. I need to try again.

Why did I circle this? I made a plan and followed the plan I devised.

instruction. This observation form should be used frequently to provide feedback when leaders first begin as Skillstreaming instructors. This form also has been used by leaders to observe one another, thereby providing feedback to enhance their own skills.

Skill 1: Listening Without Interrupting

SKILL STEPS

1. Look at the person.

Explain and demonstrate what looking at the person means (i.e., looking at the person's face, looking away briefly, then looking at the person again). Explain the difference between appropriate eye gaze and staring.

2. Carefully listen.

Encourage the learner to think about what is being said. The learner may want to say to himself or herself, "I know I can listen."

3. Nod your head.

Discuss both verbal (e.g., "Yes," "I see") and nonverbal messages that show someone is listening.

SUGGESTED MODELING SITUATIONS

School: Your teacher is presenting a lesson.

Home: A brother or sister is telling about an incident at school; your parent is telling you about her day.

Peer group: A friend is talking about his weekend.

Community: The coach is explaining what you will do at practice.

COMMENTS

This skill is also useful for a variety of other skills. Through modeling, role-play, and coaching, point out the verbal and nonverbal behaviors that show someone is listening. This skill focuses only on the nonverbal behaviors of the learner.

Homework Report I

Skill 1: Listening Without Interrupting

Name _____ Date _____

SKILL STEPS

1. Look at the person.
2. Carefully listen.
3. Nod your head.

FILL IN NOW

With whom will I try this? _____

When? _____

SUPPORTS

Coaching with *(name)* _____

With supportive peer *(name)* _____

Other *(specify)* _____

None

FILL IN AFTER YOU PRACTICE THE SKILL

What happened? _____

How did I do? *(circle the number)* 4 3 2 1
 Really good! Pretty good. So-So. I need to try again.

Why did I circle this? _____

Homework Report 2

Skill 1: Listening Without Interrupting

Name _____ Date _____

SKILL STEPS

- 1. Look at the person.
- 2. Carefully listen.
- 3. Nod your head.

When did I practice?	How did I do? (circle the number)			
	Really Good!	Pretty good.	So-So.	I need to try again.
1. _____	4	3	2	1
2. _____	4	3	2	1
3. _____	4	3	2	1

SUPPORTS

	Practice Situation (circle)		
	1	2	3
With prompting	1	2	3
With coaching	1	2	3
With supportive peer	1	2	3
Other support (specify) _____	1	2	3
None	1	2	3

Skill 2: Greeting Others

SKILL STEPS

1. Look at the person and smile.

Explain that looking at the person means to look at the person's face (distinguish looking at the person from "staring" at the person). Explain that the learner may look at the person while continuing to walk. If learners are being asked to perform two actions at the same time (e.g., looking and walking), practice of this skill step in isolation may be needed.

2. Say "hi" or "hello" and the person's name.

Explain to the learner that if he/she does not remember the person's name, it's okay to leave this out. However, if the learner does remember and use the person's name, the person will appreciate it.

3. Walk on if you don't want to have a conversation.

Discuss appropriate times to walk on (e.g., the learner doesn't know the person well, it's time for class or otherwise not an appropriate time to have a conversation) and appropriate times to have a conversation with the person.

SUGGESTED MODELING SITUATIONS

School: You are in the hallway walking to class.

Home: You come home after school and greet your parent.

Peer group: You greet a friend after school.

Community: You see a friend's brother or sister at grocery store.

COMMENTS

It is important to distinguish between greeting adults, peers the learner knows well, and classmates he or she does not know well. Taking a walk around the school and practicing greeting others, with coaching of these social nuances, will assist in building the skill.

If learners desire to have a conversation after a greeting, Skill 14 (Starting a Conversation), Skill 15 (Continuing a Conversation), and Skill 18 (Ending a Conversation) should be taught following this skill.

Homework Report I

Skill 2: Greeting Others

Name _____ Date _____

SKILL STEPS

1. Look at the person and smile.
2. Say “hi” or “hello” and the person’s name.
3. Walk on if you don’t want to have a conversation.

FILL IN NOW

With whom will I try this? _____

When? _____

SUPPORTS

Coaching with *(name)* _____

With supportive peer *(name)* _____

Other *(specify)* _____

None

FILL IN AFTER YOU PRACTICE THE SKILL

What happened? _____

How did I do? *(circle the number)* 4 3 2 1
 Really good! Pretty good. So-So. I need to try again.

Why did I circle this? _____

Homework Report 2

Skill 2: Greeting Others

Name _____ Date _____

SKILL STEPS

- 1. Look at the person and smile.
- 2. Say “hi” or “hello” and the person’s name.
- 3. Walk on if you don’t want to have a conversation.

When did I practice?	How did I do? (<i>circle the number</i>)			
	Really Good!	Pretty good.	So-So.	I need to try again.
1. _____	4	3	2	1
2. _____	4	3	2	1
3. _____	4	3	2	1

SUPPORTS

	Practice Situation (<i>circle</i>)		
	1	2	3
With prompting	1	2	3
With coaching	1	2	3
With supportive peer	1	2	3
Other support (<i>specify</i>) _____	1	2	3

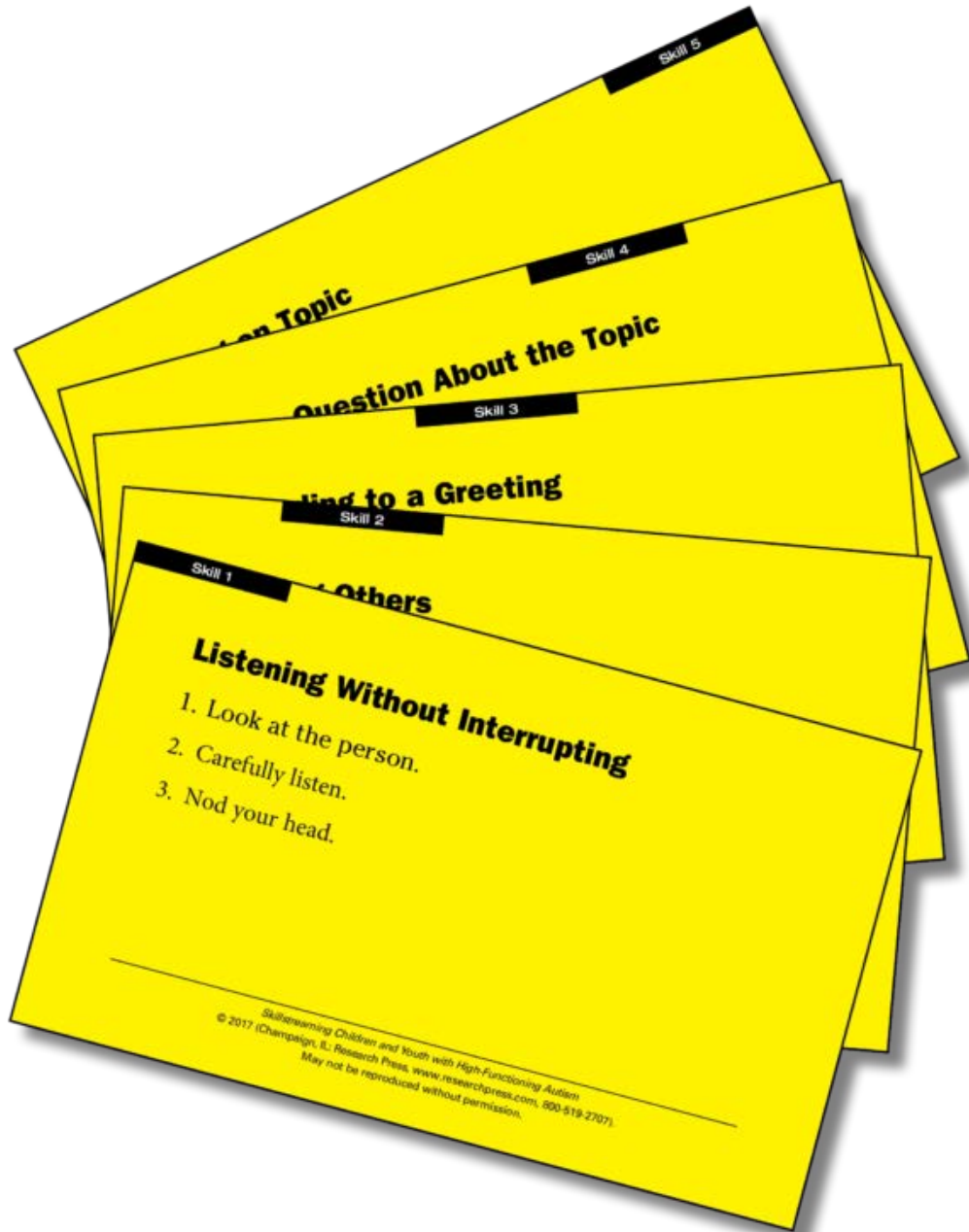
None	1	2	3

Training and Workshops

In-service training or workshops can be provided for your school, facility, or organization. For more information and available dates, please contact:

Dr. Sheldon Braaten - Behavioral Institute for Children and Adolescents

Skill Cards



Skill Cards Overview

The Skillstreaming High-Functioning Autism Skill Cards provide a convenient, easy-to-use visual support for reinforcing the 80 prosocial skills taught in *Skillstreaming Children and Youth with High-Functioning Autism: A Guide for Teaching Prosocial Skills*.

Designed as 3" × 5" cue cards for use during group sessions, individual instruction, and homework activities, each card clearly outlines the behavioral steps associated with a specific skill. Six cards are included for every skill, for a total of 480 skill cards.

These cards help children and youth review, practice, and apply social skills across a variety of settings, supporting continued reinforcement beyond structured instruction. They can be used during role-play activities, guided discussions, and real-life practice opportunities to encourage skill retention and generalization.

Note: For effective implementation, the core program book *Skillstreaming Children and Youth with High-Functioning Autism: A Guide for Teaching Prosocial Skills* should be used prior to incorporating additional Skillstreaming materials.

List of Skill Card skills

Group I: Relationship Skills

Beginning Relationship Skills

1. Listening Without Interrupting
2. Greeting Others
3. Responding to a Greeting
4. Asking a Question About the Topic
5. Staying on Topic
6. Responding to Questions
7. Taking Turns
8. Complimenting Others
9. Helping Others
10. Encouraging Others
11. Cooperating with Others
12. Sharing
13. Asking a Favor

Advanced Relationship Skills

14. Starting a Conversation
15. Continuing a Conversation
16. When to Introduce a New Topic
17. Accepting a Topic Change
18. Ending a Conversation
19. Responding to Offers to Join In
20. Asking to Join In
21. Communicating Preferences
22. Accepting Another's Opinion

Group II: Social Comprehension

- 23. Reading Others
- 24. Reading the Environment
- 25. Using a Friendly Voice
- 26. Using a Respectful Voice
- 27. Giving Information Nonverbally
- 28. Attending to a Model
- 29. Respecting Another's Boundaries
- 30. Showing Interest in Others
- 31. Understanding Differences
- 32. Taking Another's Perspective

Group III: Self-Regulation

- 33. Regulating Your Attention
- 34. Recognizing Anxiety
- 35. Deciding What Causes Your Anxiety
- 36. Dealing with Anxiety
- 37. Checking Your Voice and Interests
- 38. No Means No
- 39. Using Self-Control
- 40. Dealing with Change
- 41. Dealing with Boredom
- 42. Responding to Authority
- 43. Checking Your Behavior
- 44. Affirming Yourself

Group IV: Problem Solving

- 45. Determining Private Information
- 46. Understanding Rules of Swearing

47. Understanding Rules of Touch
48. Planning for Stressful Situations
49. Defining a Problem
50. Considering Alternatives
51. Choosing an Alternative
52. When to Change Strategies
53. When a Rule Doesn't Work
54. Giving Feedback
55. Seeking Attention
56. Accepting Attention
57. Making a Complaint
58. When You Don't Understand

Group V: Understanding Emotions

59. Knowing Your Feelings
60. Feeling Different
61. Expressing Your Feelings
62. Calming Your Feelings
63. Showing Affection
64. Recognizing Another's Feelings
65. Showing Concern for Another
66. Understanding Another's Intentions
67. Dealing with Another's Anger

Group VI: School-Related Skills

68. Asking for Help
69. Ignoring Distractions
70. Contributing to Discussions
71. Taking a Break

- 72. Setting a Goal
- 73. Completing Assignments
- 74. Following Adult Directions
- 75. Asking for Information
- 76. Organizing Materials
- 77. Making Corrections
- 78. Preparing for Class
- 79. Dealing with Transitions
- 80. Interrupting

Student Workbook & Group Leader’s Guide Overview

The *Skillstreaming Children and Youth with High-Functioning Autism Student Workbook and Group Leader’s Guide* are designed to accompany *Skillstreaming Children and Youth with High-Functioning Autism: A Guide for Teaching Prosocial Skills*. Together, these resources provide educators, counselors, clinicians, and other professionals with structured support for teaching essential social skills to children and adolescents with autism.

The program incorporates evidence-based instructional strategies that support effective social-emotional learning and skill development. Through structured practice and guided activities, students learn how to build relationships, manage conflict, understand emotions, regulate behavior, and navigate social situations more successfully at school, in the community, and beyond.

The Skillstreaming approach is built around four core learning activities:

- **Modeling** — demonstrating appropriate social behaviors and responses
- **Role-Play** — practicing skills within a supportive group setting
- **Feedback** — reinforcing strengths and identifying opportunities for improvement
- **Generalization** — applying skills in real-life situations through guided homework and practice opportunities

This structured process helps students strengthen social understanding while encouraging skill use across multiple settings and interactions.

The Student Workbooks and Group Leader’s Guide provide step-by-step guidance for implementing the Skillstreaming program. Workbook activities help students practice both the Skillstreaming process and important social nuances that support successful communication and interaction.

Group Leader’s Guide

The Group Leader’s Guide offers clear instructional support for practitioners implementing the Skillstreaming model. It includes teaching guidance, structured activities, and additional strategies designed to strengthen student engagement and skill performance. The guide is 66 pages in length.

Student Workbooks

The Student Workbook helps orient students to the Skillstreaming process through structured activities and guided practice. Students are encouraged to share completed sections with parents, caregivers, or educators to reinforce learning beyond the instructional setting. The workbook is 77 pages in length.

Available as a packet containing 10 Student Workbooks and one Group Leader's Guide.

Note: For effective implementation, the core program book Skillstreaming Children and Youth with High-Functioning Autism: A Guide for Teaching Prosocial Skills should be used prior to incorporating additional Skillstreaming materials.

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Activity 1.3—Thomas' Consequence Map

Be sure you have a yellow marker or highlighter, and a red and green pen or marker. Now, read the vignette below with your group leader.

Thomas has difficulty getting the attention of peers at recess. When peers are playing basketball and Thomas is not included, he will often run through the gameplay area, attempt to grab the ball and shoot baskets, try to defend a basket, or otherwise disrupt the game. This frustrates his peers, which often leads to arguments and name calling. Thomas initially gets angry, but later expresses remorse and says his peers never let him play with them, which is somewhat true because the peers are frustrated by his interference when it's not his turn to play. When this happens Thomas often ends up playing by himself at recess.

One day, after talking with his group leader, Thomas waits on the edge of the basketball court for a pause in the game. He then quickly approaches his peers and asks if he can play during the next game. His peers agree, and the next game Thomas plays on a team with some of the students from his grade. He makes a few good passes, and his teammates are happy with him.

Now, follow the steps below to identify triggers, behaviors, and consequences. You will use these to build a consequence map for Thomas. Ask your teachers and peers for assistance if you need help or ask your group leader if you may work with a partner.

- 1. Find the trigger:** Use a yellow highlighter or marker and highlight the possible trigger for Thomas' behavior.
- 2. Find the inappropriate behavior:** Use the red marker or pen to underline Thomas's behavior that resulted in the undesired outcome.
- 3. Circle the undesired outcome** using the red marker or pen.

4. **Find the appropriate behavior:** Use the green marker or pencil to underline Thomas's behavior that resulted in the desired outcome.
5. **Circle the desired outcome** using the green marker or pencil.

Build a Consequence Map for Thomas

Now that you have identified the trigger, inappropriate behavior, appropriate behavior, and outcomes, together we will use the consequence map template to develop positive and negative consequences for Thomas. Our goal is to help him connect his actions to likely outcomes. Listen to your group leader provide you with direction.

Think Aloud Example 1: Seeking Attention

Step 1: Decide if you want.

Henry: "I think I want someone to notice me."

Step 2: Ask, "From whom?"

Henry: "I think the new girl looks cool and I want her to notice me."

Step 3: Think of how to get attention in a positive way.

Henry: "I don't want to act silly or foolish to get her attention. I don't want to pretend I'm accidentally bumping into her. She would not like that! What's a good choice? I could smile at her. Or after class I could say hello to her and ask where she moved from."

Step 4: Decide.

"I think this is a good plan. It's good for a start . . . it's a low-key plan!"

Step 5: Do it. (After class, Henry follows his plan.)

Discussion

Answer the following questions:

- What did Henry want?
- How do you know?
- What choices did Henry consider?
- What did he decide to do?
- Did Henry follow the skill steps in order?

Thinking aloud helps with learning by:

- Stopping impulses that may be a poor choice.
- Organizing our actions to better follow our plan.
- Telling others what we are thinking.

When first learning a skill, you will think out loud what you normally would think to yourself. Later on, once you have learned the skill well, you will think these thoughts silently.

Activity 1.7—Types of Verbal Feedback

Hot: Statements that use mean, angry, or unhelpful words.

Warm: Words that tell what was done well and what specific actions could help make it even better.

Cold: Words that are very general, gushy, and not helpful.

Read the statements below. Decide if the words are Hot, Warm, or Cold.

1. "You sounded like you meant what you said."	HOT WARM COLD
2. "You were wonderful."	HOT WARM COLD
3. "How you acted was stupid."	HOT WARM COLD
4. "You followed all the skill steps."	HOT WARM COLD
5. "You thought out loud so we knew your thinking."	HOT WARM COLD
6. "You looked at your co-actor in a nice way."	HOT WARM COLD
7. "What a great actor you are!"	HOT WARM COLD
8. "Most of the time you stood up straight but sometimes you looked down at your feet."	HOT WARM COLD
9. "You talked about why the choice you made was important."	HOT WARM COLD
10. "What you said sounded dumb to me."	HOT WARM COLD

Skit Preparation Guide

List each character and their role in the skit:

Character: _____

Role: _____

Character: _____

Role: _____

Character: _____

Role: _____

Describe the setting:

Did you find props: ___ Yes ___ No

On a blank piece of paper, write the character's name. Then write each cue with the character's lines and actions. Keep the page for others to use when switching roles during a skit.

Mark the number of rehearsals completed: ___ ___ ___

Homework Report 2

Name: _____ Date: _____

SKILL STEPS

1. Decide if you want attention.
2. Ask, "From whom?"
3. Think of how to get attention in a positive way.
4. Decide.
5. Do it.

FILL IN NOW

When will you try the skill? _____

FILL IN AFTER YOU PRACTICE THE SKILL

What happened when you did the homework?

Which skill steps did you really follow?

How did I do? (circle the number)

4

3

2

1

Really Good!

Pretty good.

So-So.

I need to try again.

Why did I circle this? _____

SUPPORTS

Coaching with (name) _____

With supportive peer (name) _____

Other (specify)

None

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Activity 1.4—Learning Example

- Ask students to turn to *Activity 1.4* on pages 18 and 19 in their workbooks.
- Together, read the directions to the activity.
- Assist individual students as necessary and modify the activity (e.g., allow a student to provide only one example) as needed.
- When students have completed the activity, ask for students to share out loud.

Together read the brief statements on page 20 of the Student Workbook to introduce how the group will learn social skills.

Then, explain that they will learn the parts to Skillstreaming by working with the following social skill.

- Display the Seeking Attention skill poster.
- Direct the students to look at the skill steps as you point to them.
- Tell students that these skill steps are also on page 21 of their Student Workbook.

Skill 55: Seeking Attention

Steps:

1. Decide if you want attention.
2. Ask, “From whom?”
3. Think of how to get attention in a positive way.
4. Decide.
5. Do it.

Modeling

Explain to students that they will first learn the steps to the skill—or their plan to act out the skill—through watching someone perform the skill well. Explain that this is called Modeling. Together: read the description of Modeling on page 21 of the Student Workbook.

Think Aloud Example 1: Seeking Attention

Explain to the group that they will watch the model and listen to the model *think aloud*. Together:

- Read the Think Aloud Example 1 on Student Workbook on pages 21 and 22.

Activity 1.7—Types of Verbal Feedback

Introduce Activity 1.7 on page 32 of the Student Workbook.

- Discuss with students what Hot, Warm, and Cold feedback means. Check for understanding.
- Ask students to decide whether each statement is Hot, Warm, or Cold feedback by circling that word following the statement.
- Ask students to repeat this process with all 10 statements.

Group Leader Note: Depending on the needs of the students, the activity may be as a total group, individual, or in pairs.

Activity 1.8—Types of Nonverbal Feedback

This activity is designed to be completed as a total group.

- Read together the definitions of Hot, Warm, and Cold, nonverbal feedback on page 33 of their workbooks.
- Read the following statements in the manner noted.
- After each reading discuss why each nonverbal was either Hot, Warm, or Cold.
- Ask students to take notes on the activity page on page 33.

Statements

“I thought you followed all of the steps really well.” (Say it in a gushy, really sweet way.)

“You said that everyone can have a different opinion. It’s OK.” (Say it in a mean, angry way like you really don’t mean what you are saying.)

“You looked at your co-actor and seemed to listen to what he said.” (Say it in a friendly, helpful way.)

Discussion

As a group discuss the three questions following the activity.

Explain to the group that the specific words that were used in all three examples of feedback were positive. They were stated positively, told what was done well, and mentioned specific actions. What was different was the *way* the examples were said. If desired, ask students to say each of the sentences with positive non-verbals to make all of the examples into warm feedback.

Activity 2.2—Video Breakdown

What social skill was featured in Clip 1? _____

Describe how the character used the skill:

Did this clip feature an appropriate or inappropriate demonstration of the skill?

___ Appropriate ___ Inappropriate

Give at least one reason why you selected appropriate or inappropriate:

What social skill was featured in Clip 2? _____




Describe how the character used the skill:

Did this clip feature an appropriate or inappropriate demonstration of the skill?

___ Appropriate ___ Inappropriate

Give at least one reason why you selected appropriate or inappropriate:

Video Feedback Rubric Form

	Unacceptable 	Ok 	Good 
Listening Without Interrupting	<p>Cutting the other person off when they are talking</p> <p>Talking loudly over someone</p>	<p>Letting the other person finish, but then making comments that are completely unrelated and focus only on your interests</p> <p>Using poor listening skills (e.g., not looking at the person, not engaged with what they are saying)</p>	<p>Allowing someone to finish speaking before making your comment</p> <p>Responding to what the person said with a relevant response</p> <p>Using good listening skills (e.g., looking at the person, nodding your head, etc.)</p>

Peer Evaluation

Many students with autism have a difficult time informally learning social behaviors by watching others. One reason for this may be that they fail to attend to the most important features of another person's behavior. Using structured peer-evaluations requires students to key their attention to specific, relevant aspects of peer behavior. Similarly, many students have difficulty receiving constructive feedback about their social behavior from peers, often leading to arguments with the peer. This strategy provides feedback opportunities to be structured in safe and supportive instructional environments where both students will benefit. Therefore, this strategy is used for the following skill groups: Group II: Social Comprehension and Group IV: Problem Solving.

Activity 2.8—Peer Evaluation Form

Materials: Student Workbooks; Giving Information Non-Verbally Skill Poster

Step 1: Provide a brief review of this previously learned skill. Include examples and non-examples of communicating specific behavior through body position, facial expressions, and gestures.

Homework Report I

Explain that the first part of the homework assignment will be their plan for using the skill.

- Write your name and the date on the lines at the top of page 63.
- *Skill Steps.* Typically, the skill steps for this skill will be written for you. Sometimes you may need to copy the skill steps that your group leader provides onto your Homework Report.
- *With whom will I try this?* Then you will plan with whom and when you will try the skill.
- *When?* When will you try your plan?
- *Supports.* As part of your plan, you and your group leader will decide on the supports that will help you be successful in your practice of the skill. Examples of supports may include coaching (someone guiding you through the skill), a supportive peer (a friend who will prompt you if needed), or another support.

Explain that the following section will be completed after they try out their plan for skill use.

- *What happened?* After you have practiced the skill, write about what you did. You may want to add what the other person did after you used the skill.
- *Which skill steps did you really follow? (List)*
- *How did I do?* Then you will evaluate how well you did by circling one of the numerals indicating if your skill use was Really Good! (4), Pretty Good (3), So-So (2), or I Need to Try Again (1).
- *Why did I circle this?* Finally, you will explain why you decided on this rating.

Explain to students that when they become more proficient in completing Homework Report 1 and generalizing skill use outside of the classroom or clinic setting, the group may return to this workbook for instruction in the other homework levels.

When students are ready to move to the other levels of homework, read together these sections in their student workbooks.

Accepting Another's Opinion

1. Listen without interrupting.
2. Think about what is said.
3. Say to yourself, "Everyone can have a different opinion. It's okay."
4. Answer or comment in a respectful way.

The Role I Played (Starting a Conversation)

What was my role? _____

If you were the **main actor**, check off the items that you did:

- I told about the time I need the skill.
- I chose a co-actor.
- I gave the co-actor information.
- I acted out the skill steps.
- I did my thinking aloud.

If you were the **co-actor**, check off the items that you did:

- I was helpful to the main actor by acting in a real-life way.
- I gave helpful feedback to the main actor.

If you were an **observer**, check off the items that you did:

- I listened.
- I watched.
- I said if the main actor followed the step I was watching for.
- I gave helpful feedback.

Skill Posters



Skill Posters Overview

The *Skillstreaming Children and Youth with High-Functioning Autism Skill Posters* are a set of 80 large-format 12" × 18" visual supports designed to reinforce the prosocial skills taught in the Skillstreaming curriculum.

Each poster clearly displays the behavioral steps associated with a specific skill, providing students with an accessible visual reference that supports learning, review, and real-world application. These posters are ideal for classrooms, counseling environments, social skills groups, and other instructional settings where consistent reinforcement of skill steps is beneficial.

By presenting each skill in a clear and structured format, the posters help children and youth strengthen social understanding, improve retention, and build confidence in using prosocial behaviors across a variety of situations.

Note: For effective implementation, the core program book *Skillstreaming Children and Youth with High-Functioning Autism: A Guide for Teaching Prosocial Skills* should be used prior to incorporating additional Skillstreaming materials.

List of Poster skills

Group I: Relationship Skills

Beginning Relationship Skills

1. Listening Without Interrupting
2. Greeting Others
3. Responding to a Greeting
4. Asking a Question About the Topic
5. Staying on Topic
6. Responding to Questions
7. Taking Turns
8. Complimenting Others
9. Helping Others
10. Encouraging Others
11. Cooperating with Others
12. Sharing
13. Asking a Favor

Advanced Relationship Skills

14. Starting a Conversation
15. Continuing a Conversation
16. When to Introduce a New Topic
17. Accepting a Topic Change
18. Ending a Conversation
19. Responding to Offers to Join In
20. Asking to Join In
21. Communicating Preferences
22. Accepting Another's Opinion

Group II: Social Comprehension

23. Reading Others
24. Reading the Environment
25. Using a Friendly Voice
26. Using a Respectful Voice
27. Giving Information Nonverbally
28. Attending to a Model
29. Respecting Another's Boundaries
30. Showing Interest in Others
31. Understanding Differences
32. Taking Another's Perspective

Group III: Self-Regulation

33. Regulating Your Attention
34. Recognizing Anxiety
35. Deciding What Causes Your Anxiety
36. Dealing with Anxiety
37. Checking Your Voice and Interests
38. No Means No
39. Using Self-Control
40. Dealing with Change
41. Dealing with Boredom
42. Responding to Authority
43. Checking Your Behavior
44. Affirming Yourself

Group IV: Problem Solving

45. Determining Private Information
46. Understanding Rules of Swearing

47. Understanding Rules of Touch
48. Planning for Stressful Situations
49. Defining a Problem
50. Considering Alternatives
51. Choosing an Alternative
52. When to Change Strategies
53. When a Rule Doesn't Work
54. Giving Feedback
55. Seeking Attention
56. Accepting Attention
57. Making a Complaint
58. When You Don't Understand

Group V: Understanding Emotions

59. Knowing Your Feelings
60. Feeling Different
61. Expressing Your Feelings
62. Calming Your Feelings
63. Showing Affection
64. Recognizing Another's Feelings
65. Showing Concern for Another
66. Understanding Another's Intentions
67. Dealing with Another's Anger

Group VI: School-Related Skills

68. Asking for Help
69. Ignoring Distractions
70. Contributing to Discussions
71. Taking a Break

- 72. Setting a Goal
- 73. Completing Assignments
- 74. Following Adult Directions
- 75. Asking for Information
- 76. Organizing Materials
- 77. Making Corrections
- 78. Preparing for Class
- 79. Dealing with Transitions
- 80. Interrupting