



ADHD AND  
SOCIAL SKILLS

*A Step-by-Step Guide for Teachers and Parents*

ESTA M. RAPOPORT



# ADHD AND SOCIAL SKILLS

A STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE FOR  
TEACHERS AND PARENTS

*Esta M. Rapoport*

**Rowman & Littlefield Education**

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*To my parents, Lilyan and Irving Milchman,  
and to my brother Hartley*

*To both my husband Fred, my true love,  
and my wonderful children, Mimi, Ian, and Jake,  
for all of their everlasting love, encouragement, pride, guidance, and support  
without which I could not have written this book*

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# FOREWORD

**A**ttention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder, or ADHD, is as confusing a term as it is a condition affecting our children. Kids who suffer with this disorder appear confused, distracted, angry, and disrespectful, talking endlessly with high energy, which is not an easy condition for them, their families, or their schools to deal with. But we are coming to understand this disorder and how to cope with it, thanks to this book by Esta Rapoport, which is aimed at managing the ADHD in schools and, by implication, at home.

The insights and methods presented in the book are primarily meant for the adults who interact with these children and can then be applied to the children themselves. Living with and teaching children/students with this disorder can bring out the worst in teachers and parents, making the adults angry and prompting them, as Dr. Rapoport explains, to scream “Sit down

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and shut up!” and, often out of frustration, to leave the child to his/her own devices. In contrast, reaching out to these children, reinforcing their better behavior, and changing their negative actions can have amazing effects, as Rapoport shows and explains so clearly and elegantly in this much-needed book.

If children with ADHD aren't taught how to manage themselves and their behavior, they may spend the rest of their lives alone, isolated, unmarried, unemployed, and unemployable. So the stakes are high and lessons to be learned are critical. How can I teach you, live with you, help you if you don't sit still, listen, respond, be quiet, and grasp what I'm saying and be responsive? Uniquely, too, Dr. Rapoport is not afraid to put herself personally into the picture, telling stories about how she worked with these children (Timmy being a good example), meeting with the children's school principal and teachers, and involving herself with the children's reactions to schools. She gives examples from her research about students with the disorder, such as, they are “running around in circles,” “talking was also nonstop,” “avoiding eye contact, and being uncontrollable.” We can feel these conditions and come to understand better the children and what can and should be done to help them in practical terms.

Each chapter in the book treats a set of particular *Social Skills*, numbered from one through fifty-two, giving examples of the following: (1) how these conditions manifest themselves in daily life (at home and at school); (2) methods for grappling with the problem; and (3) strategies for coping. Nicely, this book has managed to organize the skills, from the first one, that is closest and most subtle: *Social Skill 1, Maintaining Eye Contact*, to a more behavioral one, say, *Social Skill 15, Responding to a Compliment*, to the most public and general in the set, *Social Skill 52, Behaving Properly in Public*.

For example, take *Social Skill 22, Receiving Criticism Well*: children with ADHD find it difficult to hear negative assessments of their behavior because these kids are yelled at, criticized, and belittled dozens of times per day: “Be quiet,” “Stop

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hitting,” “No biting is allowed,” “I told you three times to clean up your room.”

The book then gives adults a series of “methods” for dealing with this problem, using stories, CDs, listening to the child, and helping the child to build confidence so he or she can learn to listen, respond, and “take criticism.” And, as the child behaves better, she or he will receive less criticism and take advice more easily (Social Skill 22). Like most of the methods and strategies in this book, one technique leads to improvement in another, which leads to more acceptable situations in the next situation. So the child learns to cope, and the adult becomes more patient, more skillful, and better at managing the conditions of this disorder.

In chapter after chapter, the book provides clear, direct, and realistic advice to teachers and parents: Be aware of the signs, the changes in behavior; know the child and be aware of changes in “typical behavior” and then act quickly and directly; speak with the child, quietly and privately. You can give the child a book about students who are being bullied and can share it with the family and the child. Be engaged, aware, and follow up, and get the child to report when he or she is being bothered and bullied, and steps should be taken to stop other children from picking on the child with ADHD.

Most important, everyone should realize that these kids with ADHD don’t want or like being that way—but that they cannot help themselves. Starting there, adults should help children control their emotions and behaviors, urging them to make and keep friends. Thus, this book allows us to understand the nature of these students, the reactions they can create from teachers (parents) and other students, and gives us fifty-two different social skills in a kind of hierarchy to teach children with ADHD to deal with their conditions. Thus, it breaks the key skills for the kids down and provides useful advice to the adults about being positive, working together, being observant, making and testing hypotheses, and helping the adults through the home and school to change the child’s environment.

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What could be more useful? This book is clearly written, uses real examples and methods, case by case, and can assist real children with ADHD by helping those in the child's environment: home, school, and elsewhere. And I would say, too, that these ADHD techniques and skills can be used in dealing with all children as they grow up, helping them learn to be responsible social creatures, and to learn to live at home, school, work, and in the community. The process is lifelong, and the advice and methods in this book are applicable throughout the child's world. The kids with ADHD often force us to work more carefully and thoroughly since their conditions are more exaggerated and severe. All children need understanding adults, can use "structure," "consistency," and "people to listen and help them"—it's just more critical for the student with ADHD, as this book so well explains and illustrates.

Bruce S. Cooper, Ph.D.  
Fordham University Graduate School of Education

# PREFACE

I walked into the school where I would be working for the next year and was stunned to see Timmy, an eight-year-old, curly haired, mop-topped imp sitting right outside of the principal's office. He had his head down and was not talking to anyone. I sat down next to him and after just a few minutes, tears began to flow gently down his cheek. He told me that he was trying to make himself invisible so that no one could see him as they walked by, because unlike him, *they* were going to gym class. Why was he not going to gym class like everyone else?

His teacher told me that he was not yet ready to go to gym, art, music, or recess with the other children because he talked incessantly; he did not pay attention to instructions; he interrupted whomever was speaking; and he continuously touched others. How obstructive could a little boy's behavior be that would prevent him from attending classes and activities that would seemingly be fun for him?

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In a way, one could not blame his teacher. Apparently the last time he entered the gym, he immediately darted to the closet where all of the equipment was stored and one by one, threw each and every piece of equipment out onto the gym floor. In fact, he threw some of the balls at the other children.

His behavior was certainly obstructive. However, was there not one teacher who could try to teach him how to behave appropriately? Timmy's teacher quickly told me the answer to that question. She said that "He just wouldn't listen." She also told me that she "just didn't have the time to work with one child." Timmy was one student in an eight-student class. Was she kidding? Her response gave me a clear picture of how she felt about Timmy and his behavior.

I know that you are asking yourself, why did Timmy exhibit these socially inappropriate behaviors? Why did he exhibit poor social skills? Timmy had a diagnosis of attention-deficit/hyperactive disorder (ADHD) as well as a diagnosis of giftedness. The symptoms that he exhibited are typical for children with the diagnosis of ADHD as listed in the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM-IV-TR). Certainly, Timmy exhibited the following from the DSM-IV-TR:

- (b) often has difficulty sustaining attention in tasks or play activities
- (c) often does not seem to listen when spoken to directly
- (h) is often easily distracted by extraneous stimuli
- (e) is often "on the go" or often acts as if "driven by a motor"
- (f) often talks excessively (APA 2000, p. 66).

In fact, if children with ADHD do not learn how to diminish or self-regulate these symptoms, they may arguably spend their entire adult lives feeling friendless, devoid of spouses, and having difficulty obtaining and keeping a job.

As hard as it is for me to admit it, you can see how a child like Timmy could be annoying for other children to have around. It was just about impossible for Timmy to get children

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to like him, let alone to make friends. Each time I entered the classroom, Timmy appeared to be happy.

However, within a few moments, his face showed more and more sadness and hurt. Whenever he tried to talk to his classmates, they would ignore him or make insulting comments to him. His behavior would then suddenly become inappropriate. This was the cycle of Timmy's behavior: he would talk to his classmates; they would ignore him or make hurtful comments to him; and then he would exhibit socially inappropriate behavior that would irritate them. This cycle was prevalent during all of his classes as well as throughout lunch.

When I came to school to work with Timmy, no one wanted to sit next to him at lunch. Let us look at what typically happened. As Timmy ate his lunch, if the other children did not get up from their chairs immediately upon seeing him walking toward them and sit somewhere else, he would speak to them. They would say insulting comments to him, such as, "Oh no, here he is again, the talking monster," or "The jumping jack in a boy's body is sitting here, yuck." He would then exhibit inappropriate behavior, such as purposely chewing his food with his mouth open.

The other children would then say to me that "He grosses us out." Since Timmy clearly did not understand how his behavior was causing his peers to respond to him in a negative way, he did not do anything to change his behavior. I tried to talk to Timmy to help him to understand exactly why his peers were rejecting him, but he just did not understand. He would speak to me about feeling rejected and unwanted but just did not understand the origin of his own socially inappropriate behavior. So I tried a different approach.

I asked for and received permission from his parents, the other children's parents, and the school to videotape him during class, in lunch, in recess, and in gym class. I included the stipulation that the videotape was for my use only. The other children thought that I was videotaping them as well, so they

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did not complain. I only had to show Timmy a few minutes of the videotape before he got the idea of the annoying nature of his behavior. That tape was a great teaching tool for me over the year that I worked with him, but I will not get into those details here.

After working with Timmy during that year, I knew that I had to find a way to help teachers and parents teach social skills to children with ADHD, so that these children's socially inappropriate behavior would not result in their becoming isolated, bullied, and rejected. I knew that I had to do something to try to prevent other children with ADHD from experiencing their childhood years in a sad and lonely place like the world in which Timmy lived. If children with ADHD learn positive social skills, they will naturally feel better about themselves. If they succeed in learning these socially appropriate skills, they will be less likely to form negative opinions about themselves, as Timmy had already done at eight years old.

Every author has a motivating force behind their writing. Timmy was my motivating force. I wrote this book to help those individuals who work with children such as Timmy to understand this conundrum called ADHD. I also wrote this book to help the individuals who work with these children to teach them how to self-regulate their socially inappropriate behavior, so it will be easier for them to have positive social interactions. Even though the audience for this book is actually teachers, as one of my students reminded me, "Parents are children's first teachers" (personal communication, Terri Graunitz, November 2008). Therefore, I will say here that I wrote this book to help teachers and parents learn how to teach social skills to children with ADHD.

Teachers in our schools as well as parents at home need to learn how to teach children with ADHD appropriate social skills so these children can avoid being mistreated like Timmy and so many other children in our country who have a diagnosis of ADHD. Children such as Timmy are rebuffed and bullied by their peers every day in classrooms across the United States.

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Their self-esteem and self-confidence are being negatively affected because of the reactions of others toward their behavior. Later in this book you will hear about children from my field research who experienced being bullied because they behaved, like Timmy, in different ways from other children, often appearing vulnerable. What do people see first when they encounter children with ADHD? Trust me that it is not their good heart; it is their socially inappropriate behavior.

One of my mentors asked me, “Who should care about the social skills problems of children with ADHD?” Everyone must care. Why do I say that? Most educators agree that there are at least 3,290,000 children with ADHD in our schools today.<sup>1</sup> I would say that that is a good enough reason to care about children with ADHD. It was certainly a good enough reason for me to write this book.

These children could be *your children*.

These children could be *your sister's or your brother's children*.

These children could be *your friend's children*.

If you are a teacher, an administrator, a parent, a psychologist, a psychiatrist, a pediatrician, a pediatric neurologist or a social worker, or in fact, anyone who comes in contact with children with ADHD frequently, you cannot ignore the plight of children who behave in a socially inappropriate way. The manner in which these children behave is not of their own free will but is due to this enigma called ADHD. These children behave in ways that are socially inappropriate because they have social skills difficulties. In other words, they have not yet developed the social skills that are necessary to interact either with other children or adults.

Back to Timmy. Do you remember that I discussed how Timmy's teacher felt about him? Let me mention some of the reactions of the other children in the classroom, among others. Every day that I entered the classroom, another child would come running up to tell me what a horrible thing Timmy had done to them. Then, they asked me, “Could you please keep Timmy away from us?”

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I told these children that those kinds of comments were unacceptable and hurtful. However, even though I told them to stop saying those negative things about Timmy, they did not do so. Timmy heard every one of these hurtful comments, which made him tear up right in front of me. He quickly became angry at the child who said it, which caused him to strike out against that child, as well as all of the children in his class, even more.

In an attempt to find out more about Timmy, I spoke to his mom. According to her, children have been saying negative comments to Timmy ever since he was in preschool. She also told me that Timmy was always so hyperactive, that it seemed as if he was perpetually in motion. As I observed him in class, he would talk in an obsessive way about anything and everything. For instance, he would ask why the teacher was wearing her hair in a ponytail, perhaps thirty times.

Additionally, his comments were almost never on the topic being discussed. In addition, when he realized that no one was listening to him, he began to move closer to the child or adult to whom he was speaking. He would also try to touch that child or adult. If you are familiar with the “Close Talker” in the *Seinfeld* episodes, that was the style of Timmy’s interactions. The more the child became annoyed, the more annoying Timmy became. Consequently, none of the children wanted to sit next to him or be anywhere near him. Imagine how an eight-year-old boy would feel when no one, not his peers or his teachers, wanted to be around him. This sweet and discerning child was rejected by everyone. He was such a bright little boy. Why couldn’t he add his insightful comments to the conversations in class or at recess?

Sadly, he never was given the chance to enter into those conversations, either during gym, art, or recess, because as I have said before, he was not permitted to attend any activity where the teacher thought that he might be disruptive. His teacher felt that he was misunderstanding much of the instructions that she gave the class, in terms of how to go about doing

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activities as well as instructions concerning how to do his class work. However, in the year that I worked with Timmy, his teacher never attempted to clarify those instructions for him.

In fact, it appeared that even though he was so many steps ahead of everyone intellectually (he had a diagnosis of giftedness), he could not attend to either his teachers or his peers for an extended period of time without “bouncing all over the room,” as his teacher told me. Because of Timmy’s socially inappropriate behavior, his teachers responded unkindly to him, while his peers verbally abused and rejected him. Timmy certainly needed to learn how to behave in a more socially appropriate way, and apparently, I was the one who was going to teach him.

I was hired to be what was called an itinerant teacher in the New York City public schools. My job description stated that I was to supervise eight-year-old Timmy in his classroom for six hours a day for four days a week for a period of one year.

I believe the actual reason that I was hired was that they wanted me to isolate Timmy from the other children as well as from the teacher. The principal thought that if I was in charge of Timmy, Timmy’s behavior, which was the only perception they had of Timmy, would not annoy anyone.

Over that year, I got to know Timmy well. He told me how terrible he felt when other children rejected him, and that he so desperately wanted to have a friend. Without going into exactly what interventions I used to remediate his inappropriate behavior, I can tell you that from that first day forward, I observed the other children rejecting Timmy and saw how it affected his self-esteem. Little by little, this cute little boy became very insecure and felt very unwanted.

He would walk with his head down so no one could say anything negative to his face. How do I know that? He told me so. Additionally, I observed him exhibiting that type of body language, which certainly validated what he had told me. More often than not, I would see tears streaming down his little face when I tried to get him to maintain eye contact. I needed to

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have him maintain eye contact, of course, so that I could be sure that he was paying attention when I was teaching him social skills.

There is hope for children like Timmy in terms of learning social skills. Even though it took a year for me to help Timmy learn how to self-regulate his behavior, by the end of the year he was attending gym class, with me in tow. It was a good thing since my rusty skills as a soccer coach came in handy that year!

The other children were learning how to play soccer, so I taught Timmy to play as well. I ran right next to him and helped to model soccer skills for him. On the last day of school, Timmy's class was playing soccer. I convinced the gym teacher to permit him to play on one of the teams. The score was tied at 2-2. I signaled to one of the other boys to pass the ball to Timmy, who was waiting right in front of the goal.

The other little boy dribbled the ball to Timmy. Timmy dribbled the ball a few more feet, and with a good "foot" kicked the ball into the goal for the point to win the game. I still become emotional upon thinking about the end of this rather tumultuous story. After Timmy kicked the ball into the goal, his "team" jumped on top of him, chanting his name: "Timmy, Timmy, Timmy!" As I watched each and every one of those children slap Timmy a high-five, I was just stunned to see how far Timmy had come.

I saw that Timmy felt so proud of himself. I could also see that all of the hard work that we had done together over that past year was worth it. I am not telling you that that was the end of Timmy's socially inappropriate behavior. I will tell you, though, that from that point onward Timmy knew that he was capable of self-regulating his socially inappropriate behavior. He began to have some ownership over his socially *appropriate* behavior as well.

Now that I have given you a real-life example of how poor social skills can affect a child with ADHD and the people

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around him, I will take you on a long journey down the road of teaching social skills to children with ADHD. So let us begin.

### **NOTE TO THE READER**

For clarity purposes, I am referring to a child with ADHD as “he” instead of “she” in this book, even though clearly there are many girls who have ADHD as well. Also, the names used are pseudonyms in order to protect the privacy of all individuals discussed in this book.

*We don't accomplish anything in this world alone . . .  
and whatever happens is the result of the whole tap-  
estry of one's life and all the weavings of individual  
threads form one to another that creates something.*

—Sandra Day O'Connor

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# INTRODUCTION

**A**s teachers who work with children with attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) every day, or parents who live with these children, you certainly know how social skills difficulties affect the lives of children with ADHD. What you may not know, however, is that children with social skills difficulties may arguably evolve into adults with social skills problems. I am going to emphasize what I said in the preface: When these children with ADHD become adults, they will most certainly have difficulty making and keeping friends, finding a spouse, and obtaining and keeping a job.

The effects of social skills problems on children with ADHD are wide-ranging and generalize to many facets of their lives. Haven't children with ADHD learned positive social skills at home as modeled by their parents or in school as modeled by their teachers? The answer to that question is no; they typically

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have not learned to exhibit positive social skills at home or at school.

Children with ADHD do not learn social skills as easily as do typical children. Two children, one typical and one with ADHD, can live in the same house. The typical child will learn positive social skills and the child with ADHD will not. Why don't children with ADHD learn social skills as easily as typical children?

Children with ADHD do not learn positive social skills because they become distracted during the time they are exposed to them, among other reasons. In other words, their attention to these positive social skills is interrupted; something interferes with their learning of socially appropriate behavior. For example, they may become distracted and have their attention interrupted due to temper tantrums; they may be paying attention to something other than their parent who is teaching them a social skill; or they may be anxious, among other reasons.

Children with ADHD who are easily distractible can learn positive social skills, but it is difficult for them to do so. I do not mean to paint a gloomy picture and say that these children will not learn positive social skills. They can and will learn positive skills if they have some help along the way. These children need help from teachers and parents who understand that they are not purposely trying to behave in a socially inappropriate way. Therefore, as teachers who work on social skills with children who have ADHD, you must have some expertise in both ADHD and social skills training.

However, our education system does not prioritize teaching social skills to children with ADHD. On the contrary, our education system emphasizes and stresses academic achievement and technological expertise, as it should, to an extent. However, along the way toward emphasizing the teaching of academics, children's problems in interacting with their peers somehow get shoved aside.

When a child succeeds academically and receives good grades, he feels confident and, arguably, has good self-esteem.

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However, if a child does not succeed socially and cannot make friends, he most likely will develop poor self-esteem. Children's social goals have arguably not been incorporated into what educators think are the most important goals toward which to strive.

Just to reiterate, what does the federal government, yes, the federal government, mandate as goals for students today? Academics. If you were to read the No Child Left Behind legislation<sup>1</sup> you would see that goal discussed in depth and in detail. In the government's viewpoint, perhaps it is vital to teach academics in order to compete with the world in terms of technology and science, as we did many years ago in the era of *Sputnik*. However, for some children, such as children with ADHD, learning positive social skills is just as important a goal.

It is imperative for teachers to prioritize the teaching of social skills in ways that children with ADHD can learn them.<sup>2</sup> Otherwise, the teaching of academics is going to be ineffective. Why? If children with ADHD do not learn social skills, the teaching of academics is going to be constantly interrupted by inappropriate questions, hyperactive behavior, and impulsive behavior. Teachers become quickly frustrated when children interrupt their teaching by asking inappropriate questions or questions that have already been answered.

That being said, it is those same teachers who say that it is impossible for them to teach social skills when they are under pressure due to the testing requirements of No Child Left Behind. It is absolutely possible! If these teachers taught social skills to children with ADHD, they would be able to prepare all of the children in their class for those tests with few interruptions.

Teachers *think* they do not have the time to teach social skills because they have to spend so much time preparing children to take the required tests. Teachers must make time to teach social skills to children with ADHD for the children's sake, for their sake, and for the sake of other children in the

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classroom. How can teachers teach social skills within such a restricted curriculum?

They could teach social skills by embedding<sup>3</sup> them within their academic setting. No Child Left Behind delineates employing research-supported practices<sup>4</sup> as a vital component to successful teaching. A great example of a research-based practice is embedded instruction. Teachers can simply embed or incorporate the teaching of social skills within their academic setting. In this book, you will learn how to embed the teaching of social skills within your daily lessons in your classrooms, activities, and recess, among other natural settings.

You will learn the following, among other things, in this book about ADHD and social skills problems:

- \* You will learn the definition of ADHD.
- \* You will learn the typical misunderstandings that individuals in our society have in regard to whether or not ADHD is a real disorder or one that has been seemingly created by parents who are trying to gain unfair advantages for their children. (I am not kidding; believe it or not, some people think that way!)
- \* You will learn the reasons that children with ADHD have social skills problems.
- \* You will learn about the different types of social skills deficits.
- \* You will learn the effect that having social skills deficits has on the behavior of children with ADHD.
- \* You will learn the reasons that children with ADHD do not learn appropriate social skills as easily as typical children.
- \* You will find out the names of the social skills that have been developed by well-known researchers as well as the ones that have evolved over the course of my research.
- \* You will learn how you as teachers can lay the foundation for teaching social skills.

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- \* You will learn how educators can teach social skills within their academic settings.
- \* You will see examples of social skills training interventions.

I have included numerous social skills training interventions in this book. They are based on both well-researched social skills interventions as well as on the social skills training interventions that I have designed as a result of my research. Teachers and parents are also given examples of many of the interventions. (Go directly to those chapters if you want to begin right now!)

Teachers today often work collaboratively and cooperatively to try to diminish socially inappropriate behavior in children with ADHD. Therefore, I have included a chapter explaining positive behavior support and how to implement it within your classroom in regard to managing socially inappropriate behavior in school for children with ADHD. Finally, you will find a list of resources that can be easily accessed. Hopefully, these resources will help you as you begin teaching social skills to children with ADHD. Before you look at the list of resources, let me tell you the various ways you can use this book.

I would suggest reading this book as if you were reading a recipe book. Look at the table of contents and see which chapters are interesting to you. I would then suggest skimming all of the chapters, even if you have decided that you only wish to read certain chapters. The reason for skimming the chapters is to make sure that you are not missing any sections of chapters that may be important to you, in terms of the children with whom you work.

If this is your first foray into ADHD, then you might decide to begin with the preface and read each chapter sequentially, so you can get a grasp of each section of the book. If you are already knowledgeable of the definition of ADHD and its history, for example, you may want to skip to chapter 2 where

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I discuss the derivation of social skills deficits. (Of course, I would love if you read every single word that I have written, but I know that that is just not practical!)

If you are familiar with that information, you can then skip to chapter 3 (if you wish) where I list the various social skills that you may decide to teach the children you are working with who have ADHD. You may, however, decide to skip all of that and travel past “go” right into the social skills training interventions.

By the way, you can read this book and either use the social skills interventions as I have written them or you can tailor them to the individual needs of a specific child with whom you are working. You can also skim the social skills interventions that I have designed and pick and choose which ones are appropriate for you to teach.

When you are skimming the chapters, however, do not forget the Bibliography and Suggested Resources for Teachers and Parents. After you try a social skill intervention, for instance, you may want to reinforce the social skill that you have just taught. On my resource list, you may find a book that you can read to a child with ADHD that discusses a similar topic as the social skill intervention that you have just taught.

I also have included a reference to my dissertation in case you would like to see the derivation of my work with children with ADHD and social skills as well. As related to suggested resources, what happens if you have a question about a particular social skill intervention? That is easy. You can e-mail me at erapoort@cnr.edu, and I will try to get back to you as quickly as I can.

Let us begin our journey.

# 1

## WHAT IS ATTENTION-DEFICIT/ HYPERACTIVITY DISORDER, ANYWAY?

**W**hat is attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder? Before I give you the medical/educational definition, listen to Stacey who decided to home school her son Bobby who had ADHD. She did not feel that Bobby would be able to learn within the confines of a classroom due to the fact that he could not stay in any one place for a prolonged period of time, a typical characteristic of ADHD.

And then, by the time Bobby was four, for sure, I was pretty convinced that he had ADHD. And, um, and I was also convinced that I didn't want to medicate him. And, um, so, but I know that if he was in a classroom that, well, first of all he was four and a half. And I'm thinking, he's supposed to be ready for kindergarten soon? And I'm thinking, there's no way this kid could sit in a classroom for a half-day or a whole day, either one. So I started thinking, wow, that's not going to be good for

him. It's not going to work for him. I realized that he wasn't going to be suited for classroom learning. And originally, that was one of my big reasons was that I knew that a classroom wasn't going to be a good place for him.

Other children such as eight-year-old Timmy, whom you first heard about in my introduction, exhibited the following characteristics in his classroom as noted from an adapted Conners Rating Scale:

- \* Restless in the “squirmy” sense
- \* Excitable, impulsive
- \* Fails to give close attention to details or makes careless mistakes in schoolwork, work, or other activities
- \* Is an emotional child
- \* Restless or overactive
- \* Does not appear to listen to what is being said to him
- \* Leaves seat in classroom or in other situations in which remaining seated is expected
- \* Inattentive, easily distracted
- \* Has difficulty waiting his turn
- \* Does not know how to make friends
- \* Fidgeting
- \* Disturbs other children
- \* Talks excessively
- \* Runs about in situations where it is inappropriate
- \* Has poor social skills
- \* Fidgets with hands or feet
- \* Demands must be met immediately—easily frustrated
- \* Blurts out answers to questions before the questions have been completed
- \* Interrupts or intrudes on others
- \* Easily distracted by extraneous stimuli
- \* Restless, always up and on the go

Have you noticed any similar symptoms in your students? Let's continue on to the accepted definition of ADHD, which

has become the umbrella term for attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder of all types. So we are all clear on exactly what we mean by attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), here is the well-accepted, current definition of it according to the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM-IV-TR):

The essential feature of Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder is a persistent pattern of inattention and/or hyperactivity-impulsivity that is more frequently displayed and more severe than is typically observed in individuals at a comparable level of development (Criterion A). Some hyperactive-impulsive or inattentive symptoms that cause impairment must have been present before age 7 years, although many individuals are diagnosed after the symptoms have been present for a number of years, especially in the case of individuals with the Predominantly Inattentive Type (Criterion B). (APA, 2000, p. 85)

The DSM-IV-TR categorizes these children into four types:

- \* Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder, Combined Type
- \* Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder, Predominantly Inattentive Type
- \* Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder, Predominantly Hyperactive-Impulsive Type
- \* Attention-Deficit-Hyperactivity Disorder, Not Otherwise Specified (APA, 2000, p. 87)

As noted on one of the days that I worked with Timmy, the inconsistency of these children's behavior is very frustrating to teachers who work with them.

One of the most difficult things about Timmy's behavior is that it is evidenced by inconsistency. This is the first year that the school has allowed him to have gym. Last year, the teacher did not feel that she could run the gym class successfully because she constantly had to manage Timmy's behavior. I believe that

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one of the reasons, among others, that he exhibited socially inappropriate behavior in gym class was that he did not know how to play many of the games that the teacher played. Therefore, I taught him many games this year that he had never been taught how to play. For example, I taught him how to play soccer and kickball.

Today, I talked the gym teacher into permitting him to participate in the kickball game that she was facilitating in gym class. After teaching him how to kick the ball properly, and run around the bases according to the rules, he made a big kick that enabled him to get two children “home,” as well as himself. Timmy ran “home” at the same time as a child threw the ball in an attempt to get him out before he crossed the plate.

Timmy then took the ball and threw it at the child’s face, hurting him. When he saw the child cry, he felt very badly. I made him apologize. I also had him sit out of the game for a few minutes. There was clearly no “rhyme or reason” for his behavior. He finally had athletic success, yet behaved in a destructive manner. (You already read in the Preface how Timmy finally learned to self-regulate when he achieved social success through playing soccer.)

On the same day that he had displayed the socially inappropriate behavior I just described, he also exhibited socially appropriate behavior. I simply could not explain Timmy’s enigmatic, inconsistent behavior. Again, my notes:

The social studies teacher finished her lesson earlier than expected and allowed the children some free time. Timmy played a clever variation of a Hang-Man game with Hebrew letters for thirty minutes with three other boys and one girl. He was clearly the leader at this game and set up the rules. He was able to negotiate with all of the children who were playing Hang-Man with him. I have witnessed this positive interactive behavior before. This was not parallel playing as with Legos but interactive behavior, where Timmy was laughing and having a good time. He was an equal member of the group, in terms of social interaction.

On that day, Timmy exhibited both socially inappropriate behavior and socially appropriate behavior. When children with ADHD behave in such an inconsistent way, the people around them often misperceive their behavior. These outsiders, as I call them, view these children's behavior as representing the child. They view ADHD as a disease.

That is why you will hear me referring to children who are diagnosed with ADHD as children with ADHD or children who have ADHD rather than ADHD children. These children, our children, have a disorder that affects their behavior. Children with ADHD and their behavior must be viewed as two separate entities, even though these children are ultimately responsible and accountable for their behavior.

### **COMMON MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT CHILDREN WITH ADHD**

These inconsistencies in a child with ADHD behavior, as evidenced by Timmy's socially inappropriate behavior, often lead to people having misconceptions about children with ADHD. For example, they may question whether or not ADHD is an actual disorder or perhaps is an excuse for misbehavior. Others may say that ADHD is overdiagnosed. Still others may believe that ADHD is caused by poor parenting, specifically, that the parents of the child with ADHD do not discipline the child well enough. Some may feel that parents try to have their children diagnosed as having ADHD so they can gain accommodations for their children, as well as trying to give their children an advantage when they are tested.

For those of you who have children with ADHD in your classrooms or in your home, you clearly will beg to differ. ADHD is an actual disorder or syndrome. Whatever you want to call it, it is real and it exists. Both teachers and parents know that these children are bright. It is just that their ability to do academic work is impeded by behavior that is socially

inappropriate, whether they have social skills problems or problems with distractibility or both of those difficulties. What is the evolution of the term attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder?

## **DOES ADHD HAVE A HISTORY?**

The derivation of ADHD has a storied past, as does the definition itself. Still (1902) observed behavioral symptoms in certain children when he first focused attention on the hyperactive child. The symptoms that he saw in those children are similar to those that teachers and parents see today in children with ADHD.

Still (1902) spoke about children's moral control of their behavior. He referred to what we know as hyperactive and impulsive behavior today, neither of which the child could control. He found that "a deficit in moral control could arise as a function of three distinct impairments: (1) a defect of cognitive relation to the environment; (2) a defect of moral consciousness; and (3) a defect in inhibitory volition" (p. 1011).

From 1917 to 1918, the spread of encephalitis caused individuals to experience symptoms that were the result of brain damage. This encephalitis outbreak was the impetus for people to investigate the causes of ADHD.

Werner and Strauss (1941) and Strauss and Lehtinen (1947) developed the concept of the "brain-injured child," which was pervasive throughout this era. They found that this brain damage could occur to the infant either before or after birth. "The behaviors of the brain-damaged children were described as hyperactive, distractible, impulsive, emotionally labile, and perseverative" (Meyen, Vergason, & Whelan, 1993a and b, p. 246). The term brain-injured child applied to children with behavioral characteristics similar to those of children with ADHD today as well.

Ironically, these children had no evidence of brain damage! How could those distractible, hyperactive, and impulsive children, as the researchers stated, be taught effectively in traditional classrooms with variable routines and typical classroom noise?

Researchers suggested that these children be placed in smaller, more organized classrooms, with as few distractions as possible (Barkley, 1998, p. 7).

I remember that the principal of the first school in New York City where I taught children with ADHD required all of the teachers to have white walls in our classrooms, with no pictures hung up. We had to wear clothes that were monotone in color, such as beige or gray, so nothing could distract the children whom we taught.

Little did we know as first-year teachers that these children would distract themselves! They would jump up and down, twirl their hair, tap their fingers on the desks, and walk around in circles! The term brain-injured child was soon to change, however.

During the 1950s, the term brain-injured child was changed to minimal brain damage. "To differentiate this term from true brain damage, scholars suggested the term 'minimal brain damage,' a designation indicating that the brain damage was slight" (Meyen et al., 1993a and b, p. 247). After suggestions by the National Institutes of Health (NIH), the term was changed to minimal brain dysfunction (MBD) (Clements, 1966, p. 9). Just in case you are interested in the definition of MBD that was used at that time, here it is:

Children of near-average, average or above average general intelligence with certain learning or behavioral difficulties ranging from mild to severe, which are associated with deviations of function of the central nervous system. These deviations may manifest themselves by various combinations of impairment in perception, conceptualization, language, memory, and control of attention, impulse, or motor function. (Clements, 1966, p. 9)

As things go, the term evolved and changed again in 1957 to hyperkinetic impulse disorder, because researchers such as Laufer and Denhoff (1957) believed that these children had a deficit in the central nervous system (CNS), specifically in the thalamic area. This seems like such a definition-specific term to me, which would have certainly fit my brother perfectly. He spent his time in elementary school jumping over other children's desks in a leapfrog fashion. My brother was never evaluated, but if he had been I believe he would have had a diagnosis of what we now call ADHD Predominantly Hyperactive-Impulsive type.

Unfortunately, no one knew what to do or tried to help my brother to diminish his hyperactivity so he could focus more efficiently. My brother's hyperactive behavior led other children to dislike him, which was detrimental to his self-esteem. That low self-esteem led him into dangerous situations as he got older when he became involved with a very risky group of young adults.

I am certain that one of the reasons, among many, that my brother lived a life of social hardship was that no one reached out to help him to try to diminish his hyperactive behavior. He was always looked upon as the "bad child." He spent most of his academic life either in the principal's office, in detention, or suspended from school. Back to the evolution of the term ADHD.

Chess (1960), among others, then replaced the term MBD with hyperactive child syndrome. He described "the hyperactive child as one who carries out activities at a higher rate of speed than the average child, or who is constantly in motion or both" (p. 239). That definition certainly described Timmy.

When Timmy took his medication, his behavior was fairly stable. He still engaged in nonstop talking, however. When he did not take his medication, his behavior was erratic and his talking was also nonstop. He constantly behaved as if he were in a whirlwind, running around in circles. He darted across the room and back again and talked incessantly. No teacher would

welcome that kind of socially inappropriate behavior in the classroom. But back to the evolution of the term ADHD.

Ready for another change? Researchers in the 1950s and 1960s questioned the unitary term of hyperactive child syndrome. This change was important because:

1. It emphasized activity as the defining feature of the disorder, as other scientists of the time would do.
2. It stressed the need to consider objective evidence of the symptom beyond the subjective reports of parents and teachers.
3. It took the blame for the child's problems away from the parents.
4. It separated the syndrome of hyperactivity from the concept of a brain-damaged syndrome (Barkley, 1998, p. 9).

Following the logic at the time that this syndrome was more diverse than one definition, in 1966, the National Institute of Neurological Diseases and Blindness delineated at least ninety-nine symptoms of this disorder (Barkley, 1998, p. 8).

By the early 1970s, the essential characteristics of the hyperkinetic or hyperactive child syndrome were expanded to include what researchers previously felt to be only associated characteristics. These included impulsivity; short attention span; low frustration tolerance; distractibility; and aggressiveness (Barkley, 1998, p. 10). Now we are getting closer to today's definition. In fact, one of the parents in my field research, Bess, spoke to me about Aaron's short attention span when she said, "He's just really bright and has difficulty shifting his focus from one thing that is interesting to anything else."

Two models of ADHD evolved as described by Wender (1971) and Douglas (1972). Wender described minimum brain dysfunction as six clusters of symptoms. These are:

- \* Motor behavior
- \* Attention-perceptual cognitive function

- \* Learning difficulties
- \* Impulse control
- \* Interpersonal relations
- \* Emotion (Barkley, 1998, p. 11)

What were the underlying causes of these symptoms? Wender stated that they were caused by three primary deficits. These deficits were a decreased feeling of pleasure and pain; a generally high and poorly modulated level of activation; and extroversion (Barkley, 1998, p. 11). It seemed to follow that in consideration of the fact that these children felt a diminished feeling of pleasure and pain that they may have been less responsive to punishments and rewards. That being said, you can see that those children might not have responded well to their teachers' or their parents' attempts at behavior management.

The second model was developed by Douglas in 1972. He found that deficits in sustained attention and impulse control were more likely to account for these children's problems than just hyperactivity. In other words, they could not remain focused for a long period of time. They also could not control their impulses, such as, among others, hitting and kicking other children. He found that hyperactive children were not necessarily more reading or learning disabled, did not perseverate on concept learning tasks, did not manifest auditory or right-left discrimination, and had no difficulties with short-term memory (Barkley, 1998, p. 13).

Douglas (1980) expanded on her original model and described four deficits that could possibly explain the causes of ADHD. These were investment, organization, and maintenance of attention and effort; inhibition of impulsive responding; modulation of arousal levels to meet situational demands; and an unusually strong inclination to seek immediate reinforcement (Barkley, 1998, p. 13). The evolution of a new term was quickly approaching, however.

Attention-deficit disorder became the new term in 1980 due to Douglas's work (1972) in addition to the criteria set down

by the American Psychiatric Association in the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM-III). The change to the term attention deficit, or poor attention span, rather than hyperactivity, as these children's major problem was useful because of the agreement that hyperactivity was not the only symptom of this disorder (Barkley, 1998, p. 20).

The DSM-III placed a greater importance on inattention and impulsivity than on hyperactivity. Lists of symptoms were included, as were guidelines for the age of onset as well as exclusions of other childhood psychiatric symptoms (which emphasized hyperactivity) (Barkley, 1998, p. 21). Stepping back a bit into a discussion of treatment, the efficacy of the use of medication, specifically Ritalin, to diminish the symptoms of ADHD was researched from 1939 to 1941 by Bradley (1937), among others. The use of similar medications was continued into the 1970s.

In fact, in response to later studies that reaffirmed a positive drug response in hyperactive children, various medications were employed in the 1970s to diminish the hyperactive symptoms of children who were of school age. These medications are still used today. During the same time period, Feingold (1975) discussed the possibility that there were environmental causes of hyperactivity, such as allergies to food additives. The latest change in terminology, perhaps, was soon to come.

In 1987, the DSM-III was revised and became the DSM-IV. At that point, the DSM-IV changed the term attention-deficit disorder (ADD) to attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), which has remained so to today. Included in this new revision were single-symptom lists including single cutoff scores for inattention, impulsivity, and hyperactivity. These lists were based on empirically derived dimensions of child behavior along with established symptoms that were developmentally inappropriate for a child's mental age. More research continued, however.

During the 1990s, neuroimaging research proved that there was brain activity in children with ADHD, specifically in the

frontal regions. In fact, researchers found that the posterior sections of the brains of children with ADHD are significantly smaller than those in children without ADHD (Barkley, 1998, p. 35; Semrud-Clikeman et al., 1994).

During this time, the DSM-IV also reintroduced the term attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder, predominantly inattentive type, ADHD-I, which required evidence of symptom pervasiveness across settings and demonstration of impairment in a major domain of life functioning (home, school, work) (Barkley, 1998, p. 38). So, what determined whether or not a child had ADHD?

The predominant view of the 1990s, therefore, was that social and environmental factors influenced whether or not a child had ADHD more so than neurological factors. Additionally, it was thought that these children's most apparent deficit was behavioral inhibition or lack of self-regulation (Barkley, 1998, p. 39).

Barkley et al. (1992) among other researchers felt that "the subtype of ADHD comprising chiefly inattention without impulsive-hyperactive behavior may possibly be a qualitatively distinct disorder entirely from those children who have hyperactive-impulsive behavior" (Barkley, 1998, p. 39). A model for ADHD was further refined, leading into the following decade.

Brown (2007) described the inner workings of children with ADHD in a model that described four executive functions:

- \* Activation: organizing, prioritizing, and activating for work
- \* Focus: focusing, sustaining, and shifting attention to tasks
- \* Effort: regulating alertness and sustaining effort and processing speed
- \* Emotion: managing frustration and modulating emotions. (pp. 13–17)

We have read many descriptions or models of ADHD, some of which have defined ADHD in a similar fashion and others

that have offered varied descriptions. In my experience over many years of teaching children with ADHD as well as in my field research, I have found that most children with ADHD do not fit into a specific diagnostic category. Therefore, teachers must be cognizant of the specific and unique behavioral characteristics of each child with ADHD.

Even though most children with ADHD are distractible, for example, not all are impulsive. Additionally, they do not all have social skills problems. However, some of these children may exhibit organizational difficulties, among other symptoms.

Being familiar with the types of symptoms that a child exhibits reflects whether or not a teacher has background or prior knowledge of the child's real-life experiences. If a teacher does have this knowledge, she will likely be able to help the child with ADHD learn how to manage his behavior so he can attend more effectively to his teacher's instructions.

Additionally, as part of that prior knowledge, a teacher will know that the child interrupts others' conversations. The teacher will also be able to look into the possibility that other children may reject and ostracize the child with ADHD. If the child is indeed rejected by his peers, he will have a very difficult time trying to make friends. If he has difficulty making friends, his self-esteem will be negatively affected. Presumably, he will also have difficulty interacting with adults in a reciprocal way, which will generalize to his experiencing great difficulty obtaining a job.

This outline of the derivation and causes of ADHD would not be complete without mentioning some very exciting and new research, "in consideration of the fact that 'the prevalence of Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder has been estimated at 3%-7% in school-age children, approximately 3,290,000 of those children have ADHD" (APA, 2000, p. 90; cited in Rapoport, 2007a, p. 225). Researchers have questioned whether or not there is a delay in the brain maturation of children with ADHD or whether children with ADHD are characterized by a total difference in typical brain development.

“Since its earliest description, there has been debate as to whether the disorder is a consequence partly of delay in brain maturation or as a complete deviation from the template of typical development” (Shaw et al., 2007, p. 19649). In a study funded by the NIH, Shaw et al. (2007) found, in groundbreaking research, “that in youth with attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder brain (ADHD), the brain matures in a normal pattern but is delayed three years in some regions, on average, compared to youths without the disorder.”

The areas of the brain that reflect difficulties for children with ADHD are those that control self-regulation in their thinking, attention, and planning. Therefore, the maturation of the brain is quite normal, but merely delayed, which should assure teachers and parents alike that these children’s symptoms should diminish as they mature because at some point, the child will have normal brain maturation. This new information should offer teachers and parents great optimism concerning the academic prognosis of children with ADHD.

So have the symptoms of ADHD changed? Most certainly not. However, perhaps we are beginning to gain a clearer understanding of ADHD that will help teachers to instruct children with ADHD in a more effective way. What can teachers and parents do to help children with ADHD diminish the socially inappropriate symptoms they exhibit, specifically a lack of appropriate social skills? What are social skills? Do children with ADHD have social skills deficits? Do other children have them as well? The next chapter discusses these questions in detail.

## 2

# SOCIAL SKILLS DEFICITS IN CHILDREN WITH ADHD

*He has this behavior that really pisses people off. Some ADD or ADHD is either manageable or they're so charming or sometimes it passes. We have one. His personality makes people really upset. And that was pretty evident early on.*

Sound familiar? Do you teach a child like Chris? When Valerie described Chris's personality, I just sat there stunned. The homeschool parents I had visited told me stories about their children having difficulty making friends and feeling rejected, but Valerie's description of Chris's personality was too sad for words. I thought about how difficult life must be for him as well as for his parents.

**ADMIT IT—THIS CHILD IS SO ANNOYING!**

Children with social skills deficits may behave in a very annoying manner to both their peers and adults. They may talk excessively without realizing that they are doing so or they may talk so infrequently that people do not even know they are in the room. Their parents seemingly do not like them; their teachers seemingly do not like them; and other children do not like them. I felt so sad hearing one of the mothers describing her child in such negative terms. I guess she was being realistic, but even so.

How do some teachers respond to children with ADHD, especially those children who are hyperactive? Michael had ADHD-combined type. Belinda spoke about the difficulty that Michael had experienced in school, specifically in terms of one of his teachers' attitudes:

And it was a battle. He was in her classroom I think, for four months, because after four months of he's not getting it, there was no action from her to do anything. Um, I had him moved to a different classroom; I went and met with the principal. There were several incidences that made me very unhappy throughout the school year. And I told the principal that at this point, he does not need to be in her classroom. He needs to be put into a different class, which they did, and he seemed to be doing better. But we still had the old he doesn't like to write, and if something gets tough, you know, the head itches, I need a drink, I need to go to the bathroom. It was a vicious kind of cycle. Nobody wanted to take the time to help. Nobody wanted to help figure it out. Nobody wanted to make a difference. They all just wanted to be the one to say "He's not getting it. There is a problem."

Mary Ann told me a similar story about her son Billy's experience with his gym teacher:

But also in the classrooms that were somewhat chaotic, [*sic*] a loud gymnasium where all sounds are coming in loudly, and it

seems that there is chaos. He's had trouble finding, finding his focus when it seems like everyone's running around crazy. So, even though the teachers in gym felt like they were in control, in his perspective, in what he was seeing, which is crazy, so he's going to add to it, and run around crazy. So he was having to go to detention, actually for his behavior in PE. . . . It would be that he'd mess up on Thursday, and he would have to wait for the next Wednesday to go to detention. And she even talked about in-school suspension for his behavior in PE. And that type stuff was really starting to weigh heavily on me. I'd worry about him every PE day.

Bess offered an example of one among many negative experiences Aaron had had in gymnastics:

Gymnastics has been a problem, like other activities that we have gotten him involved at one time or another (Mom laughs, nervously), because he has trouble going with the flow. And he gets distracted from what he's supposed to do very easily, and that can turn into behavior problems with, you know, goofing off with other kids, also sometimes misinterpreting social cues because he gets so focused on one way of doing things.

Children such as Michael, Billy, and Aaron have problems interacting with others. To those who are familiar with children with ADHD, this is obvious, right? Bess also remembered a time when Aaron spoke in a disrespectful way to his grandfather.

I can remember when he was four and he talked back to his grandfather. I said nothing, because it was like, you know what the situation was with the grandfather. I don't want to say he asked for it, but the tone and attitude and the behavior was such that Aaron was "back at ya," you know. I did correct him. I told him, Aaron that was not right, even though my thinking was, I'd have done the same thing as an adult. You're a child, you don't behave that way. So, it's always been a very tricky situation. I talked to him at that point. I did say to him, Aaron, you know, you need to apologize; that was wrong. To let him

know that it was unacceptable, but at that same point in time I knew that what he said was something that anyone, any adult would have said in the same situation. But the problem was that he wasn't an adult. He was a child. He didn't know he wasn't supposed to say that. That was how he felt, so that's how he handled it.

Parents and teachers know very well of these children's behavior and how others respond to it. They are also quite familiar with the social skills problems that characterize these children, as one parent described:

As far as social skills go, I do think that kids with ADHD have significant issues with this. Sometimes it seems to be a matter of the fact that they do not notice their own behavior as being unusual or inappropriate in any way. Thus, they make no effort to control it. But, even when pointed out, they often seem unable to control odd or inappropriate behavior.

I am sure that all teachers have come across students who are inflexible and even noncompliant, like Michael. His mom explained:

When I've got his attention, I tell him, "Michael, you need to watch it, he is your instructor. Don't fight. Don't put yourself in a dangerous situation." And many a time the teachers say, it's okay; I'm glad he's asking. I'm glad he's questioning. And I say yeah, but, you know, there comes a point in time when he needs to say okay, instead of fighting it all the time.

## **WHAT IS CAUSING THESE PROBLEMS?**

Okay, so let's get to the bottom of these children's social skills difficulties. Children with ADHD of all types may have social skills problems, even though their behavior may be varied. Why? They have social skills deficits. These deficits typically have been described as either "can't do"<sup>1</sup> or "won't do"<sup>2</sup>

(Gresham et al., 2001, p. 33). They either do not know how to behave in a socially appropriate manner or they know how to behave in a socially appropriate manner but do not do so.

Children with ADHD have social skills deficits that prevent them from developing positive social skills. These children typically do not pick up and internalize positive social skills that are modeled by their parents at home in the same way as children without ADHD do. Even though I spent the past several years studying the social skills problems of children with ADHD, Frank Gresham and Steven Elliott have researched social skills since the 1980s and are certainly two of the most prolific researchers in the field.

Their interventions are arguably considered the standard, and despite the fact that the parents in my research did not use the social skills interventions that Elliott and Gresham (1991) developed, these authors mention five reasons why children do not learn positive social skills. They are:

- \* Lack of knowledge
- \* Lack of practice of feedback
- \* Lack of cues or opportunities
- \* Lack of reinforcement
- \* Presence of interfering problem behaviors. (pp. 28–29)

## **WHY DON'T CHILDREN WITH ADHD LEARN POSITIVE SOCIAL SKILLS?**

### **Lack of Knowledge**

Lack of knowledge of exactly what comprises a positive social skill is often seen in children with ADHD. For example, perhaps a child does not understand the goals of the social interaction with which he is involved. Sam, for example, was so competitive about winning. Therefore, he missed the point of the play date that his mother had arranged. What was the goal of the play date? Sam's mom wanted him to play with a

friend and learn to cooperate. The problem arose when Sam's friend wanted to play Connect Four, which can be a highly competitive game.

Sam clearly did not learn the multiple goals of playing with a friend and being competitive in the game they were playing, so when he saw himself losing, he behaved in a socially inappropriate way. He threw over the Connect Four board and ran off. He might have been upset that he lost, while still appreciating the joy he experienced by playing with a friend.

What happened? Sam's mother tried to use the play date as a vehicle through which Sam could learn to cooperate and interact positively with a peer. Unfortunately, because Sam was directed to winning the game and became upset when he lost, that behavior interfered with his learning the positive social skill of cooperation that his mother was trying to teach him. In addition, it is likely that Sam did not pay attention to his mother when she told him that the point of the play date was to learn to cooperate and not to win the game.

In this case, Sam did not know or understand the behavioral strategies to reach the goal of the play date. Why do children with ADHD like Sam not internalize these strategies? Perhaps in addition to their lack of knowledge, they did not practice the specific skills that would have permitted them to hone a particular positive social skill. All of the children with whom I visited in my field research told me that they wanted to make a friend, but they simply did not know how to go about doing it. Additionally, these children did not realize that they had to practice the specific social skills in order to make a friend.

### **Lack of Practice or Feedback**

Do you remember the old joke, how do you get to Carnegie Hall? The answer was practice, practice, practice. Children

with ADHD may simply have not had enough practice behaving in a socially appropriate manner. No one likes to practice anything, let's face it. I learned how to play the cello as a child and as much as I loved playing with the orchestra and coming together to create that incredible, unified sound, I hated, yes, hated to practice. My mother locked me in a room and told me to practice for an hour. An hour can be a painfully long time for a young child to spend playing a cello, especially when you are rarely playing the melody of a song! It is very hard to admit it, but I made an audio tape of myself playing, and once in a while (I really did not do this often!) I played the tape instead of actually practicing. Instead, I sat and read a book. Now I realize that if I had practiced more, I might have been a great cellist. In fact, I was not accepted to the school I wanted to attend as a music major. As an adult, I played with some semiprofessional orchestras, but not the ones with which I might have played. I was only fooling myself—everything in retrospect, I guess.

Back to children with ADHD and practicing social skills. There are many ways to teach these children to practice appropriate social skills. Arguably, most of the research shows that children learn social skills more effectively when parents are involved in the social skills training.<sup>3</sup> I have been involved with parents of children with ADHD long enough to know that the effort they put in every day is extraordinary and requires the utmost patience. I know that they are continually exhausted. I know that it is typical nowadays for both parents to work and that it takes an added effort to manage a child who exhibits symptoms of ADHD as soon as these parents arrive home and well into the night.

Are you trying to decide if a child with ADHD you know has social skills problems? Perhaps some examples of social skills deficits/problems might be helpful. Read and see if the child in question in your classroom or home exhibits any of these behaviors. Among some examples of social skills deficits are

the following, accompanied by the specific behaviors characterizing these deficits below, so please keep reading:

- \* Deficits in social perception and social cognition that inhibit students' abilities to interact with others
- \* Lack of consequential thinking
- \* Difficulty expressing feelings
- \* Difficulty in feeling empathy for others
- \* Difficulty delaying gratification (impulsive)
- \* Inappropriate grooming and hygiene
- \* Failure to understand and fulfill the role of listener
- \* Inability to take the perspective of another
- \* Less time spent looking and smiling at a conversational partner
- \* Unwilling to act in a social situation to influence the outcome
- \* Less likely to request clarification when given ambiguous or incomplete information
- \* Tendency to talk more or less
- \* More likely to approach teacher and ask inappropriate questions
- \* Less proficient in interpersonal problem solving. (Vaughn, Bos, & Schumm, 2007, p. 255)

Before you check to see if the children in question have social skills deficits, let me give you some specific behaviors that may occur if a child has these deficits.

- \* *Difficulties in social perception:* A child walks up to two children who are disagreeing and asks "Can I play?" Even though the child clearly sees the ongoing argument between the two children, he seemingly is unaware that they may be so involved with disagreeing that they may not consider including him at that moment. Additionally, they may become annoyed with him if he intercedes.

- \* *Lack of consequential thinking:* A child walks up to another and pulls the chair out from under him. The child who pulled the chair out does not realize that the child who was sitting on the chair will fall down on the floor, possibly hurting himself.
- \* *Difficulty expressing feelings:* A child pushes another one down and cannot say he was sorry.
- \* *Difficulty delaying gratification:* A child walks up to another who is using a shovel at a sand table. Instead of asking to use the shovel, he grabs it and knocks the child down. The child did not have the patience to wait until the other child finished with the shovel. Instead, he acted on impulse.
- \* *Inappropriate grooming and hygiene:* A child arrives at school with dirty hands wearing the same soiled clothes he wore the day before. He may not pay attention to how others view his physical appearance.
- \* *Failure to understand and fulfill the role of listener:* In conversations with peers or adults, the child talks incessantly and continuously interrupts. He does not understand that when one person talks the other person listens.
- \* *Inability to take the perspective of another:* One child is upset because the other children did not permit him to play. The child with ADHD does not understand why that child is upset.
- \* *Less time spent looking and smiling at a conversational partner:* As a child is playing with another, the child with ADHD does not look or smile frequently at the other.
- \* *Unwilling to act in a social situation to influence the outcome:* A child is playing by himself on the playground while watching the others play together. He is unwilling to go over to those children to ask them to play.
- \* *Less likely to request clarification when given ambiguous or incomplete information:* A teacher hands out permission slips and tells the children to return them to school signed

by their parents. She does not tell the children when they have to return it. The child with social skills deficits does not ask the teacher when to return the permission slip and, typically, forgets to hand it in to the teacher.

- \* *Tendency to talk more or less:* A child either talks too little or excessively to peers and adults.
- \* *More likely to approach teacher and ask inappropriate questions:* A teacher gives instructions on speaking out in class. She instructs the children to raise their hands when they have something important to ask her or to tell to the class. The child with ADHD raises his hand and asks “Can we stand up in our seats and shout out our questions?”
- \* *Less proficient in interpersonal problem solving:* A child feels rejected by another child. He has not actually been rejected but does not understand how to go about trying to be friends. (Vaughn et al., 2007, p. 255)

### **SOME REAL-LIFE EXAMPLES OF SOCIALLY INAPPROPRIATE BEHAVIOR**

What are some examples of socially inappropriate behavior or, for a better term, poor social skills? Here we go. “On my first observation visit, on a late November day in 2004, I walked into a farmhouse in New Hampshire and began to observe Bess teaching Aaron in their home school. For the first part of the lesson, as Bess taught eight-year-old Aaron history, science, and German, he sat quietly and listened—until the mathematics commenced. All of a sudden, Aaron became frustrated and began singing, snapping his fingers, swinging his rope-belt around and around and finally headed for the door. I watched Bess cajole Aaron into returning and trying to do his work, which he did, this time at least. The battle, however, continued between Aaron’s socially inappropriate behavior and Bess’s attempt to control it. All she could do was merely to react to

Aaron's behavior. As I learned in six months of field research, this scenario would frequently be repeated, however" (Rapport, 2007a, p. 148).

Why was Aaron's behavior socially unacceptable? His atypical behavior, despite his productivity, would not be tolerated in a classroom. Can you imagine how a teacher would react if Aaron behaved in such a way in her classroom? He would be an immediate discipline problem, or the "bad" child.

Do your students or children have problems with social skills? Among others, some of the social skills problems of children with ADHD are:

- \* They either have difficulty making friends or do not have any friends.
- \* They do not understand other children's body language.
- \* They have problems with responsibility; they do not understand how to behave responsibly.
- \* They have difficulty listening to others without interrupting.
- \* They have difficulty listening to and interpreting other children's social cues.
- \* They appear vulnerable and are often bullied or are bullies themselves.
- \* They have difficulty with self-control.
- \* They have problems cooperating and compromising with peers.

How do you know if a child has social skills deficits or problems? Of course, you could check the list of positive social skills in chapter 3 that children should have within their behavioral repertoire. You could also ask yourself, "Why doesn't this child behave in a socially appropriate manner as other children do?" You could look around your classroom or in activities with which this child is engaged and observe how typical children interact and observe them.

Okay, back to social skills deficits. Teachers and parents know if a child with ADHD's social interactions bring about rejection, upset feelings, or tears, which is certainly an indication that this child has difficulty interacting with his peers. The results of these interactions may also be a sign that they have social skills deficits. These same teachers and parents observe that some children have an understanding of the appropriate way to behave. They wonder to themselves, how did *those* children learn social skills, by osmosis?

Social skills deficits translate into children with ADHD exhibiting behaviors that are abrasive and annoying. These children's socially inappropriate behaviors lead peers to mistreat them by either ignoring them or by rejecting them. Teachers are certainly aware of how other children behave toward children with ADHD. Children with ADHD have to learn to interact in a more acceptable way. All social experiences begin with the initial interaction.

Children with ADHD often do not know the body language they have to adopt when they meet someone for the first time. For instance, suppose Johnny walked by Sam in the hall, looked down at the ground, and did not make eye contact. How would Sam know that Johnny wanted to make friends? Making eye contact in an initial social interaction is a signal that says "I want to be friends." When a child does not maintain eye contact, the message may be "I do not want to make friends." Children with ADHD do not internalize these lessons and must be taught how to behave in a socially appropriate manner. These lessons often begin with teaching the child with ADHD how to initiate a conversation with another child.

Not knowing how to greet another child is among many reasons why children with ADHD have great difficulty making friends. Problems making and keeping friends became a common thread among the children whom I observed. Valerie described Chris's impulsivity, which made it difficult for him to make friends.

Okay, so friends have been difficult, because he does have that impulsivity, eventually, the hyperactivity. Kids can go with the flow with the hyperactivity. The distractibility, they're distractible too. Impulsivity is tough. People, kids get scared of him, because he'll do; he'll beat [*sic*], he'll hit them, he'll poke them. He'll quickly become upset, and run away, and so he's very unpredictable in other kids' eyes, and they don't like that. So friends are hard.

In addition to being unaware of how to make an initial contact with another child, children with ADHD behaviors are often impulsive. This impulsivity is a signal to others to alert them to the fact that "that child is so annoying." Have you had a similar experience as Mary Ann, who told me about her son Robert?

He has ADHD. . . . He's very impulsive, so he bops people in the head if he feels like bopping people in the head. When he feels like bopping people in the head, not out of meanness, just because, well, it looks like it was fun to do. Or because they had curly hair, and he wanted to touch it. Or he pushed somebody in front of him in line because he thought that he would be fun to see if it would be a domino effect. And so he was getting in trouble for things like that.

These impulsive behaviors do not only erupt among children who are hyperactive. Robert had ADHD-inattentive type and was usually very quiet, except when something inside of him told him to act out. When his mother taught him academics, he surreptitiously acted in a socially inappropriate way. One moment he would be quietly doing his work, and the next moment he would be purposely throwing his pencil on the floor or kicking his brother under the table. At times it almost felt like all of a sudden "something" took over these children, a higher power, perhaps. Silly? Maybe, but it was hard to explain these impulsive behaviors that left as quickly as they arrived. These children do not, therefore, have good self-control.

## **TEACHERS' RATINGS OF SOCIAL SKILLS THAT ARE VITAL FOR SCHOOL SUCCESS**

Teachers need children with ADHD to have good self-control in order to teach academics to them as well as to the rest of the class. Teachers have rated the following social skills as vital for school success: controls temper in conflict situations with peers; responds appropriately to peer pressure; controls temper in conflict situations with adults; responds when pushed or hit; and responds to physical aggression (Lane et al., 2006). Perhaps it would help you to understand exactly what I mean by difficulties with self-control if you heard about an actual parent's experience.

## **REAL-LIFE STORIES OF CHILDREN WITH ADHD SOCIAL SKILLS PROBLEMS**

### **Lack of Self-Control**

Are these children aware of their impulsive behavior? Valerie told me that Chris began exhibiting his social skills problems or difficult behavior at a young age. "Because he was very high maintenance of course at that point, at 3, 4, 5 years old, I couldn't leave him alone. He couldn't do play dates. He was hitting people, very aggressive, biting, he just couldn't."

Lack of self-control seemed to be a common theme in the children I observed. Impulsivity is only indicative of one social skills deficit. Social skills deficits come in many forms. Parents may notice that a sign of their child having social skills deficits may appear at an early age when he has difficulties with transitions.

### **Difficulties with Transitions**

Bess told me about Aaron's difficulties with transitions. "For Aaron, there was the emotional part, which manifested itself

very early on, and he had great difficulty in transitions. And I didn't realize at first what that meant, what was going on in his head. From the time that he was big enough that I couldn't physically strap him into his car seat, that I needed his cooperation, there was trouble. He was never a child to just 'go with the flow.' He's not the kind of kid to just do what everybody else is doing just because that's what everybody else is doing."

### **CHILDREN'S AWARENESS OF THEIR BEHAVIOR**

In terms of impulsivity and hyperactivity, one of the best and the worst things was that some of these children were acutely aware of these tendencies, such as Daniel who described himself in rather graphic terms:

I can't really control myself, I have ADHD. They just say ADD for short. I have to learn to control myself, because sometimes I forget to take my pill and that like screws up, because I have to take the pill the same time every day. . . . I have to get myself to calm down and not be so hyper. I get too hyper and I get like making noises. And it just kind of [laugh] embarrasses me as well as them. You wouldn't like it if someone was talking to you and they were going [acts in a very hyper way to show me] how're you doing? [acts hyper to show me again]. I also laugh a lot. Whenever somebody else is laughing about a joke, I sometimes can't help myself but laugh. I don't know why. I know, but it's just kind of weird. Cause sometimes, that's a stupid joke, but why am I laughing? They said great, so why am I laughing? She's laughing, I'm laughing. I have contagious laughter.

It was the best thing because if a child is aware of his behavior, he can presumably learn to self-regulate it. The worst thing is that the behavior is so ingrained, especially as in thirteen-year-old Daniel's case, that it may be difficult to diminish. Daniel was a very likable child. However, he was mischievous and continually tested his mom Kathleen's patience by joking with her in an inappropriate way and never letting up. At times, he

appeared to be inappropriate in terms of the way he spoke to adults; he “joked around,” but sometimes did not realize that he should stop. As his mother was reading a short paper that he wrote on Egypt, she said, “I thought you’d give me more detail.” Daniel then said, laughing, “You don’t deserve that many.” He laughed, but I do not know if he realized that he had spoken inappropriately to his mom, one of the typically devoted homeschool parents whom I researched.

### **RESPONSES OF HOMESCHOOL PARENTS TO THEIR CHILDREN’S SOCIALLY INAPPROPRIATE BEHAVIOR**

As the homeschool parents in my research tried to teach their children, they became frazzled and frustrated. As a matter of fact, I became frazzled and frustrated. I was so emotionally exhausted by the struggle that I observed between the children’s socially inappropriate behavior and the parents’ often futile effort to control it, that I could barely get my things together after the observations to walk to my car. Every time the parents tried to teach academics, their children’s socially inappropriate behavior intervened. I am sure that whether you are a teacher or a parent you have had the same experiences. I gave these extraordinary parents so much credit and felt exasperated for them as well. Okay, so what other annoying behaviors have I seen? These annoying behaviors come under the category of unnecessary and inappropriate questions, that’s for sure.

If you teach children with ADHD, I am sure that you have tried to teach academics while running up against their inappropriate questions, distractibility, and any of numerous other behaviors that characterize these children. Teachers struggle to get these children to remain quiet in an assembly, and parents struggle in trying to get these children to sit still when they are at dinner. Different parents used a variety of methods to teach their children social skills, one of which was the “Golden Rule.”

Sure, some of the parents, especially the devout Christian parents, tried to maintain the “Golden Rule” and follow the guidelines set in the Bible, but neither of those standards worked for more than a few minutes. They put a figurative bandage on a cut that continued to bleed when the bandage was removed. Catching a child in the act of misbehaving and acting on it immediately did not help either, as Donna explained to me about her daughter Kristen’s behavior:

Well, I call her on it, and explain to her that that’s not appropriate. Sometimes she’ll act out, I mean act inappropriate just because she can, act inappropriate in this environment. But if she continues to act inappropriate, then we’ll talk to her about it. I would say, Kristen, please don’t do that or Kristen please. And usually, she’ll try to respond and be good for twenty minutes or ten or twenty minutes or something and then she’ll forget.

## **CHILDREN’S ACTUAL BEHAVIOR**

Kristen’s behavior was indeed curious. She seemed to have a mischievous quality that characterized her, which I observed in her sense of humor. That quality was most certainly the reason that she wore clothes that looked more like costumes. She even wore these costumes when she attended her English class at the library that her mom taught for Kristen and other homeschool students, or church, for that matter. Kristen was somewhat “in her own world” a good part of the time, which was when she appeared to dress in costumes, which were often inappropriate for the cold weather in New England.

For example, Kristen typically wore gray Aeropostale sweat pants with a green miniskirt, a dark purple long-sleeve shirt under a short-sleeve Aeropostale shirt (which she told me was very “in”), a scarf around her neck, a yellow hat worn sideways, and old, torn apart white or gray slippers. She wore this type of outfit whether she was in her house or outside the house participating in an activity. Why did I feel the clothes she wore

were so important? Teachers would certainly not find her style of dress acceptable for a classroom. Also, and more importantly, her peers would most certainly look at her as strange.

Kristen, similar to Robert, also had ADHD-inattentive type. However, unlike Robert, she acted as the class clown. It was amazing to watch her. Her friends were used to her “dress code,” but people who walked by or worked in the library stared at her. It is so important for children with ADHD to look basically like other children their age. It is difficult enough that their behavior can be very abrasive, which makes them stand out to their peers. They certainly should not dress so uniquely that they look markedly different from other children their own age. This is especially true for children with ADHD who exhibit behaviors that call attention to themselves.

Kristen played with anything she could to distract herself and others, which included swinging lollipops around and throwing papers and pens. As I videotaped, I wondered how it was that she got away with fooling around so much. Her mother tried to stop her from acting in a distractible way. However, she told me that it was more important to her that Kristen learned the curriculum, which is why she taught her through her activity levels. Approaches such as these will be discussed in a later chapter.

Are you beginning to see what a child who has social skills deficits looks like? Let’s continue. Some children, such as Daniel, are aware of their problems. Others, however, are seemingly unaware. How can they possibly work on diminishing their socially inappropriate behavior if they are not aware that they are exhibiting any, especially a social skills deficit such as misinterpreting other people’s social cues? It is very hard to do so, but is still possible if they have social skills training.

## **MISUNDERSTANDING OTHERS’ SOCIAL CUES**

What does it mean if a child is misunderstanding or misinterpreting another child’s social cues? Here is an example. Three

children are playing a hide and seek game on the playground. Jimmy wants to play with them. Instead of waiting to see if the children in question ask him to play, he tries to get involved in their game, which has already started. He goes up to one child who is hiding and says "I see you." The children rebuff Jimmy and make mean faces at him while continuing their play. Jimmy does not pick up their cues that they do not want him to play. Misinterpreting social cues in a school setting may be among many reasons that children with ADHD do not pay attention to another child's actions or words.

Bess spoke to me about Aaron misinterpreting other children's social cues. She explained:

Like he took it away, and I didn't know what to do, and I took it back, then he started hitting me. The poor kid has a lot of instances of that sort of thing happening, because he'll misinterpret what is going on. And then when some kid does something, he'll think he, Aaron, is innocent in the eyes of the other, and won't understand why the other did something that seems mean. And then Aaron will react in a mean way to respond.

Belinda also explained to me how difficult it was for Max to "read people." "And you need to realize and read, and that is something that is his most difficult part of life, is that he doesn't know how to read people. He just doesn't really care if they're getting upset because he'll just get more upset."

Don't the parents of children with ADHD teach them social skills such as the meaning of what another child is saying to them in a social interaction? Of course they do; children with ADHD just do not pick up the cues in order to respond appropriately.

Children without ADHD typically learn social skills from their parents. If children with ADHD cannot pay attention to their parents' or others' teaching of social skills, they cannot learn socially appropriate skills. In addition to distractibility, which prevents these children from learning social skills, behaviors such as temper tantrums can also interfere with learning

social skills that their parents are trying to teach them. As Bess told me:

When he [Aaron] gets in a rage, it's very difficult for him to think clearly and he will sometimes lash out. Cause it's one thing to teach social skills through a story and it's another thing when something happens and you know you have to handle it.

What happens when a child misunderstands another's social cues? He generally behaves in a socially inappropriate manner. He does not listen to the exact words others are saying. If he does not pay attention to those words, how would he know how to act and react?

When the child with ADHD does not comprehend what another child is saying, the child with ADHD may appear different and vulnerable. Children look at him strangely wondering why he doesn't "get it." When someone appears vulnerable, others often take advantage of him; this is sad but true. Children with ADHD often become targets for others to bully.

### **CHILDREN WHO HAVE BEEN BULLIED: TRUE STORIES**

This is a fact: Children with ADHD are often bullied or become bullies. The homeschool parents in my research and many others tried to prevent their children from being bullied as they had been in school by home schooling them. Of the children in my research, however, all reported being bullied when they attended school, as Daniel related:

Oh, um, this one kid, I was riding my bike down the sidewalk onto Maple Street, and I come out of the gate. I turn and go through this little area with trees. That's where this little kid jumped me. Well one day, I got past all that, and then crossed the street. I have to turn again, go down the street, turn again, coming through the gate that leads to this neighborhood. Well,

on the way down the road before the gate, this little kid, he was riding a skateboard and like, he was just riding past me, and like, he stopped and got off, and started riding very slowly. Then he stopped and got off, and stood there and like tried jumping in my way. So I had to turn around 'em real quick, and I went kind of far, but then my pant leg got stuck in my chain. So then I yanked that out. It embarrassed me. I started going again. He caught up with me. He was just riding along the same side as me pushing me, so I had to go on the grass and pedal a lot faster.

As Daniel continued to talk to me, I had to hold back the tears. He told me in an emotionally laden voice another instance when he was bullied on the way home from school:

This one kid tried to steal my bike. He jumped on the back pegs and started taking it from me, and whenever I'm coming home from school, I have to be careful a lot because I'm riding my bike. I was just walking my bike because they're just too many kids. I can't ride around them, just walk it. And he jumped on the pegs. I held a firm grip. He tried, like, yanking it out of my hand. I ended up falling, and he fell along with the bike on top of me, pressed it up against my chest. I couldn't breathe.

Max spoke of his horrific experiences in one among several instances of his being bullied in school:

Actually, the boys make it a coincidence. You know how they'll have it so you forget your books and you'll be made fun of? When you're not looking, they'll take your books and hide them somewhere. So when you're in your darkest hour, when everybody's kind of laughing, like ohhhh, that's when they'll turn on you.

Well, like one time when I was in the cafeteria with my friends, with me and Bob one of the kids grabbed me and tried to punch me. I mean, I don't know why he grabbed me, I don't know why he tried to punch me, and then he was able to nick me, and then later that day, when I was planning to get into the

portables, he came back up to me, he punched me. I didn't do anything; I just stood there.

One time, I tried fighting back but I started thinking about my dad, and wondering, oh my gosh, what am I going to get myself into? I'm going to have to face the wrath of my dad. So I stopped, ended up being beaten up. I had to hide. They beat me up like around the chest.

Yeah, I just want to be somewhere to fit. It's like a circle, everybody's inside the circle except for me and some other people. There are probably other people probably getting in, they're probably getting in, being happy and stuff and being part of the crowd, while I'm still outside.

Do parents know that their children have been bullied? Some do. Daniel's mom knew that he had been bullied and began to focus on the subject of bullying. However, she did not know how to start, as she told me later. Daniel always appeared to be confident and vulnerable at the same time. His confidence came in the form of jokes. His vulnerability came in the form of telling people about friendships that were either never made or made and never continued. Daniel's mom told me about her and her husband's focus on helping Daniel to handle the instances when he was bullied.

Daniel was having, was mostly having problems in middle school with bullying. He started coming home every day, and sometimes he came home crying. He'd come home with an asthma attack because the kids were jumping him, knocking over his bike, stealing his bike. My husband and I tried to encourage him to be tougher and stand up for himself but it's not his nature. So, um, that was the main thing that I started to focus on.

Other parents do not know that their children have been bullied, as Debra confirmed. I began to believe that many parents did not know that their children were the victims of bullying. How could that be? Children who have been bullied often keep it a deep, dark secret, fearing reprisal from the bul-

lies if anyone finds out. Oftentimes, if children do not discuss a topic, parents do not ask important questions related to that topic.

One of the children to whom I teach social skills commented to me recently that “When I am teased it is not a big deal because it is nothing major; it is just for a laugh.” I was stunned that he had rationalized that being teased does not hurt feelings but just makes other children laugh! I then asked him if having other children laugh at him hurts his feelings. He said no. These children need to be taught how to approach bullies and diminish their negative impact if they are to have fun and succeed in extracurricular activities.

Teachers and parents must look for signs from children with ADHD that will give them a clue as to whether or not they have been bullied. One sign may be when a child who was previously energetic spends most of his time hiding in quiet places, or perhaps no longer talks and laughs at the dinner table. Another signal may be that he does not want to leave his house.

One hint: Every teacher and every parent knows each child with ADHD’s typical behavior. If the child’s behavior is aberrant from his everyday behavior, try to speak to the child when no one else is around. Perhaps buy a book about a child who has been bullied and see if and how the child responds. A good book that teachers and parents can read to children with ADHD from six to twelve years old that teaches children how to behave toward bullies is *Blue Cheese and Stinky Feet* by Catherine de Pino (2004).

Whatever you do, follow your hunches and do not ignore the child’s atypical or unusual behaviors. A teacher has the luxury of reading to small groups of children at a time so the child whom the teacher suspects has been bullied does not feel pinpointed or subjected to embarrassment. The teacher should suggest that the child with ADHD spend private time with him or her to discuss his experiences of being bullied and to guarantee confidentiality.

Whether or not parents or teachers know if children have been bullied, it is nevertheless humiliating and damaging to a child's self-esteem if it is occurring. Additionally, even if parents and teachers know that a child has been bullied, they usually do not know how to teach these children good defensive techniques to protect themselves from this horrific experience.

Educators and parents must teach children who have ADHD to be proactive and to tell an adult immediately if children are bullying them. Additionally, educators and parents must teach children who have ADHD the methods of approaching and interacting with bullies so that they are able to stop the latter from harassing them. You will find some books on bullying listed in the Bibliography, particularly some books on cyberbullying, which is a new added danger to children with ADHD.

So, social skills deficits certainly are present in children with ADHD. These social skills deficits obstruct these children's ability to make and keep friends and to have successful social experiences. We must all understand one thing: children with ADHD do not want to behave in a socially inappropriate way. They just cannot help it. They must be taught appropriate social skills over a long period of time to learn to regulate their own behavior, so they can make friends and experience successful social interactions.

# 3

## SOCIAL SKILLS: LISTS AND DESCRIPTIONS

So your student or child needs to learn appropriate social skills. What are social skills anyway? “Social skills may be defined as socially acceptable learned behaviors that enable a person to interact with others in ways that elicit positive responses and assist in avoiding negative responses” (Elliott & Gresham, 1993, p. 287). Let’s see what that means in relation to the child whom you are teaching.

### **WHAT DOES IT MEAN FOR A CHILD TO HAVE GOOD SOCIAL SKILLS VERSUS POOR SOCIAL SKILLS?**

If the child has good, intact social skills, he interacts with other children as well as typical children in a positive way. He is able

to make friends and develop positive relationships with adults. If a child has poor social skills, you will realize it the moment that child walks into your class. As you watch this child, you will see behaviors that are dissimilar to other children's behavior in terms of distractibility, following instructions; forgetting; lack of respect; and interrupting; among others.

If he does not have good, intact social skills, there is a possibility that he may be bullied by other children. I cannot say enough in this book about the dangers of children with ADHD being and acting vulnerable; vulnerability leads to negative social experiences with other children.

Therefore, children with ADHD need to improve their social skills because interacting in school and in extracurricular activities can be treacherous for them. Additionally, during my field research, I observed firsthand how children's difficulties in social skills can affect their learning of academics.

### **LIST OF SOCIAL SKILLS THAT CHILDREN WITH ADHD NEED TO LEARN (AND TEACHERS NEED TO TEACH)**

The following is a list of some of the social skills created by Elliott and Gresham (1991) and included in their *Social Skills Intervention Guide*. These social skills are necessary for children with ADHD to have in their repertoire if they are going to experience successful social interactions.

#### **Social Skills List 1**

- Social Skill 1: Maintaining Eye Contact
- Social Skill 2: Greeting Others Nonverbally
- Social Skill 3: Greeting Others Verbally
- Social Skill 4: Introducing Oneself
- Social Skill 5: Initiating Conversations
- Social Skill 6: Joining Ongoing Activities

## SOCIAL SKILLS: LISTS AND DESCRIPTIONS

- Social Skill 7: Volunteering to Help Peers
- Social Skill 8: Inviting Others to Join Activities
- Social Skill 9: Asking an Adult for Help
- Social Skill 10: Answering the Telephone
- Social Skill 11: Asking Permission to Use Property
- Social Skill 12: Reporting Accidents to Appropriate Persons
- Social Skill 13: Questioning Rules That May Be Unfair
- Social Skill 14: Giving a Compliment
- Social Skill 15: Responding to a Compliment
- Social Skill 16: Telling Adults When Something Is Appreciated
- Social Skill 17: Accepting People Who Are Different
- Social Skill 18: Accepting Peer Suggestions for Activities
- Social Skill 19: Cooperating with Peers
- Social Skill 20: Compromising by Reaching Agreement
- Social Skill 21: Responding to Teasing Appropriately
- Social Skill 22: Receiving Criticism Well
- Social Skill 23: Controlling Temper in Conflicts with Adults
- Social Skill 24: Responding Appropriately When Pushed or Hit
- Social Skill 25: Controlling Temper When in Conflict with Peers

### **Social Skills List 2**

The following is a list of social skills that I created from my field research upon observing parents teaching children with ADHD. Children with ADHD arguably need to develop these social skills in order to have successful social experiences.

- Social Skill 26: Diffusing Negative Behavior When Someone Is Annoying
- Social Skill 27: Taking Something with Permission
- Social Skill 28: Social Skills Taught through Curriculum
- Social Skill 29: Social Skills Taught through Conversations with the Child

### CHAPTER 3

- Social Skill 30: Sitting Quietly When Being Taught by Teacher or Parent
- Social Skill 31: Pulling Hair Back When Preparing Food
- Social Skill 32: Not Touching Your Hair When Preparing Food
- Social Skill 33: Being Polite or Asking Teacher or Parent Politely to Hand Him Needed Items
- Social Skill 34: Learning to All Instructions Given by Teacher or Parent without Interrupting
- Social Skill 35: Not Burping Out Loud
- Social Skill 36: Not Exhibiting Distractible Behaviors
- Social Skill 37: Learning Socially Appropriate Behavior from Others
- Social Skill 38: Learning Social Skills Taught through Interactions with Siblings
- Social Skill 39: Learning Social Skills Taught through Temper Tantrums
- Social Skill 40: Learning Social Skills When Academically Frustrated
- Social Skill 41: Staying on Task and Not Leaving Room When Academically Frustrated
- Social Skill 42: Learning Social Skills Taught through Modeling Teacher's or Parents' Behavior
- Social Skill 43: Conversing with Children or Adults
- Social Skill 44: Respecting Elders
- Social Skill 45: Following Instruction Given by Teachers and Parents
- Social Skill 46: Having Good Manners
- Social Skill 47: Being Responsible
- Social Skill 48: Interacting through Teacher or Parental Coaching
- Social Skill 49: Keeping Promises
- Social Skill 50: Learning Social Skills
- Social Skill 51: Having Good Character
- Social Skill 52: Behave Properly in Public

## **SOCIAL SKILLS THAT TEACHERS EXPECT CHILDREN WITH ADHD TO EXHIBIT**

As teachers and parents, we all have an ideal set of social skills we want our students and children to know and perform. The following social skills, among others, are those that have been rated by teachers as critical for school success:

- \* Produces correct schoolwork
- \* Ignores peer distractions while working
- \* Finishes class assignments on time
- \* Puts work or school materials away
- \* Appropriately tells you when treated unfairly
- \* Keeps desk clean and neat
- \* Introduces self to new people (Beebe-Frankenberger et al., 2005, p. 14).

It is interesting to note that the teachers were aware in this study of the negative responses that children with ADHD received from their peers. For example, they told the children to tell them when someone treated them unfairly. In addition to learning how to make an initial social interaction, children with ADHD need to learn to control their own behavior.

## **A REAL-LIFE STORY OF A CHILD WITH ADHD LOSING SELF-CONTROL**

When a child is impulsive and strikes out at another child, teachers' and peers' attitudes become negative quickly. Children may not want to be friends with a person they fear. Teachers may not want to teach children who have poor self-control, such as the lack of self-control that Valerie spoke to me about:

And he'll come out with once in awhile, I don't have any friends. And you know, lately we've talked about it, you know.

Why is that? In his class, he got impulsive, and the kids were getting scared in February. And so during the February break, we wrote an apology letter to all the kids and I wrote one to all the moms saying we're sorry about any negative behavior that Chris had. You know, we're working on it. To the parents, I didn't go into detail, but I said biochemical issues, up front. He wrote that I hope that we can still be friends, and he included a Pokeman card or a magic card, a Uno card in an envelope, and we sent that out to everyone. Because I didn't know who he had offended, who he had hit [*sic*]. I didn't know who he was impulsive with, but there was a general, Chris is too much for us.

### **SOCIAL SKILLS THAT TEACHERS RATED AS VITAL FOR SCHOOL SUCCESS**

Researchers found that the majority of teachers rated the following social skills in the category of self-control as vital for school success:

- \* Controls temper in conflict situations with peers
- \* Responds appropriately to peer pressure
- \* Controls temper in conflict situations with adults
- \* Responds when pushed or hit; responds to physical aggression (Lane et al., 2006)

In the diverse classrooms of today, teachers want children to be able to cooperate with one another. Cooperative learning is a useful approach that is employed in the schools today. Children with ADHD often do not know how to be flexible in their views in order to cooperate with children who are from diverse backgrounds, for example. The majority of teachers in the same study also rated the following social skills in the category of cooperation as critical for school success:

- \* Uses free time in an acceptable way
- \* Follows your directions; complies with your directions

- \* Ignores peer distractions when doing classwork
- \* Attends to your instructions
- \* Easily makes transitions from one classroom activity to another
- \* Gets along with people who are different
- \* Produces correct schoolwork
- \* Uses time appropriately while waiting for your help
- \* Listens to classmates when they present their ideas (Lane et al., 2006, p. 161).

Beebe-Frankenberger (2006) also found that “teachers rated cooperation social skills almost exclusively as critical for school success in both the elementary and secondary grades” (p. 15).

### **WHAT SOCIAL SKILLS DO PARENTS WANT THEIR CHILDREN TO LEARN?**

Beebe-Frankenberger (2006) found that parents rated the social skill of self-control as a social skill they most wanted their children to learn. They also rated the social skill of responsibility as critical for their children to learn at home. Differing with Lane et al. (2006), however, “the parents did not rate any social skills that were part of the cooperation social skill domain as critical” (Rapoport 2007, p. 61).

The children typically interacted with their siblings and their parents in their intimate home setting. Perhaps since these children mostly interacted with only a few people in their home at a time, their parents did not rate the skill of cooperation as high as self-control and responsibility. We will see in chapter 4 how teachers and parents can lay a foundation so that they can teach positive social skills to children with ADHD.



# 4

## WHAT CAN TEACHERS AND PARENTS DO TO HELP CHILDREN WITH ADHD TO LEARN POSITIVE SOCIAL SKILLS?

### LAYING THE FOUNDATION

Teaching social skills to children with ADHD takes some creativity. For example, in my opinion, these social skills cannot be taught in an isolated setting. Why do I say that? If social skills are taught in isolated settings, children with ADHD will most likely exhibit those new positive social skills in that setting only. In other words, these skills will not generalize to other settings. I often tell my graduate students that if their teaching of social skills does not generalize to other settings, then they really have not effectively taught those skills.

The best way, in my estimation, to teach social skills is to teach them within a natural setting for a particular child. What do I mean by a natural setting? A natural setting is one in which the child is already engaged. This setting may be at

recess, in gym class, art class, or anywhere that a particular child is interacting. It would not be a good idea, for example, to teach a child social skills in a room apart from his natural social interactions. How would a teacher teach social skills to a child within a classroom setting without embarrassing that child or stigmatizing him?

It actually can be very easy. The key is to make the teaching of social skills a subject to embed, or to teach within the natural setting of the classroom. For example, I believe in differentiating instruction to each particular child's learning styles, strengths, needs, and interests. (At its most basic level, differentiation consists of the efforts of teachers to respond to variance among learners in the classroom. Whenever a teacher reaches out to an individual or small group to vary his or her teaching in order to create the best learning experience possible, that teacher is differentiating instruction [Tomlinson & Allen, 2000, p. 2].) I also believe that every child could use some instruction in social skills, such as being respectful; taking responsibility; sharing; and taking turns, among others.

It is certainly not going to be detrimental for the typical children in your class to review and to learn social skills! As I traveled throughout the United States when I did my field research, I was amazed at how many typical children either did not possess positive social skills or did not perform appropriate social skills. I can guarantee you that it certainly is not going to be harmful for the typical children in your classes to learn social skills.

Back to teaching social skills to children with ADHD. Despite the fact I stated before that it is not a good idea to teach social skills in an isolated setting, I do teach social skills to children with ADHD in their homes. I do so because it is difficult to gain permission to work with children with ADHD in their schools. Therefore, I use these children's homes as a natural setting in which to teach social skills. These children typically do not have intact social skills. After I feel that they have learned

some initial social skills, I have them try out their new social skills in a social interaction.

For example, I encourage parents of children with ADHD to have play dates for their child while I am there to facilitate social skills training. I work on social skills that occur naturally as the children are playing, such as sharing; cooperating with peers; compromising; being respectful; and being responsible, among others.

You are probably asking yourself, aren't you obstructive to the process of playing? That certainly is a reasonable question. I quickly become as invisible as possible. Remember, children are curious. However, when they are given a brief explanation, they are usually satisfied. For example, children are content to know who I am, and after that, they do not ask again. During the play date, I make sure that the parent is paying attention to the social skill that I am teaching. It is vital for the parent to know and understand exactly which social skills I am teaching their child if they are to reinforce that social skill after I leave.

Let's return to the classroom. One of the most important prerequisites when you are teaching social skills is to have the parents involved and in agreement in terms of your goal for the child. It is less likely that the teacher will see real improvement in a child's social skills if the parents are unaware of the teacher's efforts and uninvolved in the process of social skills training. As I said previously in relation to the social skills that I teach children with ADHD at home, it is vital for the parents to reinforce the same social skills that the teacher is teaching. In that way, there is more of a probability that the child will exhibit the new socially appropriate skills in other settings, thereby generalizing the new social skill.

Unfortunately, it often happens that parents are quite content with the teacher working on social skills by herself without parental input. Sometimes, parents of children with ADHD and similar disorders become overwhelmed by the child's consistently erratic behavior and are quite happy to take a step back

and permit someone else to intervene in an effort to diminish that behavior. I certainly understand that temptation on the part of the parents.

As I have repeatedly stated, if the parents are not involved in the social skills training in a major way, there is a much lower probability for success. It is one of your jobs as a teacher to ensure that the parents facilitate the same social skills training at home as you do with the child in the classroom. The parents must know the particular social skill that the teacher is teaching the child; why the teacher is teaching that social skill; how the teacher is teaching that social skill to the child; when the teacher is teaching that social skill; and where the teacher is teaching that social skill.

Let me give you an example of how difficult it is to teach social skills without parental involvement. Let's say that you, the child's teacher, are working on diminishing the child's temper tantrums. You teach the child replacement behaviors that he facilitates instead of having a full-blown temper tantrum each time a specific thing upsets or frustrates him. First, when the child has a temper tantrum, you ignore it, provided that the child is not hurting himself, others, or school property. Second, you teach the child breathing exercises and other self-calming mechanisms. Third, you teach the child replacement behaviors for the temper tantrums, such as using words to tell the teacher why he is upset or by drawing a picture of what is bothering him and causing him to have a temper tantrum. The temper tantrums for the child with ADHD are diminishing in school, which increases the amount of time the teacher is able to teach social skills as well as academics.

The parents have not met with the teacher and do not know or understand what the teacher has been doing in terms of teaching the child social skills. The child has a temper tantrum at home. His mother just had a baby. She is worried that the child with ADHD is jealous, because he *thinks* that he is not getting enough attention. The mother of the child with ADHD holds him on her lap. He is angry and hits her. She says "Poor

Alex, did someone do something mean to you in school today?" The teacher in school then sees the temper tantrums escalate in school. Why? Because the mother is reinforcing socially inappropriate behavior by giving the child negative attention.

I know that you are saying, why are you blaming the mother? Maybe someone *was* really mean to the child in school or on the school bus. Listen, I am a mother and I have made all of the same mistakes, and seemingly more than typical parents make, I am sure. The ideal goal for children with ADHD is to have them manage their own behavior, even at a young age.

The child with ADHD *must* be taught to self-regulate his socially inappropriate behavior. He will be prevented from doing so, however, if the parents do not respond to that behavior in the same way as the teachers do. In fact, if the parents *react* to those socially inappropriate behaviors in an emotional way, as compared to the teacher who *responds* to the child's socially inappropriate behavior in an unemotional way, then the child's behavior will be like a seesaw; the child's behavior will be up and down and up and down. The child's socially inappropriate behavior will increase at home and then decrease in school. This will result in a very confused child who does not have a consistent way of responding to frustration.

The child must learn mechanisms for self-calming and exhibiting socially appropriate behavior in a consistent way. After the child calms down, the teacher or parent can offer the child cues to encourage him to talk about why he is so upset. They can also help the child with ADHD to try to prevent that problem from occurring again.

Sometimes the answers are simple. For example, the child with ADHD is overtired and demands that his parent buy him a new toy *now*. Sometimes the answers are complex. For example, the parents of the child with ADHD are divorced. The child thought that his dad promised to take him out for the day, and the dad does not arrive. Let us think about what really may have happened.

The child did not listen carefully when his father told him the day that he was planning to come for a visit. The child, therefore, mixed up the days that his father was planning on coming to visit. When his father did not arrive on the day that the child with ADHD thought that he would, the child became very frustrated. Instead of asking his mother if this was the correct day, he became angry and overwhelmed with disappointment. This child was vulnerable and reacted to incorrect information, which resulted in him having a temper tantrum.

As I have said before, children with ADHD are very vulnerable. It is vital for the teacher as well as the parent to make sure that the information the child is told is completely and correctly understood, so that socially inappropriate behavior does not erupt as a result of a misunderstanding of that information.

As parents or teachers, what do I do that you could also do? The child has a play date and I observe and help the child to interact in a positive way. Parents could do the same as I do. Teachers could observe their students in either free time or recess. Children with ADHD who have social skills problems often have to be taught how to play. Is that surprising to you? Many of us grew up with fond memories of playing with our friends without expending any extra effort in learning how to play.

But remember, children with ADHD have difficulties picking up and interpreting cues from other children. Therefore, when they try to play, they misunderstand and misinterpret what other children mean. These misunderstandings leave children with ADHD feeling confused and less likely to try to interact again anytime soon. These negative experiences interacting with other children help to explain why many young children with ADHD prefer to play alone.

They often do not even know how to approach another child in order to play with them. If you are a preschool or a kindergarten teacher, you may not expect all of your students

to recognize and read their letters, but you probably expect all of the children in your class to know how to play!

So, how do teachers go about teaching social skills to children with ADHD? Do you have time to teach children how to play when you are pressured to keep up with a strict curriculum that is standards dependent? Yes. You must make the time, or else your own accountability may be questioned. Teachers are supposed to teach children whatever curriculum they need to be taught. It may seem as if I am being tough on teachers, but remember, I am a teacher myself. I am only too aware of what I and other teachers did or have not done to teach children with ADHD all of the skills they need to interact successfully in life.

## **COOPERATIVE TEACHING**

Teachers' approaches in today's elementary school classrooms typically call for cooperative teaching. Cooperative teaching may be difficult if some of the children in the class behave in a socially inappropriate manner. In order to affect the type of teaching that incorporates children working together for a common purpose, the teacher must pinpoint the most critical social skills she feels the children need to improve. She may then consult the suggestions for social skills training included here. Vaughn and Bos (2009) delineate certain directives for teaching social skills. They state certain principles of teaching that all educators need to consider when they teach social skills. The following are the elements of any social skills training program.

### **Cooperative Learning**

Classrooms should be designed for cooperative learning "so children work alone, with pairs, and with groups, helping each other

master the assigned material” (Vaughn & Bos, 2009, p. 137). However, they also point out that the following, as researched by Johnson and Johnson in 1986, “four elements need to be present for cooperative learning to occur:

1. “Students must perceive that they cannot succeed at the required task unless all members of the group succeed. This may require appropriate division of labor and giving a single grade for the entire group’s performance.
2. There must be individual accountability so that each member of the group is assessed and realizes that his or her performance is critical for group success.
3. Students must have the necessary collaborative skills to function effectively in a group. This may include managing conflicts, active listening, leadership skill, and problem solving.
4. Sufficient time for group process must be allowed, including discussing how well the group is performing, developing a plan of action, and identifying what needs to happen” (p. 137).

What cooperative skills would each child have to have in his repertoire to collaborate effectively? The child must know how to listen without interrupting; how to take a leadership role; and how to be a good problem solver. The children must have ample time for the group to facilitate the necessary procedures to ensure success. The children must be honest concerning the performance of the group thus far. They must be competent in designing a procedural plan and point out clearly the order of what has to happen to achieve group success (Vaughn & Bos, 2009, p. 137).

## Peers

“Involve peers in the training program for low-social-status students” (Vaughn & Bos, 2009, p. 137). No matter what causes

individuals in society to view children with ADHD, they are nevertheless thought of as having low social status. By implementing modeling, as Elliott and Gresham (1991) delineated in their research, children who are of low social status and might be rejected, for example, might be able to learn positive social skills. "Including popular peers in the social skills training program increases the likelihood that they will have opportunities to observe the changes in target students and to cue and reinforce appropriate behavior in the classroom" (Vaughn & Bos, 2009, p. 137).

The goal of involving the more popular children with the less popular children is to improve the perception of other children toward those with ADHD. If typical children see their peers interact with children with ADHD, it is possible that they might change their negative attitudes toward those children. How can these negative attitudes be changed toward children with ADHD?

Individuals in society must be educated about the symptoms that children with ADHD exhibit in order to prevent these children from experiencing rejection. First, teachers must become aware of their own possible negative biases toward children with ADHD. Second, teachers must take advantage of any opportunities to teach peers to accept children who interact differently than they do. How easy would it be for teachers to talk to all of the children about how to accept other children's differences? Very easy.

As I have said before, I know that teachers today have the pressure of testing and multitudes of paperwork. Even so, if typical children do not learn to accept children who are different in their style of social interaction, skin color, dress, or culture, how will any of those children interact successfully in today's diverse society? I know that my focus here is to help children with ADHD to develop positive social skills, but let's not forget typical children as well.

So, how do teachers incorporate accepting children who are different into their constricted academic schedule? Think

about it this way: Teachers become teachers to help children learn. That goal cannot only be directed toward typical children who learn academics easily. Think about it another way: Physicians do not only give care to people who are healthy. Therefore, teachers must incorporate children who are different into their academic and social skills teaching.

What do teachers do to help children with ADHD diminish their social skills problems? Those of us who have been teachers at one time or another know that we have tried to help the children in our classrooms to interact with others in a positive manner. However, do we actually teach social skills? If we do, do we teach them to all of the children or just to the children with social skills problems? Have we become frustrated trying to teach academics to children with ADHD? Have we lost our own tempers when we tried to teach these children?

I am sure that some of us yelled at these children to quiet them down. Did we look away when other children mistreated children with ADHD? I certainly hope not. If children with ADHD were very disruptive to our teaching, we probably tried to place them in a self-contained special education classroom or at least sent them to a resource room for a certain amount of time.

Teachers need techniques to teach academic subjects through an individualized approach that will help to diminish the socially inappropriate behavior of the child with ADHD. Don't forget that oftentimes children behave in an inappropriate way because they feel academically frustrated. Perhaps they have to complete too much work in too little time, for example. Or, maybe they expect that a teacher will instruct them in a difficult subject at a specific time of day. When that instruction occurs at a time of day that is different than the scheduled time, they may exhibit socially inappropriate behavior as a response to the schedule change. It is possible that children with ADHD become anxious anticipating the work they have to do, which is difficult for them. Perhaps they come into school after sleeping poorly at home and are more alert after lunch than in the morning.

## STRATEGIES FOR TEACHERS

Techniques to teach academics based on modifications tailored to a child's individualized learning style may be a good way to try to diminish the socially inappropriate behavior of the child with ADHD. Teachers can therefore do the following:

- \* Change the order of the subjects taught to this child in order to prevent the child from being bored by the same order of subjects each day.
- \* Change the time of day that certain subjects are taught to this child, according to his temperament. Some children with ADHD may learn certain subjects more easily in the morning, for example. On the other hand, some children with ADHD may learn more effectively in the afternoon. In fact, some children with ADHD may learn some subjects better on certain days of the week.
- \* Modifying the teaching environment by removing any distracting items. For example, if there is a clock in the room that is ticking, remove the clock. Why not?
- \* The teacher should revise the way she gives directions to the child with ADHD. Try to give one or two directions at one time, at most. Determine the child's strongest learning modality (e.g., visual, auditory, tactile-kinesthetic) and give the child directions in that modality.

### **If the Child with ADHD Is a Visual Learner**

Give him a small dry-erase board with erasable pens. Write the instructions that you are giving the child and number them. After the child follows a specific direction, he can have the pleasure of erasing that instruction. It gives a child a positive feeling when his board is clean and white again!

### **If the Child with ADHD Is an Auditory Learner**

Tell the child the instructions and ask him to repeat the instructions back to you two times. If that does not work, record the instructions on an audio recorder. Have the child listen to the instructions a few times, one sentence at a time. Then ask him to repeat the single sentence aloud back to you. After he has learned one sentence of the instructions, have him repeat the next instruction the same way. Before you know it, he has learned all of the instructions!

### **If the Child with ADHD Is a Tactile-Kinesthetic Learner**

Write the instructions down using bubble sticker letters so that the child can rub his finger along the instructions while you read them or while his is reading them. If the child cannot read, have pictures of the instructions with a bubble or a raised surface so the child can touch the letters as he learns the instructions.

- \* Give a toy to the child with ADHD such as Play-Doh to manipulate while he is working in an effort to stimulate the child and reduce distractibility. One of the children to whom I have been teaching social skills rolls and molds a piece of Play-Doh as we are working. As a teacher, you still have to make sure that the child is attending, but somehow, permitting the child to manipulate a soft substance such as Play-Doh seems to divert his distractibility and diminish it.
- \* Teach a child with ADHD within his activity level.
- \* If a child seems to walk around in a room when I am teaching social skills, I permit him to continue to do so. However, when the children have to write answers to questions or watch a DVD, for instance, I require them to sit down. I do encourage them to get up and walk around

from time to time, however, so they can use this form of exercise to diminish their hyperactivity.

One of the parents in my research explained the way that her son manipulated an object as well as how he learned through his own activity level:

Bess: He's just really bright and has difficulty shifting his focus from one thing that is interesting to anything else. He always has something in his hand, always plays with something in his mouth too, but yet it's not distracting. It helps him to concentrate.

Investigator: Why do you think that is?

Bess: I don't know, I don't know. It's similar to the chanting during our math workshop. He'll come with some nonsense chant that he'll do, just a couple of seconds, whatever. But he'll do the same, not every time, but if it's a long worksheet that he has to go through and he might have some trouble concentrating. So you'll hear this chant all the way through. He'll just say whatever, make whatever noises and then give the answer, then repeat that for every one. At first it really bothered me, [laugh] 'cause I just thought, why are you doing this? And it's just slowing you down when you get to something really easy. But I finally realized that it's adaptive. It's helping him and he came up with this all by himself [laugh] and I shouldn't mess with it.

Similar to the way that Bess's son found things to stimulate himself, children with ADHD look for something to stimulate them. So the key to reducing their hyperactivity is to find something that they can latch on to or hyperfocus on. Here are some possible examples:

- \* Encourage the child with ADHD to do some sort of exercise for a short time during a break from instruction. One of the children with whom I worked went outside his house in a break from his work and jumped on a trampoline.

Obviously, this exercise has to be supervised, in my opinion. When the child returned to the room, he was much more relaxed, quiet, and ready to learn again. In school, this exercise could be in the form of a walk around the school or around the classroom, provided that he does not interrupt anyone else's work.

- \* The child could even be encouraged, with a peer buddy from another class, to spend a few minutes walking with him at recess to diffuse some of his hyperactive behavior.
- \* Modify the amount of time the child with ADHD needs to complete a subject or an assignment. What is the difference if the child with ADHD takes an extra class period or a half of a class period to get his work done, as long as it gets finished? Make sure that if the child takes a shorter period of time to complete an assignment, it is done carefully and neatly. Children with ADHD have been known to be a bit disorganized and, how can I say this nicely, not very neat, which I assume you may have already observed!
- \* Modify the assignment for the child with ADHD. Revise the amount of work he needs to complete at one sitting.

## TECHNIQUES FOR PARENTS

What can parents do to help their child with ADHD diminish his social skills problems? The parents in my research were an extraordinary group of people who dedicated their lives to teaching their children in a protective environment. They told me that they asked themselves, "Would my child receive the help that he needed in a typical classroom?" The answer always came back as no, as Bess explained: "Yeah, I think in a school, it would be very hard for a teacher with twenty or twenty-five kids to get the help that he needs. I think about the playground, recess, on the bus, whatever, without a lot of

adult supervision, things can get out of hand, and it's hard for lessons to be learned."

In fact, these parents, whether they were home schooling for the first time or whether they had always home schooled their children with ADHD, realized that school was or would be very difficult if not treacherous for their children. Remember the statement by Mary Ann:

He has ADHD. . . . He's very impulsive, so he bops people in the head if he feels like bopping people in the head. When he feels like bopping people in the head, not out of meanness, just because, well, it looks like it was fun to do. Or because they had curly hair, and he wanted to touch it. Or he pushed somebody in front of him in line because he thought that he would be fun to see if it would be a domino effect. And so he was getting in trouble for things like that. And mainly it was in times that it wasn't direct teaching. It was the transition.

In the homeschool environment, the parents whom I have observed teaching their children with ADHD have had unlimited time to teach social skills since home schooling was a twenty-four-hour-a-day occurrence, as Stacey expressed to me:

I think that it takes a lot of time [teaching social skills]. I think that if your kids are gone for eight hours a day, it's going to be hard to find all that time because by the time they get home, it's not like you're going spend the next five hours that you're home sitting around talking with them, because you got to cook dinner. They got homework, there are ball games, this [*sic*] that activity, the other thing. And so I think it would be hard to find the amount of time that you need to really do all the teaching that needs to get done to get that foundation laid.

Children who have ADHD, as I have said before, do not internalize appropriate social skills as other children do from their parents and significant others. That being said, they can learn positive social skills in other ways besides modeling their parents' behavior. Social skills training has to be deliberate

## CHAPTER 4

and reflect meaning for each and every child with ADHD. In order to create an environment where these social skills are learned successfully, parents should teach these social skills, if at all possible, within the extended home environment. For example, arguments with siblings can be used to teach cooperation. Being disappointed by a parent's decision concerning something they wanted to buy or do can be a great time to teach respect. Let us continue on to the next chapter to learn about some interventions you can try.

# 5

## WHERE SHOULD I BEGIN?

**D**o you definitely know what social skills you want to teach the child with ADHD? How do you know that these skills are the ones that he needs to learn? In order to answer those questions, what is the very first thing to do in terms of teaching children with ADHD social skills? Any individual who is going to teach children with ADHD social skills must do some type of assessment that will give them an idea of each child's repertoire of social skills. This assessment does not have to be formal, but it does have to be accurate. Before a teacher instructs a child in social skills, it is imperative to do a functional assessment. I delineate and discuss functional assessments in chapter 7, so it might be a good idea to pause here and read that chapter.

Here is a short reminder of exactly why a teacher or a parent would need to teach social skills to a child with ADHD.

Children with ADHD and similar disorders exhibit socially inappropriate behavior. Their behavior is what causes others to become annoyed with them.

Why would a child want to become friends with anyone who is annoying? The answer is that they would not. That being said, after the teacher or the parent realizes what effect the behavior of a child with ADHD has on other people, it is time to teach that child the social skills that either he has never learned or does not have in his repertoire. By the way, I am not just talking about children with ADHD-hyperactive type. Children with all types of ADHD, including ADHD-inattentive type, all exhibit similar socially inappropriate behavior.

Just to reiterate, however, before you begin to teach social skills, some sort of evaluation is essential. An assessment is mandatory because you need to know the intact social skills that the child has and, if he indeed has that knowledge, whether or not he performs those social skills.

One child may have an intact social skill of knowing how long to wait for another person to speak, for example, but cannot seem to stop interrupting. There is a difference, as I have explained before, as to whether or not a child has a certain social skill in his repertoire and whether he is performing that skill.

It is a waste of the teacher's time to teach a social skill to a child with ADHD with which he is already familiar. Doing so might diminish the child's interest and motivation to learn social skills that he does not know. Once again, however, we will not have any of this information if we do not assess the child's social skills.

Okay, back to the assessment. After you have completed a child's functional assessment, do you know how to go about teaching social skills? Do you know what to do first? Do you know which methods to use? Be relieved to know that there is not any *one* method that works to teach social skills to every child with ADHD. One child may respond to social stories, while another child may respond to role playing. One child

may respond to a visual presentation, while another child may respond to hearing a story on an audiotape.

The most important thing to do before you begin teaching social skills to the child with ADHD is to make sure he understands each social skill that you're planning to teach and why you are teaching it to him. Additionally, make sure that the child definitely does not have either the knowledge of the social skill or does not know how to perform the social skill before you begin your work. You do not want to teach a child with ADHD a social skill that he already knows and can perform!

## GET THE CHILD ON BOARD

It is very important that the child understands exactly what social skill you are planning to teach as well as why you are going to teach that social skill. Reif (2005), among others, states that it is vital that the teacher or parent “explain the need or rationale for learning the skill. Define the skill clearly. Discuss and reinforce by visual displays (posters, photos)” (p. 58). You certainly do not want the child to feel that he is doing anything wrong. However, children with ADHD must have an understanding of the correct or appropriate way to interact with others as compared to the incorrect or inappropriate way to interact with others. Oftentimes they do not see and understand other people's viewpoints or opinions of their behavior.

A great book to use to emphasize the worldview to these children is Jed Baker's (2003) book *The Social Skills Picture Book: Teaching Play, Emotion, and Communication to Children with Autism*. I know that his book was specifically written for children with autism, *but* his methods of teaching positive social skills are very effective. When I first read it, I was uncomfortable with pictures that communicated the right and wrong way to behave. I believe in reinforcing positive behavior and trying to extinguish or diminish socially inappropriate behavior. That

being said, it helps children with ADHD to know that their behavior is inappropriate.

## **METHODS**

You can color copy (please check on copyright information and write Jed Baker for permission to copy his pictures for classroom use!) his pictures, cut them out, and laminate the incorrect and correct way to exhibit a specific behavior. Showing each picture to a child encourages conversation about their own experiences exhibiting each specific social skill.

I would also visit the Model Me Kids website in order to locate some great videos on the various components of teaching the initial social skills to children. Real-life children are used in these videos, which can be used for video modeling.

In the next chapter we will begin the discussion of the individual social skills—the nitty-gritty of helping children build a repertoire of positive social skills.

# 6

## THE SOCIAL SKILLS AND HOW TO TEACH THEM

### **Social Skill 1: Maintaining Eye Contact**

The first skill to teach children with ADHD, in my opinion, is to maintain eye contact. (Social skills 1 through 25 were adapted from Elliott and Gresham's [1991] *Social Skills Intervention Guide*.) Before you can teach important social skills to children with ADHD (e.g., listening to others without interrupting), they must learn how to maintain eye contact. As you speak to a child who does not have eye contact, make sure to look right into his eyes. When I was working with Timmy, who you heard about earlier in the book, I often had to hold his chin lightly in my hand and instruct him to look at me. Of course,

I had to repeat this command many, many times before I saw Timmy comply.

Additionally, as children with ADHD talk to their teachers or to their classmates, encourage them in an unobtrusive way to look at them as the conversation begins and continues. Offer praise when the children look into your eyes when you speak to them. You can say, “Good looking at me, Timmy” or “I like the way you are looking at me when I speak.” It is also a good idea to praise other children who are maintaining eye contact as a model for the children with ADHD to follow. Be creative with the rewards you choose. But remember, fade those rewards out after a certain period of time.

After you teach the child to maintain eye contact, how do you teach the child to greet someone nonverbally?

### **Social Skill 2: Greeting Others Nonverbally**

This is an easy one to explain. Imagine that child 1 is walking down the hall in school and another child approaches. Child 1 looks toward the ground or to the right or to the left. Child 2 gets the cue or signal that the first child does not want to be friendly. How? If child 1 wanted to be friendly, he would have turned his body toward child 2 and not only looked at him, but smiled at him, indicating a feeling of welcome. By looking at the ground or at the side, child 1 gave the impression that he had no interest in any sort of interaction.

You may be saying, now, that is ridiculous. I have a couple of shy students who find it difficult to look at other children as they pass by, and they certainly do want to make friends. That may be true, but the children with ADHD must be taught exactly what their nonverbal body language means, especially what it is saying to other approaching students.

What is body language, exactly? In my own personal definition, it is nonverbal behavior that a person exhibits, such as the way people walk; the way they carry themselves (lean closely over to others, stay back from others, etc.); the gestures they make (pointing, putting their hand on someone's knee or shoulder, etc.); facial expressions (frowning, shaking their head in frustration, holding their head down, looking away during the conversation); or eye contact, among others.

Children with ADHD must be accountable for their body language as well as their verbiage. They must be taught alternate ways of behaving. In order to be taught the more appropriate ways of interacting, they may first have to be taught how to role play. Children usually enjoy role playing, especially if it is done privately. You can explain to children with ADHD that role playing is similar to scenes they see on television or in the movies, but done in a private context to teach them how to behave appropriately in public. The teacher can demonstrate role playing by playing both parts in a very short script.

Oftentimes children without ADHD can benefit by role playing as well. In fact, the child without ADHD can be paired with a child with ADHD to create a modeling effect. In addition to the child with ADHD showing other children body language that communicates to them that he would like to be friends, it is also important to teach the child with ADHD to greet others verbally.

### **Social Skill 3: Greeting Others Verbally**

If you are a jogger or a walker, you must have experienced passing others on the street. Have other people ever walked or jogged by you without saying a word? It has happened to me many times. I honestly cannot understand why the other person would not say hello, so I just give in and say hello first.

Oftentimes this other person appears embarrassed that he or she did not greet you. It is important to teach the child with ADHD that when he passes someone in any circumstance, it is expected that he either nod his head or say hello. When the child does so, the other person typically communicates in return. If the other person does not say hello in return, at least the child knows that he has interacted in an appropriate way. Whether the child with ADHD greets others nonverbally or verbally, it is critical that he learn to introduce himself.

#### **Social Skill 4: Introducing Oneself**

Introducing oneself might be a skill that you think is something only adults should have within their repertoire. It is just as important for a child with ADHD to know how to introduce himself to others as it is for an adult to do so. The reason that it is so important for a child with ADHD to do so is that if he does not introduce himself, he will feel that he does not know anyone in that situation, and he will not! It is no wonder why children with ADHD often feel that they are on the periphery of social interaction.

When children with ADHD feel isolated, they may exhibit socially inappropriate behavior. When a child with ADHD exhibits one socially inappropriate behavior, that behavior often sets off other socially inappropriate behaviors. Feeling isolated and apart from a group of people might be a reason that a child with ADHD may exhibit socially inappropriate behavior. However, if he introduces himself, he may avoid that empty feeling of isolation. The social skill of introducing oneself may incur some anxiety. However, the social isolation that results from not doing so is more painful.

*Example!* The child with ADHD whom I observed in New England had a great deal of anxiety. He especially became anxious when

he did not feel that he was familiar with the people who were interacting in close proximity to him. When I first met him, his mom was talking to me and had not introduced him to me as of yet. By the time she got around to introductions, he was already running in circles around us, jumping up and down and pulling on his mom's dress.

A good thing for her to do before she got into any complex discussion with me might have been to whisper to him, "Michael, this lady is Dr. Rapoport. Tell her your name." If he was too anxious to tell me his name, she could have just said "Say hello to her." Greetings are a very important skill for children with ADHD to learn. Instead of greeting an oncoming person, children with ADHD or similar disorders seem to look down at their feet when they pass someone in the hall, for example.

It is very important to teach a child with ADHD what to do after the initial nonverbal or verbal interaction, and that is to introduce himself to the other person. Make this task as simple as possible by teaching him to turn his body to the person, as I have said before, and then say his first and last name. For example, have the child with ADHD say, "Hi, my name is John Smith." This social skill among others must be practiced. Using puppets is a good way for children to take on the role of another person and practice the social skill of introducing themselves.

*Method!*

One puppet says: "Hi, my name is Ellen Jones." Then, hopefully, the other puppet says, "Hi, my name is Bill Evans." You can have everyone in the classroom practice this skill. They can either use real puppets or paper bag puppets. If the child with ADHD has difficulty role playing using the puppets, then you can try finger puppets. If he still has too much anxiety to talk through role playing with puppets, you can ask him to draw the two people involved in the introduction.

*Example!*

The teacher can draw bubbles and write words within them herself, or have the child with ADHD write the words in the bubbles. Additionally, the teacher can place pictures within the bubbles for young children who cannot write. The best picture

to use, of course, which is so easy with today's digital photography, is the child's own picture. (Please obtain permission from the child's parents before you use any pictures of the child to teach him social skills!) If the child does not want to use his own picture, you can use pictures from magazines that you can glue onto craft sticks. Believe me, there are many ways to show a child with ADHD an image that will affect him in a way so he can learn to introduce himself to others, especially to other children. When they know how to introduce themselves to other people, they can begin to learn to initiate conversations.

### Social Skill 5: Initiating Conversations

Following right along, after the child introduces himself, he needs to learn how to initiate conversations. This is not as easy as it sounds because remember that children with ADHD do not pick up on social cues. In fact, they do not always understand cues or signals that other children communicate. If you have been to conferences, you know that the speakers often use "ice breakers" to initiate or to encourage conversation.

*Method!* I like to teach children with ADHD to use a conversation starter to help them initiate a conversation. One of the parents from my research explained how she used social starters in order to help her child initiate conversation:

But I tried to keep him current when Pokemon was big, I let him be into Pokemon, and that was a big social starter for him. There's a place here called Kid's Park, and he goes to the movies like a little day care center. And that was like his conversation starter. You know, he'd go with three cards in his pocket and that was huge. You know, some of the parents, said no, no Pokemon was bad. But he didn't. He would just make up stories about them. He didn't have any books on Pokemon. He

didn't watch any Pokemon shows on TV. And that's kind of a Harry Potter thing; it's a social vehicle, so I don't mind him being up on the lingo, 'cause that helps him kind of get in on the conversation.

If the child with ADHD is interested and has some knowledge about a subject in which another child is also interested, then it will be easier for him to initiate a conversation. The teacher should instruct the child with ADHD to tell another child a little about himself. This information does not have to be private, but rather, information such as the following:

- \* What team you root for
- \* What foods you like to eat
- \* Where you like to go for fun
- \* Where you do not like to go for fun
- \* What sports or recreational activities you like

Let's explore how a child with ADHD can successfully initiate a conversation.

1. He has to decide with whom he wants to talk.
2. He should think about something that both children like, such as video games, television shows, books, food, among others.
3. He should locate the person and judge by their body language if that person looks like he would have the time to talk. He should ask himself: Is he already talking with someone? Is he working on the computer? Is he working with someone else?
4. The child with ADHD finds the child with whom he would like to talk. He makes a judgment by observing the other child's body language in terms of whether or not he looks like he would be free to talk. The child with ADHD can then make a comment concerning the shared topic of interest. The child with ADHD can practice this skill by

*Method!*

using puppets or by role playing with a teacher. He can say, "I went to a restaurant with my family last night. We had great pizza. Do you like pizza?" Or, "Did you watch the baseball game last night on television? It was such an exciting game."

5. If the other child responds, then the child with ADHD has an entry point and is on his way. If the other child does not respond, the child can try to mention another topic. If the other child still does not respond, then the child with ADHD should walk away and try to talk to someone else later. Each classroom is filled with many children, so there will be many opportunities to initiate conversation.
6. Sometimes a teacher can intercede in a covert way in a natural setting, such as recess, for example, and help to facilitate conversation. The teacher can walk the child with ADHD up to another child. She then says: "Joey, didn't you tell me before that you watched the baseball game on TV last night and how exciting it was?" If the child in question who is trying to learn how to initiate a conversation does not want you to facilitate conversation with the other child, then forget it. The last thing that a child with ADHD needs in terms of building a positive self-concept is to feel embarrassed that the teacher interceded because he could not do so.

*Method!* The following are possible questions that a child with ADHD might ask another child in an attempt to initiate a conversation, depending on the child's age, of course:

- \* What's up?
- \* What have you been doing lately?
- \* What did you do last weekend?
- \* What do you have planned for this week?
- \* What are you doing for the holidays?
- \* What are you going to do this summer?
- \* What's there to do around here?

- \* What do you like to do?
- \* What videos have you seen lately?
- \* What music do you like? (Cooper, 2005, pp. 27–28)

These questions could be written down as in a script and practiced in a role playing situation just to make sure that the child with ADHD feels confident when he approaches other children. If you notice, none of these questions requires a yes or no answer. They are open-ended questions and all require a more detailed answer. You may be wondering why I suggest that the child with ADHD ask another child open-ended questions. If a child asks another child a question that requires a yes or no answer, yes or no is all the response the child will receive. The conversation will begin and end right there in most circumstances. Moving forward again, after a child learns to initiate a conversation, they can then learn to join ongoing activities.

### **Social Skill 6: Joining Ongoing Activities**

It is very important for you, the teacher, to judge if the child with ADHD in your classroom has acquired the social skill of joining ongoing activities. Children with ADHD typically do not know how to behave or what to do when they want to join in with children who are already playing. Children with ADHD do not know what to do when they want to ask another child if they can join in their play. They do not know that they should wait until there is a quiet time before they ask to join in other children's activities. These children have been known to barge in on the two children who are already playing. Being able to discriminate between people's various facial expressions and their associated body language is a major strength when a child approaches another and has to decide whether to ask if he can play in their group. A child has more of a probability of social

failure and rejection when he does not understand other children's facial expressions and body language.

When children with ADHD fail to pick up cues from other children as to whether they will ask them to join in their active play, they do not understand that the particular time that they enter the social interaction may not be an acceptable time to play with these children. It is very important to teach children with ADHD to recognize and to understand body language so they can judge when is an appropriate time to try to join in activities.

Here are some ways to teach children with ADHD to appropriately join in with another's activities. The following activity is for children with ADHD who like taking on roles and who do not have social anxiety related to being in front of people.

Method!

**Charades:** We all remember the game charades. It is a great game for helping a child with ADHD to recognize facial expressions as well as body language. If the child does not really understand what the facial expressions mean, read him *Today I Feel Silly & Other Moods That Make My Day* by Jamie Lee Curtis (1998). They can manipulate the facial expressions at the end of the book themselves. One child can model one facial expression, such as angry, while the other guesses that facial expression. The teacher can make up two teams and the team that guesses the most facial expressions wins. The teams should be mixed randomly with children who have ADHD and those who do not have ADHD.

All children, those who do and do not have social anxiety, can try the next exercise.

Method!

**Mirror, Mirror on the Wall:** Mirrors are great tools for showing children who might not otherwise realize what a certain facial expression means to learn to understand their meaning. Either a teacher or another child can make a facial expression in the mirror. Ask the child with ADHD to name the facial expression (i.e., happy, angry, nervous, afraid, etc.). Then, ask the child with ADHD to make the same expression in the mirror that the other child did. If the child with ADHD did

not pay attention to the other child's facial expression, have the child make the facial expression again.

**Candid Camera:** The teacher can gain permission from the child's parents to take pictures of the children themselves making the various facial expressions. The teacher should write in an informed consent letter that the pictures will only be used for the teacher's educational purposes. It may be easier to teach facial expressions to children with ADHD if they see pictures of themselves making the various expressions. They typically laugh and seem to remember the facial expressions because they become personally relevant. Children with ADHD learn and remember when they are engaged in the learning process. When teachers make learning experiences meaningful and relevant to children, they are more likely to remember what they have learned. Digital photography offers another lesson as well. After you take the pictures, look at them with the child with ADHD and agree that he has made a particular expression. If not, you can delete it until the child makes the facial expression that was discussed. *Method!*

**Candid Camera Video:** Children with ADHD and other disabilities, for that matter, often do not see other people's viewpoints as to how they are behaving. A great way for these children to see themselves from what I call a worldview is to videotape their behavior in situations where they are trying to interact with other children. Make sure that you gain the parents' permission before you videotape. Do not be concerned that your presence will affect the quality of the social interaction, because it will not. During my field research, I had that same concern. However, I quickly learned that not only do I become invisible, but more interestingly, the children cannot and do not alter their behavior in any way. Children with ADHD do not perform for anyone. They exhibit the same behavior no matter who is in the room. *Method!*

Children with ADHD behave as they behave; that is it. I would recommend viewing the videotape first yourself, just to make sure that in your opinion, nothing about the tape

embarrasses the child. As I said before, most children with ADHD do not see themselves from other people's viewpoint, so in most cases the videotape will be fine for the child to view. I would, however, view the videotape privately with the child, as you should be certain to state precisely on the informed consent. Once the teacher has decided that the video footage is a good representation of what she wants to teach, then do not delete either the tapes or the pictures. You might want to go back and refer to them later on.

The following are cues that teachers can help children with ADHD to look for when they want to join in with children who are already playing.

Explain what body language means:

- \* Are the children's bodies facing in the same direction?
- \* Are the children's heads and faces close together?
- \* Are the children engaged in an animated conversation with each other?
- \* Are the children playing in a corner of the room away from others?
- \* Do the children look at the approaching child when he moves toward them?

One book that might help young children to understand the basics of joining in with another's play is *Join In and Play* by Cheri J. Meiners (2004). Now that the teacher/parent has taught the child with ADHD to join in on activities, it is also crucial that the child learn about volunteering to help peers.

### **Social Skill 7: Volunteering to Help Peers**

The social skill of volunteering to help peers is one for teachers to think about before they begin to teach it. This is really a

thinking social skill. You will remember that I discussed making each social skill you teach meaningful to the child with ADHD as a way to help him learn it. Well, let us explore how to do that. First, try to encourage the child to think about the last time he observed that one of the children in their class needed help of any kind. Did someone have to pick up blocks quickly to get to the next activity? Was a child holding many things in his hands while trying to open a door? Did someone have too much to carry when he held his lunch tray? Did someone lose something important to him?

Additionally, just to make sure that the child really understands what you mean by helping another child, you could read a book to the child, such as *The Berenstain Bears Lend a Helping Hand* by Stan and Jan Berenstain (1998) and *Helping Mom* by Mercer Mayer (2002). Another great idea that would make this social skill lesson meaningful is for both the teacher and the student to write a social skills story based on a time when a child needed help and another child came to his assistance.

A peer support or a peer buddy system is a very useful tool for teaching social skills to children with ADHD. In this example, the teacher speaks to a typical child and asks him to help a specific child when he needs assistance.

Bob has been building a large block structure for an hour. *Method!* The teacher says, "Okay, everybody, we have to clean up because lunch is in five minutes." Bob looks around and looks worried and says aloud, "How will I ever put all of these blocks away in five minutes?" Before he becomes very upset, Bill, another child in the class, goes over to him and says, "Bob, would you like me to help? Two of us can put the blocks away faster than one!" Bob says, "Great. Thanks, Bill!" They put the blocks away so fast that Bob and Bill are the first in line for lunch!

Be sure to include pictures along with the social stories to make the meaning very clear for the child reading it. The child can draw the pictures, the teacher and the child can draw the

pictures together, or the teacher can take digital pictures (with informed consent, of course) of one child helping another as a real example.

The teacher might want to include the reasons why is it important to help another child in a social story. The teacher and the child with ADHD, therefore, can collaborate and write a social story that describes a situation when a child wants help from another child. Perhaps the child with ADHD can offer assistance to a typical child. The child with ADHD will feel good about himself, because he is helping someone else. Most important, helping another child might be the first step in making a friend.

Speaking of steps, here are some steps to teach a child for when he decides to help another child. Notice what the child has to do in the first step. We have discussed this social skill previously. The steps can be written on a task card, which we will see examples of later.

- \* Maintain eye contact with the child.
- \* Smile and use a kind voice.
- \* Say, “It looks like you might need some help putting away the blocks.”
- \* Ask, “Would you like me to help you?”
- \* Help the child. (adapted from Hensley, Dillon, Pratt, Ford, & Burke, 2005, p. 162)

### **Social Skill 8: Inviting Others to Join Activities**

This social skill is very important in terms of making friends. One way to actually let another child know that you would like to be friends is to ask that child to join whatever activity with which you are involved. This sounds easy for a typical child, but it may be treacherous for a child with ADHD. If a child with

ADHD asks another child to join in an activity with which he is involved, the child with ADHD might very well be rejected. Still, teachers must not give up. It is imperative to teach a child with ADHD to invite another child to join in his activities.

In order to learn how to invite another child to join in an activity, first, the child with ADHD has to know how to read the cues that the other child gives that may be interpreted in a positive or a negative way. Second, the child with ADHD has to learn how to understand another child's body language. Why?

In order for the child with ADHD to ask another child to join him in activities, that child must be able to get an idea of whether or not the child may be interested in playing with him. Many times, body language and facial expressions are the only hints that individuals express. Children with ADHD need to see and understand the relationship between body language, facial expressions, and behavior. Until they do, they cannot begin to interact in a more positive way.

In order to assist these children in improving their social interactions, it is important to give them just a few, simple steps at a time. Why? Because children with ADHD often get caught up in so many details that they do not internalize their teachers' instructions. Here are some steps a teacher can implement so the child with ADHD can learn to invite others to join activities:

- \* Walk close to the child you would like to ask to join in your activity.
- \* Look at his facial expression: Is he 😊 happy, ☹️ sad, 😡 angry, and so on?
- \* Look at his body language: Is he sitting in a relaxed way in a chair? Is he walking around the room?
- \* After you have made a decision that the child is happy and relaxed, walk up a little closer to him.
- \* Very simply, ask if he would like to join you in whatever activity you are involved in.

- \* If he tells you that he would like to join you in your activity, then begin to interact with him.
- \* If he tells you that he is busy or that he does not want to join you in your activity, you can tell him to let you know if he changes his mind, or just say okay, and walk away.

As a teacher, you can modify my list as you wish. You may want to use pictures as a way of demonstrating what the various facial expressions look like, for example. As I have said before, and just to emphasize the point, the child with ADHD is more likely to remember something that is meaningful. Therefore, perhaps using pictures of the child and his family showing angry, happy, or sad faces may teach the child what the various facial expressions look like more easily. You may want to make each step simpler yet by minimizing the words on the list. For example, you can list the steps in a simpler way, as follows:

- Method!
1. Walk over to the child.
  2. How does he feel?
  3. How does he look?
  4. Does he look like he wants to join you?
  5. Walk closer to the child.
  6. Ask him if he would like to join you.
  7. He said yes? Good!
  8. He said no? Walk away and ask someone else.

Are there still too many steps? Try this then.

- Method!
1. Look
  2. Decide
  3. Walk over
  4. Ask

What happens when children with ADHD invite others to join activities and a problem arises? It may appear to be an

obvious thing to do by asking an adult for help, but for children with ADHD, nothing is obvious.

### Social Skill 9: Asking an Adult for Help

Asking an adult for help may sound like an easy thing to do. This is definitely not true! It can actually be very anxiety provoking for a child with ADHD to go up to an adult to ask for help. There is more to it than the aspect of just asking. Think about it. What feelings might the child with ADHD have (who already is stigmatized in the classroom due to his behavior) when he asks the teacher for help? The child with ADHD may be upset because he thinks he is the only one who requires help. This is an incorrect perception, but even so, the child with ADHD may think that way. They automatically feel different because they need to ask for help, and they might feel, perhaps, that they are not as academically able as the others, even though that perception is typically false.

Beginning on the first day of school, one thing the teacher must do is explain and reiterate that everyone needs help from the teacher from one time to another. In fact, it is very important to explain to all of the children that the help that one child needs from a teacher is different from the help that another child needs from the teacher. Do not forget that the child with ADHD may not be as confident as his classmates. Therefore, the teacher may need to convince the child with ADHD that it is definitely true that *everyone* needs help at one time or another. You might give the children examples of different types of help that specific children may need. (Do not say the actual children's names, though!)

The teacher can also ask the child "What's the worst that could happen when you ask for help?" (Cooper, 2005, p. 18). Cooper (2005) suggests the following three questions that *Method!*

children can ask themselves. He also offers the following responses:

- \* “What’s the worst that could happen if I ask about the assignment?” *Other kids might laugh at me, or think it’s a dumb question.*
- \* “What’s the worst that could happen if they laugh or think that?” *I’d be embarrassed.*
- \* “What’s the worst that could happen if I was embarrassed?” *Well, nothing too bad. And so what? No one’s perfect and I’ll get over it pretty quick.* (pp. 18–19)

I remember telling my own children that everyone at one time or another asks a teacher a question that they are sure everyone thinks is “stupid.” If you ask those children what you said, however, not one of them even remembered! Cooper (2005) also suggests “what can happen if you *do* ask a question,” as follows:

- \* “You get an answer.”
- \* “You get more information.”
- \* “You get the chance to learn and do better.” (p. 19)

Once the child with ADHD understands the concept of asking an adult for help, these are the steps he might follow.

Method!

- \* Look at the adult’s facial expression.
- \* Look at the adult’s body language.
- \* Look for signs that will tell them to STOP and WAIT to ask for help right now:
  - \* Sign 1: Are they talking to someone else?
  - \* Sign 2: Are they on the telephone?
  - \* Sign 3: Are they reading a book or an instruction manual?
  - \* Sign 4: Are they trying to get some equipment to work?

Here are some possible questions that a child can ask a teacher:

- \* “Excuse me, can you help me?”
- \* “Could you please explain that again?”
- \* “For some reason, I’m still not getting it. Could you repeat that?”
- \* “Could you please go over that again?”
- \* “I’m sorry to bother you, but can you go through each part?”
- \* “Tell me again: Why did you do it that way?”
- \* “This is really confusing. Will you please help me?”

What should the child do while he is waiting? How long should he wait? Waiting can be a problematic situation for a child with ADHD. “Empty time” as I call it, or the time that a child is waiting for others to stop talking, is the time when a child with this disorder may begin to exhibit the signs of ADHD that others find annoying and disruptive. The teacher must instruct the child to do alternate things while he is waiting.

This example, by the way, may be the first step in the child with ADHD’s attempt to self-regulate his behavior. Let’s say, for instance, that the child with ADHD is doing math and having difficulty with one type of problem. The teacher should let the child with ADHD know ahead of time that if he feels that he is becoming agitated and restless, to do part of an assignment on a different subject. Continuing on with the topic of teaching the child with ADHD how to go about asking an adult for help can also include teaching him the appropriate way to ask for help, especially, how he would go about answering the telephone.

### **Social Skill 10: Answering the Telephone**

Even though this social skill is more of a skill that is needed at home, it nevertheless generalizes toward making an initial

social interaction and talking to people in social interactions. Let's say that the child with ADHD is playing a video game and is so hyperfocused (or "zoned in") that he does not hear the telephone ringing and ringing and ringing. First, parents should teach all of their children who should answer the telephone when it rings. Should everyone converge on a ringing phone at once? Should the adults in the house answer it all of the time?

Once the decision has been made as to who answers the phone, then what is the appropriate way to answer a telephone? The appropriate way depends on what the parent decides, of course, but there are certain appropriate ways. Here we go:

*Method!* "Hello, this is Ellen. To whom would you like to speak?"

Does this sound a bit formal? Okay, then how about:

"Hello, this is Ellen. Whom would you like to speak to please?" (I would not be rigid about whether the child uses whom or who.)

The issue here is exactly what information do you want to give the caller and what information do you want in return. You could say: "You have reached the Smiths. Who would you like to speak to?" The child should be polite and respectful at all times. If you do not want to tell a caller the household name, for privacy reasons, then the child with ADHD could just say: "This is Jeff. Who would you like to speak to, please?"

Even though this effort sounds easy, children with ADHD may forget what they are supposed to say. One of the parents in my field research had her daughter practice answering the telephone many, many times with her grandparents. They called and she answered, perhaps thirty times. It makes children feel good when someone tells them how polite they were on the phone. One of the homeschool parents felt that modeling appropriate telephone behavior taught her daughter polite telephone skills.

Mom: I have to say that Melissa's the only one that really answers the phone like that [politely]. She must have picked it up. The others say hello? That's kind of my work voice. I only use it on the phone.

Interviewer: Maybe she modeled you and that helped her to figure out how to answer the phone the way she wants to.

Mom: Well, that certainly works better because I found myself yelling at them to stop yelling [laughter]. It doesn't work as well as I felt the example would.

The fact that her daughter, arguably, learned how to answer the phone by modeling her mother answering the phone is a good idea. At any rate, it seemed to work, because while I was observing her, I heard her answer the phone politely while gaining the information that she needed to pass on to her mother. The fact that modeling worked here is evidence that different strategies work with different children. It is up to you, the teacher or the parent, to discover which strategy works best with the particular child you are teaching.

Another idea might be to have a script of what the child should say when he answers the phone at each phone in the house. This suggestion will help the typical children in the household as well. If the child does not read yet, you could have pictures on a card that will show the child with ADHD exactly what to do and say when the phone rings. The script may come in the form of the method below.

One way to help children with ADHD learn to answer the phone appropriately is to create a list of the correct things to say when someone calls and leave this list by each phone in the house. For instance, here are some possible sentences to put on the list: *Method!*

1. "Hello?"
2. "This is Jane."
3. "Whom (or who) would you like to speak to, please?"

or

1. "Hello, you have reached the Smiths."
2. "Who would you like to speak to, please?"

There have been many times that I am in the middle of teaching a child how to answer the telephone appropriately when the child wanders over to my briefcase. After looking in my briefcase, he decides to use one of my pens. Is that pen his property to use? He certainly needed to learn about asking permission to use property.

### **Social Skill 11: Asking Permission to Use Property**

Being curious about other people's possessions may be characteristic of all children, but it is definitely characteristic of children with ADHD. However, curiosity is one thing, but touching or taking other people's possessions is quite another. One way to teach a child how to be respectful of another person's possessions is to teach him about respect and privacy. Some things belong to others. The child with ADHD is behaving responsibly if he asks permission to use something that is someone else's property. This social skill can be added to a list of rules that the teacher or the parent can create along with the child. This rule might say: Only touch another person's property after I have asked if I could do so and that person told me I could. Rules are important to children with ADHD because they have something consistent to which they can refer. How can you teach the child not to touch another person's property without permission? This social skill incorporates some self-regulation as well as some self-talk:

*Method!* The child walks over to a bag that has some toys in it. He says to himself:

- \* Is that my bag?
- \* Are those my toys?

The answer to both of those questions should be no. If so, then he walks back to what he was doing.

It might help the child with ADHD to remember what to say to himself if the teacher writes down either the questions or the pictures that represent the questions.

That sounds easy, right? Actually it is very difficult for children with ADHD to prevent themselves from touching another's property because they typically look for instant gratification. Touching those toys would indeed have been instant gratification.

Another important lesson as part of teaching children with ADHD not to touch another person's property without permission is teaching them how to accept a negative response from another person. They have to be taught to understand that the word "no" means one thing: "No." Children with ADHD also have to be taught that just because another person says "no," it does not mean that that person is angry at them. It simply means that they are not permitting them to touch their property without permission.

Sometimes as children touch others' possessions or even just play, accidents happen. Everyone has stories of a child getting hit in the head with a toy or falling off the playground equipment. The question is, does the child with ADHD know how to go about reporting accidents to appropriate persons?

**Social Skill 12:  
Reporting Accidents to Appropriate Persons**

Now this is a social skill that seems as if it is natural, right? Children with ADHD may not understand that it is their

responsibility to report an accident when it occurs. Trust me on this one. I was working with Timmy in gym class a few years ago. The teacher had a large gym class of approximately twenty-five children. The teacher had asked Timmy to take the balls out of the closet. At the same time, she was lining up cones on the gym floor.

All of a sudden, a ball rolled away (Timmy did not roll the ball this time!) and a girl tripped over it and hit her head. Timmy stared at her crying, at first, and then ran off. What was his responsibility here? He should have run over to the teacher and told her that the girl tripped, fell, and was crying. He told me later that he ran off and did not tell the teacher because he was afraid that she would think that he somehow made the girl trip. He was clearly used to being thought of as the “bad” child.

In fact, children with ADHD, especially those who are hyperactive and/or impulsive, typically feel that they are always at fault. Hopefully, after the teacher or the parent teaches the appropriate social skills children with ADHD will feel better about themselves and stop blaming themselves for every problematic event that occurs. Therefore, children with ADHD need to begin questioning rules that may be “unfair,” and they must be taught to do so.

**Social Skill 13:  
Questioning Rules That May Be Unfair**

This social skill may be one of the most difficult ones for the child with ADHD to learn. Because children with ADHD may not be able to look beyond their own selves, they often do not understand what others are seeing. Therefore, they may only believe what they are seeing. This can be a problem, believe

me. If you told a child with ADHD during a temper tantrum, for example, that he was behaving in an angry way, he would not only not pay attention to you (that is, if you could get his attention), but he would not believe you.

Elliott and Gresham (1991), among others, have done extensive research on social skills training. Their work serves as a standard to this day in terms of defining social skills and designing social skills training interventions. Here are some questions that they suggest children with ADHD can ask themselves.

The following are questions that children with ADHD can ask themselves (and/or the teacher can ask them) in terms of gaining an understanding of whether or not the child with ADHD thinks an adult is being fair or unfair: *Method!*

- \* “When have you felt that a rule your parent or teacher made was unfair to you?”
- \* “How did the unfairness of the rule make you feel?”  
“What did you do?”
- \* “What might happen if there were no rules at school at home, or in our country?”
- \* “What makes a rule unfair?”
- \* “What might make a rule fair?” (Elliott & Gresham, 1991, p. 152)

What is the point of the child asking himself questions such as these? When children can answer these questions, they have moved one huge step forward toward regulating their own behavior. When children with ADHD ask themselves a question, they have to think about and make a decision about their behavior, and therefore, the answer. Hopefully, on the way to thinking and making a decision about their answer, they will incorporate other people’s viewpoints and, specifically, how other people would answer those questions. When they learn to look at other people’s viewpoints, they may also find it easier to begin giving a compliment.

**Social Skill 14: Giving a Compliment**

Why is it important for the child with ADHD to learn to give a compliment? Don't children give compliments naturally? Children without ADHD may in fact give compliments freely and easily, but children with ADHD typically do not. They do not realize and understand why it is important to give compliments to peers, and so they do not do so. Even though their parents and siblings give compliments and they seemingly observe them doing so, they do not internalize that social skill.

When I explain to children with ADHD with whom I work why it is important to give their peers compliments and teach them how to do so, I explain that giving compliments is all about being nice to someone. When a child is nice to another person, it makes him feel good. It may also be an indication to the other child that he is making an effort to make friends. Trying to teach a child with ADHD to behave nicely toward another child can be a challenge, however.

For example, I am having a difficult time trying to explain and convince a five-year-old whom I am teaching social skills to agree with me that even though someone may have annoyed him, he still should be nice to that person. He says that he cannot be nice to another child because this child does not listen to his teacher. He told me that the other child's teacher gives him "strikes" every time he does not listen. When I asked him why it is his business if the teacher manages the other child's behavior in this way, he laughed! He clearly only wants to be friends with children who behave; that is so interesting in consideration of the fact that he himself, a child with ADHD, as well as other children with ADHD, often has difficulty exhibiting socially appropriate behavior!

A child with ADHD has to be able to understand other people's actions before he is able to give another person a com-

pliment. How would he do so? The teacher can coach the child to follow these steps:

- \* Watch the person, carefully.
- \* Ask yourself:
  - \* Does the person have a new outfit on?
  - \* Does the person have a new haircut?
  - \* Has the person helped out a peer?
  - \* Has the person helped out an adult?
  - \* Has the person performed a task well, such as getting a hit in softball at recess or making delicious cookies for the class?

*Method!*

If the child with ADHD recognizes that the child with whom he is in an interaction exhibited the behavior just mentioned, then he can be taught to give a compliment. It is more important to teach this social skill if the child with ADHD does not understand how helpful the other child has been.

In fact, it might facilitate the child with ADHD's understanding of the other child's behavior for the teacher to take a video of the other child (with the parents' permission). Show the video to the child with ADHD. Point out to the child with ADHD exactly what the child does that demonstrates that he is being helpful. This video can be a two- or three-minute video from any still digital camera to which the teacher has access. How should a child give a compliment?

The teacher, the teacher's assistant, or an aide can serve as a coach to the child with ADHD and teach him to do the following:

- \* If the child with ADHD is interacting with the other child in some way, then the natural thing would be to give a compliment while they are interacting. If they are playing at recess, the child with ADHD can say, "Jess, your outfit looks cool," for example. Presumably, the other child will

*Method!*

say “Thank you,” and then the child with ADHD can say, “You are welcome.” Or . . .

- \* “Those are delicious cookies that you made. Can you give me the recipe?” Or . . .
- \* “What a great hit you made today at softball in recess. It helped us to win the game.”

These responses will not be automatic with the child with ADHD, however. You will have to practice faux scenarios and teach the child with ADHD to role play so he learns how to give a compliment. Role playing is a skill that has to be taught to the child with ADHD so he can practice any of the social skills interventions that I discuss here.

If the child with ADHD is not currently involved with the child in question but would like to give a compliment, how would he do so? In that case the child can try the following:

- \* Walk near to the child.
- \* Make a judgment, by evaluating the other child’s body language, if the other child is “available.” What do I mean by “available”? A child might be “available” if he has a smile on his face. The other child may also be “available” if he looks up in a forthcoming way when the child with ADHD approaches and says hello to the child or if he gives any indication that he would like to make a friend.
- \* If the child with ADHD deems that the other child is “available,” then he can offer a compliment, as above.

What are some other typical compliments that a child can give to another child? Here are some examples:

- \* “Those are cool sneakers? Where did you find them?”
- \* “I like your braids.”
- \* “That is a great jacket. I bet it keeps you warm.”
- \* “I like the star you painted. It looks like a real star.”

- \* “The name on your desk that you designed looks awesome.”

Your job as a teacher in this process is to make sure that the compliments one child is giving to another are not self-deprecating. The child with ADHD needs practice, practice, and more practice in order to learn how to give compliments fairly and gracefully, without showing any vulnerability.

Teachers can use puppets to instruct children with ADHD to practice giving compliments. You can make up little vignettes quite easily that will incorporate a child giving another child a compliment. Here are a few examples that you can try: *Method!*

- \* Two children are making block buildings next to each other. One of the buildings is very high, built by stacking the blocks one on top of another by size order. What could the child who did not build the high structure say to the other? What could the child who did build the high structure say to the other?
- \* One child comes to school with new sneakers and a new book bag. What could another child say to him?
- \* One child comes to school with a new haircut after the weekend. What could another child say to him?
- \* On Friday afternoon, before leaving for home, one child cleans his desk and organizes his pencils, crayons, scissors, paper, and other materials in specific sections in his desk. What could the other child say to him?
- \* Even though the teacher did not ask her to do it, one girl made cookies for the whole class for someone’s birthday. What could another child say to her?
- \* The teacher hurt her arm the day before and is wearing a soft cast. One child helps her pick up papers that dropped on to the floor. What could another child say to her?

Now that the child with ADHD has learned (even if he does not perform this skill on a regular, appropriate basis) to give

a compliment, he also has to be ready to know what to do in terms of responding to a compliment.

### **Social Skill 15: Responding to a Compliment**

There are a couple of ways to respond to a compliment, both of which can and should be practiced either with puppets or through role playing. A child with ADHD who experiences anxiety may be embarrassed when someone gives him a compliment. For some children with ADHD who also have an anxiety disorder or any anxiety at all, they may either not know what to say or be stuck on how to say it. For many children just saying “thank you” is hard enough.

However, children with ADHD may be too uncomfortable when someone gives them a compliment and may not respond. They may not want to call attention to themselves. It is also possible that the child with ADHD may not pay attention to the compliment or may not understand what it connotes. It is up to the teacher to teach all of the children in the class to give one another compliments.

It is essential that children with ADHD are given compliments because typical children will see that children with ADHD can do something well, which they themselves rarely see. There are a few ways to respond to compliments, but a response is mandatory. It is therefore essential that the child with ADHD respond to a compliment. Children and adults often think it is rude when the person to whom the compliment was made just stands there and does not respond.

*Method!*

- \* The child with ADHD can simply say “Thank you.”
- \* When another child gives the child with ADHD a compliment, the child with ADHD can say thank you and give the other child a compliment in return. For example, if a

child says to the child with ADHD, “Your New York Yankee shirt is cool.” The child with ADHD can say, “Thank you. Your New York Mets shirt is cool too.” Or . . .

- \* If a child says to the child with ADHD, “Your dress is so pretty.” The child with ADHD could omit saying “Thank you,” and instead say “Your dress is pretty too.”

On the other hand, in addition to children with ADHD learning to respond to someone giving them a compliment, they also have to learn to tell an adult when something is appreciated by them.

### **Social Skill 16: Telling an Adult When Something Is Appreciated**

Learning to tell an adult when something is appreciated is so important for children with ADHD because it takes them out of their own perspective and helps them look at the worldview that I was discussing in a previous section. Telling an adult when something is appreciated seems as if it is a compliment. However, even though the child is saying something nice, showing appreciation is more directed at something very specific. What does showing appreciation to adults teach children with ADHD? It shows them that they should respect adults.

It may seem obvious to you that children with ADHD respect adults. However, this is not always so. What is respect? It merely means that the child is being considerate of other people and understanding of their efforts. If a child does not show appreciation toward an adult, he might be considered to be rude.

In terms of rude, I was working with a six-year-old with ADHD-hyperactive type last week. As I entered the room, he said to me “You don’t have to come anymore. My grandma

is teaching me everything.” I have to tell you the truth, I was stunned. I asked myself, “Who put that thought into this child’s mind?” Typical children at such a young age generally do not express themselves in this way. Children with ADHD, however, may sometimes talk to an adult in this way.

His grandma, previous to this boy’s statement, had told me that she had been a special education teacher years ago, and that the way she was teaching her grandson was the correct way to teach him. She was clearly implying that the way that I was teaching him was incorrect. I really did not pay much attention to what she said, nor did I make a reciprocal comment. I knew that the child was progressing due to my teaching, but still, I often wonder why family members don’t simply say to teachers “Thank you so much for all of your work.”

How could this child have stated this comment in a way that sounded more appreciative? He might have said, “My grandma is working with me too. You teach me a lot when you come, also.”

Example!

The following are some examples of things that an adult may do that require a child with ADHD to show appreciation as well as possible responses that the child with ADHD might make:

- \* A teacher helps the child with ADHD with a difficult math problem. The child might say: “Thank you for helping me, Miss Charles. I understand it now.”
- \* A parent takes time out of her work schedule to take the child and his friends to the zoo. The child might say: “It was so nice of you to take time off from work to take us to the zoo, Mom. We had a great time.”
- \* A teacher (or an aide or another child) helps the child to clean up the blocks, knowing that the child needs help. The child might say: “It would have taken me so much longer to put away the blocks without your help, Mr. Allen.”
- \* A parent bakes a birthday cake for the child and brings it into school along with an extra cupcake for each child

to take home. The child might say: “Everyone loved the birthday cake, Mom. They were so happy to have a cupcake to bring home, too!”

- \* A teacher helps a child to unpack his school bag in the morning when she sees that it may take the child with ADHD longer than the required time to do so. This may be necessary due to the child with ADHD becoming distracted when he watches all of the children first enter the classroom in the morning. The child might say: “Now I am ready for my day. You helped me to unpack faster.”

Children with ADHD have to be taught in a direct and purposeful way to show appreciation. This social skill, I believe, should be explained by using examples such as the ones above.

It would be useful to make up a short video of children who behave in a respectful and appreciative manner as well as those who behave in a disrespectful and unappreciative manner. Sometimes children with ADHD need to see images clearly in a visual format before they really understand that a particular social skill is so important to learn. Another social skill that is vital to learn in our diverse world is accepting people who are different. *Method!*

### **Social Skill 17: Accepting People Who Are Different**

Why teach the child to accept a child who is different from him rather than to just *tolerate* him? First, let’s get rid of the word *tolerate* that seems to be in everyone’s vocabulary lately. In my mind, if a child is taught to *tolerate* a child who is different, he is “putting up with” that child, knowing that he does not like him for whatever reason. When someone teaches a child to accept another child, it means that he likes him. Even

though there may be an emphasis today on teaching children to respect (there is that word again) and accept people's differences, it is an especially important social skill for children with ADHD to learn. Why? The reason for teaching the skill of accepting people who are different to children with ADHD is because they are different themselves. I may have given similar examples before, but these examples of things that children with ADHD do that make them appear to be different are relevant here as well:

- \* Children with ADHD have difficulty staying in their seats in class.
- \* In situations that are more unstructured, such as gym class, children with ADHD lose their self-control and, among other behaviors, run around in an excitable fashion.
- \* Children with ADHD often are not as patient as typical children when they have to wait for a turn at play.
- \* Children with ADHD are not always willing to cooperate or compromise with other children.
- \* Children with ADHD find change difficult.
- \* Children with ADHD have difficulty making transitions from one activity to another.
- \* Children with ADHD ask questions often using inappropriate language.
- \* Children with ADHD ask questions at inappropriate times.
- \* Children with ADHD talk excessively.
- \* Children with ADHD do not listen well.
- \* Children with ADHD run into rooms.
- \* Children with ADHD barge into others' conversations and, therefore, interrupt them.
- \* Children with ADHD act out (i.e., hitting and kicking) when they become frustrated.

Teachers would most likely characterize the previous behaviors as socially inappropriate, which might make them appear

different from the other children in the class. If you disagree with me and think that some of those behaviors are not socially inappropriate, then try this exercise: Close your eyes and imagine how a child who exhibits these behaviors could fit into a typical classroom without appearing different. If you still disagree, then please tell me how that would be so.

So, you can see why children with ADHD need to learn about understanding and accepting people who are different. Teaching this social skill requires in-depth discussions with these children. They need to understand that each person is unique, so if they appear not to be the same as the others, that is okay. Children with ADHD, due to inattentiveness, however, may not notice the differences among people. In fact, they may say whatever “pops into their head,” and sometimes make inappropriate comments about other children and do not even realize it.

It is important to teach children with ADHD how people may be different on the outside, (i.e., skin color, hair color, different eyes, different dress, etc.), but may be similar in terms of beliefs, values, and behavior. A good book that may help teachers to instruct children with ADHD to learn that each person is unique is *Accept and Value Each Person* by Cheryl J. Meiners (2004).

It is particularly important to teach this social skill to children with ADHD who are brought up in restricted, narrow settings, such as Orthodox Jews, children who live in inner cities, people of Amish descent, and Mormons. Why? These children may never see a child who is different from them within their school and extracurricular activities because they only interact with children within their religious or ethnic group. Some children with ADHD may learn this important skill through reading about it, while others will require role playing as well as more in-depth explanations.

Teaching the method of reciprocal conversation is challenging due to the distractibility of the child with ADHD, but if done correctly, the child will come away with a real understanding *Method!*

of accepting people who are different. You will, of course, have to make sure that the child is maintaining eye contact before trying this method of social skills training. Try a question and answer session first.

- \* “What color is your skin?”
- \* “Is the skin of your classmates the same color?” If not, “What color is their skin?” (Researchers state that children are aware of skin color at a young age [Derman-Sparks, 1989, p. 2].) Make sure that the child has paid attention to his classmates’ skin color. If not, you need to stop here and talk to the child about how to recognize his classmates’ skin color. The teacher or the parent must show the child with ADHD pictures of children of various “colors” and make sure that he can discriminate among them. Why is that important? You must make sure that the child understands the concept of difference and being able to discriminate between people’s skin color is a good way to begin. Okay, back to the conversation:
- \* “Do the children’s skin colors in your class make the children different from you?”
- \* “If so, how does their skin color make them different?”
- \* “Do the children in your class play with the same things or with different things than you?”
- \* “What do you like to play?”
- \* “Does everyone in your class wear similar clothing?”
- \* “Does everyone in your class have the same customs?”
- \* “What are some of your beliefs? For example, are you nice to people who are nice to you? Do you do things for people who are nice to you? Do the children in your class have similar values?”

By incorporating the answers to the posed questions, the teacher should then be able to teach the child about accepting people who are different. This lesson may have to be repeated

in several ways. One way to reinforce this social skill, for example, is to have the teacher and the child with ADHD write a social story together based on the lessons learned from the conversation.

## WRITING SOCIAL STORIES

Method!

### **Social Story: Accepting People Who Are Different**

- \* You may be different from your classmates in terms of the color of their skin, dress, and culture.
- \* It is important to treat each and every one in your class with respect, no matter what their differences.
- \* The differences of each person in your class should be looked at positively and appreciated.
- \* No matter how different people seem in your class, everyone can work and play together successfully.

### **Being Different Is a Positive Attribute**

Sometimes reading a story that articulates the positive side of being different can be a big help to the child with ADHD. An example of such a story is *Tacky the Penguin* by Helen Lester (1998). *Tacky the Penguin* is the story of Tacky, a penguin who did not behave in the same way as the other penguins. For instance:

- \* The other penguins greeted others quietly, while Tacky greeted others by slapping them on their backs.
- \* The other penguins marched in order, while Tacky marched out of order.
- \* The other penguins dove into the water gracefully, while Tacky made a huge splash.
- \* The other penguins sang lovely songs, while Tacky sang odd songs.

Tacky used his difference in a positive way when hunters came to their home one day. He slapped them on the backs, marched out of order, and sang songs that irritated the hunters so much that Tacky made them leave the penguins alone and go away from their home! The other penguins appreciated him for what his difference helped him accomplish. Tacky used his difference to get the hunters to go away without harming the penguins. This is a great book to read to a child with ADHD because oftentimes, these children think that they are different in a weird, strange way. Children with ADHD think that others think of them as different as well, but unlike Tacky, in a negative way.

Children with ADHD often think that other children do not like them as well. Some of their thinking may unfortunately be correct. However, they can be taught that some of the characteristics that make them different can be used in a positive way, just as Tacky did. For example, especially in consideration of the fact that children with ADHD often feel different from other children, it would be good for them to work on accepting peer suggestions for activities.

**Social Skill 18:**  
**Accepting Peer Suggestions for Activities**

When a child with ADHD accepts his peers' suggestions for activities, he shows other children that he is willing to compromise. When other children see that children with ADHD make compromises with them, they will be encouraged to play with them at the least and, at the most, want to be friends. This social skill is a perfect one to practice either with puppets or with role playing. But how do you explain to the child with ADHD that it is better to agree with other children's ideas for what to play rather than his own ideas? Children with ADHD typically

like to play what they want to play, and in my opinion, may be rigid about playing anything else.

Teaching children with ADHD the skill of accepting peer suggestions for activities means that they learn to have a depth of understanding of other children's needs. Because of what is required for them to understand the meaning of this social skill, it may be best to teach it by using embedded instruction. By teaching the child with ADHD the social skill of accepting peer suggestions for activities within a natural setting, teachers are making this social skill relevant and meaningful to the child. This is one social skill that can best be taught during free play or recess. Let's see how to do it:

Two children are playing with blocks. One child says to the child with ADHD: "I would rather play Candyland now instead of playing blocks." The teacher prompts the child with ADHD quietly and suggests to him that he should try to agree to play what the other child wants to play.

*Method!*

The child with ADHD says: "Even though I like playing with the blocks, I will play Candyland with you now." The other child says "Great, maybe we can play with the blocks later."

Children with ADHD may also learn this skill by modeling another child's behavior. Here is a slightly different scenario: The child with ADHD is playing in the dramatic play area. She says to a peer who is playing with her: "I would rather play with Play-Doh than play in the dramatic play area anymore." The teacher quietly prompts the peer to say: "That is a great idea. I would love to play with Play-Doh now as well."

### **Social Skill 19: Cooperating with Peers**

Learning how to cooperate with peers is an easy transition from the social skill of accepting peer suggestions for activities. It is very difficult to make friends and get along with adults if

a child does not cooperate with them; this is a fact. Every type of interaction involves some type of cooperative effort. Think of your everyday interactions.

Over a period of a day, you cooked a wonderful, five-course dinner for your family. By the end of the dinner, you were exhausted. Your daughter suggested to everyone at the dinner table that each family member take on a different responsibility in terms of cleaning up the kitchen. Because of this cooperative effort, the dinner dishes and pots and pans were cleaned up in just a few minutes.

In order for children with ADHD to interact successfully, they must cooperate with each other. Sometimes, that cooperation includes sharing, which is a very important skill to acquire. When children do not share or refuse to share, arguments often ensue. Sharing is one of the first and most important of the social skills children with ADHD need to acquire if they are going to be successful in interacting with peers. A good teacher can teach all of the children how to share in a cooperative learning group as they are learning a mathematics concept. For example, children with ADHD can be taught to ask for a certain manipulative they are using. A child with ADHD might, for instance, grab a manipulative from another child and not be able to learn how to wait his turn. The teacher can teach the child with ADHD a series of steps that will help him to learn how to share and how to wait his turn.

How can a teacher or a parent facilitate that the child with ADHD learns to cooperate with his peers? The teacher or parent can write a short script or a social story and read it to the child. Sometimes, with parental permission of course and informed consent, these stories work best when the child's pictures are included in the story. They somehow see the situation as an example of a real-life situation, which, as I emphasized before, has meaning for them.

*Example!* Molly and Lucy are playing with Play-Doh. At the moment, Molly is playing with the red and Lucy is playing with the green. Lucy says to Molly: "I would like to use some of the red

to make the windows of my green house red. May I have some now?" Molly says: "Sure, I will give it to you now. May I have some green for the grass for my house?" Lucy says: "Sure."

Think about the opposite scenario: Lucy says: "I would like some of the red to make the windows of my green house red. May I have some now?" Molly says: "No, I need to use all of the red for my house and garden. You can't have any!" Lucy says: "Can't I even have a little bit for the door knob of my house?" Molly says: "I already told you no. Now, leave me alone!" Lucy starts to cry. She goes to see the teacher to tell her that Molly is refusing to share. Lucy just cries and cries until the teacher finds another color that she can use.

This is an example of a script that a teacher can write to teach the child with ADHD to cooperate with his peers: Everyone in the class is making some sort of dessert for a bake sale. The teacher assigned Heather and Kim to work together. They are making chocolate chip cookies. They will have to cooperate with each other and share the jobs that are required to make the cookies. They will also get finished baking faster than if each of them had baked the cookies by herself. Each of the girls will also be able to learn how the other does a certain part of the project.

*Method!*

Before they began the project, they made a list of the jobs that are necessary to do in order to make cookies. They divided the jobs between them. As they were working, they shared the utensils that they both needed to make the cookies, so they did not argue about who was using a specific utensil and how long they were going to use it. By cooperating and sharing, Heather and Kim became a team who worked together for a specific, shared purpose. They also made two extra cookies, one for each of them that they ate before giving their teacher the completed project for the bake sale!

Here is an example of a situation where the children did not cooperate with each other. Notice what happened as a result: Arthur and Sam were also on a team, but they were assigned to make cupcakes. Sam always made cupcakes with his mom, so he thought that he and only he knew the best way to prepare the

recipe before baking the cupcakes. He also decided on the flavor of the icing beforehand. From the moment that Arthur and Sam began their project, they had problems cooperating. They did not make a list of jobs before they began. When they started putting ingredients into the bowl, Sam argued with Arthur about which ingredient that each of them would put into the bowl first. They also argued about who should mix the ingredients, who should pour the batter into the cupcake cups, and who should put the cupcakes in the oven. Arthur tried not to argue and to accept, begrudgingly, what Sam told him to do, until the cupcakes were done. Sam started putting his choice of flavor for the icing, chocolate, on all of the cupcakes. Arthur didn't even like chocolate icing! At this point, Arthur was almost in tears, because he was so frustrated with Sam's behavior. Finally, Sam took two of the cupcakes for himself and walked away, eating one as he walked in the other direction! Arthur was so upset that he took the rest of the cupcakes and threw them all over the floor, causing most of them to break apart in crumbs!

The teacher can ask the following questions to the students after reading the story:

- \* What happened because the boys did not assign jobs to each other before they began preparing the recipe?
- \* What should Sam and Arthur have done before they began the project?
- \* What was unfair about the way Sam behaved?
- \* How did the way Sam behaved make Arthur feel?
- \* What did Arthur do when he saw Sam taking the cupcakes and eating them?
- \* What could Arthur have done to avoid the problems he experienced when baking cupcakes with Sam?
- \* How should the teacher have responded to Arthur and to Sam as related to their behavior?

The steps to learning to share can be on a task card in words or in pictures that the child with ADHD carries with him to

the math activity. What are task cards? Task cards can be index cards or cards that are a similar size with any type of information on them. They may have words or pictures on them, depending on the child's abilities or disabilities. A typical task card may have the task on it that the teacher wants a child to accomplish, either in words or in pictures. These cards could also have the assignment, a reinforcing follow-up activity, and a homework assignment on them. Also written on the task cards could be a social skill that the child with ADHD is trying to learn. Task cards serve as reminders. The content of task cards is up to you, as teachers. Here are some examples:

*Method!*

#### **Sharing a Toy that Another Child Is Playing with**

- \* Watch what the other children are playing with
- \* Decide which toy or material you want to play with
- \* Notice which child has that toy
- \* Wait until that child is finished playing with that toy
- \* Ask that child if he is finished playing with that toy and whether you may have a turn playing with it
- \* If that child is not done or will not share the toy with you, choose another toy to play with

#### **Sharing a Toy that You Are Playing with**

- \* Look around and see if anyone is near you who might want to share the toy you are playing with
- \* Offer to share the toy or wait for them to ask to play with the toy
- \* When they ask if they can play with your toy, you can say:
  - \* "I will share the toy with you when I am finished with it."
  - Or . . .
  - \* "I will let you play with my toy if I can play with your toy."

Does this method of using task cards sound as if the child with ADHD will be stigmatized because he is permitted to use the task cards and the others are not? The child with ADHD will not feel stigmatized if the teacher has explained to the class from the beginning of the year about the fact that each child has different ways that they learn best and that the teacher will be teaching each of them in a unique way. All of the children, therefore, will understand that each child is different and each child's learning style is different. If necessary, the teacher can even give everyone task cards each tailored to a skill or an assignment that suits each particular child.

**Social Skill 20:  
Compromising by Reaching Agreement**

Some people think that cooperating and compromising mean the same, but they are not exactly the same. When children (or adults) cooperate, they work together. When children (or adults) compromise, they have certain specific differences that they want to settle. Similar to learning to cooperate, children must learn to compromise if they are going to have friends and get along with adults. What characterizes a compromise? Each person must give up something. Each person has to feel as if they have won, however, or they will not agree to the compromise! That is it!

*Example!* Your family is deciding which restaurant to go to for dinner. You and your daughter would like Italian food, but the rest of your family want Chinese food. What does your family typically decide to do? You and your daughter might suggest that your family order Chinese food that night, but next Monday, they will order Italian food. The rest of the family says, "That is a great compromise."

When the child with ADHD does not feel as if he has won a game, what happens? The child typically exhibits socially inappropriate behavior in response to losing a game. The child with ADHD must be taught that he cannot always get everything that he wants, especially when it comes to interacting with others. Children with ADHD must learn to compromise when they are playing a game; when they are playing with a specific toy; and when they are engaging in activities with other children as well as with adults.

Children with ADHD seem to interact in more situations that require compromising than typical children. This may not be a fact, but let's say that I am making that conjecture after many years of helping children with ADHD to interact more positively with their peers. Perhaps they become involved in the same number of acrimonious interactions as typical children. However, they have a more difficult time compromising. We often see children with ADHD being asked to compromise with their siblings at home. This can serve as a safe, natural practice ground for these children. Sometimes children with ADHD can be stubborn and not want to compromise, as Ellen talks about here:

I would hope. One thing I would try and tell other people is that, it's very difficult to figure out how to put it in words. You can teach, but teaching doesn't make a person learn. He can only learn what he chooses to learn from what is being taught. He has to have the teachable spirit. He has to be receptive. I can teach, teach, and teach, and if he doesn't want to learn it, he's not going to learn it. So it doesn't mean I'm a bad teacher. It just means he's choosing not to learn because of a stubborn rule system, so it's trying to get through that stubborn willfulness without breaking his spirit of learning.

Since two people have to agree to give in to another person's wants and desires, it is difficult at times to convince the child with ADHD to do so. Many children with ADHD-hyperactive/impulsive type are consumed with maintaining control and are

not the least bit interested in complying with any agreement. How can the teacher or the parent convince the child with ADHD to try to compromise when the situation arises (besides bribing them!)? First, the teacher has to make sure that the child with ADHD understands what the word compromise means and how positive a tool it can be when dealing with other children. Second, the teacher has to make sure that the child with ADHD is willing to learn how to compromise.

Cooper (2005) talks about four steps to coming up with a solution that involves compromising:

1. Choose to resolve the conflict.
2. Define the problem. What exactly is the conflict and what do you want to happen? What does the other person want?
3. Think of some win-win solutions and suggest them to the other person. Ask for the other person's ideas, too.
4. Choose a win-win solution with the other person, and act on it. (p. 47)

*Method!* Role playing is a very good way to teach children with ADHD how to compromise. This is the one time that I would role play what the incorrect way of interacting would look like, however. Why? It is important to show children with ADHD the unfortunately unhappy or sometimes explosive results that he and the typical child may experience when they choose not to compromise. Did you notice that I placed the word choose in my last sentence?

Children with ADHD have a choice as to whether or not they will make the decision to compromise with others. Before we move on to role playing as an intervention to teach children with ADHD how to compromise, the teacher and the parent must explain to the child with ADHD that he is making a choice as to whether or not to compromise with another child. You can explain that in a situation when the child with ADHD thinks that another child is being unreasonable, the

child with ADHD can compromise to find a good solution to the problem.

For example, one of the children, Paul, with whom I was working, came off the camp bus holding a small flag. His sister Ruth takes the same camp bus and insisted that it was her flag. An argument apparently ensued on the bus, and they began to hit and punch each other. The teacher or the counselor might have taught Paul and Ruth to settle the argument this way:

Role play the following example: Paul enters the camp bus with a flag in his hand. His sister sees the flag and begins to grab it away from Paul. Paul could have said:

*Example!*

- \* “Ruth, I have an idea. Since we both are saying that the flag belongs to us, how about if I hold it on the way to camp and you hold it on the way back from camp?” or
- \* “I’ll tell you what. How about if I take the flag to camp today and you take the flag to camp tomorrow?”

Role playing can really be successful in terms of teaching children how to compromise because the child practices the skill many times through different scenarios until he understands. The teacher writes the scripts so each participant knows exactly what words to say in order to facilitate the role play successfully. The following are examples of situations in which a child with ADHD can role play with either an older peer, a teacher, a parent, or a sibling:

- \* Two children are drawing and they both want the pastel colored crayons.
- \* Two children want the same swing at the same time.
- \* Two children want to hand out the snack in school on the same day.
- \* Two children want the same instruments in music class.
- \* Two children want to use the only computer in the classroom.

The easiest thing to do at first is for the teacher or the parent to act a role in the role play. Eventually, these roles can be assigned to other students.

*Example!* **SCENARIO 1: SHARING CRAYONS**

- \* Person A (teacher): “I am drawing a beautiful rainbow and need all of those pastel colors.”
- \* Person B: “I am also drawing a rainbow and also need all of those pastel colors.”
- \* Person A (teacher): “Since neither of us can draw with all of those colored crayons at the same time, how about if you take some of the crayons and I will take some?” (If they are old enough to count, you can have them count out the exact same number of crayons for each person.)

*Example!* **SCENARIO 2: SHARING SWINGS**

- \* Person A: One child wants to swing on the first swing that he sees. There are four other swings.
- \* Person B (teacher) wants to swing on the same swing as person A.
- \* Person B (teacher) says: “I want to swing on that swing.”
- \* Person A says: “Well, I am swinging on this swing now. There are other swings here.”
- \* Person B (teacher) might say: “Okay, let’s make a deal. I will swing on one of the other swings for now, but in a few minutes, we will switch swings.”
- \* Or Person A might say: “If you wait a few minutes, I will let you swing on this swing for a few minutes while I swing on one of the other swings. When I want it back, though, you will have to give it back and then swing on one of the other swings, okay?”

You can use your imagination as to what would happen if neither of the two children were willing to compromise. It might go something like this:

**SCENARIO 3: SHARING SWINGS AGAIN**

*Example!*

- \* Person B: “I want to swing on the swing that you are swinging on.”
- \* Person A: “That’s too bad, because I am going to swing on it for a long time.”
- \* Person B: “You can’t do that; it isn’t fair. We all have to share swings.”
- \* Person A: “There are plenty of swings. Tough luck for you.”
- \* Person B walks over to person A and tries to push her off the swing. Person A pushes person B to the ground and she ends up crying and running away being frustrated.

**SCENARIO 4: TWO CHILDREN WANT TO HAND OUT THE SNACK TO THE CLASS ON THE SAME DAY**

*Example!*

This is an argument waiting to happen that can be avoided in an obvious way; the teacher can list the jobs of the week so that everyone adheres to them. However, let’s say that there is a special snack that is related to a specific lesson. For example, let’s say that the teacher is doing a unit on the Civil War and she is talking about the type of foods that were eaten by the soldiers, such as grits. She decides to have the class make grits and prepare a portion for each student in the class in cupcake cups. She then has to decide, since this food is not defined as a typical snack, which children should give it out. She asks for volunteers and two children raise their hands.

- \* Person A says: “I want to give out the grits!”
- \* Person B says: “I want to give out the grits!”

The teacher can model compromising behavior here. What a great opportunity to teach a social skill within the natural setting of the classroom!

The teacher can say: “Okay, I will tell you what we are going to do that makes giving out the grits fair to both of you. Sam, you will give out the grits to the first ten desks and Abby, you will give out the grits to the second ten desks. Then Sam, you will offer grits to the two teachers who might want to be a part of this lesson, and Abby, you will offer grits to the other two teachers who might also want to be part of this lesson.”

*Example!* **SCENARIO 5: TWO CHILDREN WANT THE SAME INSTRUMENT IN MUSIC CLASS**

This is another social skill that can be taught in the natural setting of the classroom, but in the music class this time.

*Caveat!* It is very important for the classroom teacher to talk to the music teacher before the child with ADHD walks into her room. In most situations, the music teacher is not knowledgeable about how to teach children with ADHD. Music is usually her specialty. Her specialty is neither ADHD nor behavior management. The music teacher, like the gym and the art teacher, in many cases is not too thrilled (even though she knows she has to) to have children with ADHD in her class. Do you remember in chapter 1 that I discussed Timmy, a child who I worked with as an itinerant teacher who up to the day that I arrived had not been permitted to attend music, art, and gym classes? This is a perfect example of a time when it is vital, and let me say mandatory, for anyone who teaches to be aware of teaching methods that are more successful than others in controlling (if at all possible) distractible and socially inappropriate behavior.

The following are strategies that the classroom and specialty teachers should both abide by when teaching a child with ADHD: *Method!*

- \* The child with ADHD will need someone to cue him and to remind him as to the behaviors that he is exhibiting that are socially inappropriate.
- \* The child with ADHD needs the teacher to remain strict to his behavioral limits and follow through with consequences when he does not adhere to those limits. For example, since music class is an active class, the teacher may be able to teach the child within his activity level, to a point. She can permit the child with ADHD to walk back and forth with the instruments in hand, unless he begins to touch other children as he walks by.
- \* All teachers should use as much structure and consistency as possible when they are teaching the child with ADHD. For example, all teachers including the specialty teachers should organize the time spent in their classrooms according to a specific order that is kept consistent every day.
- \* Begin with the same opening assignment, say, for example, which may be singing a short song. Continue on distributing instruments according to some ordered plan. For example, the front row receives the recorders; the middle row receives the bells; and the back row receives the maracas. Each day you teach these specific children, you can change the order of which row receives which instrument. However, keep consistent in your order, for each day of the week!
- \* The teacher should try to pair the child with ADHD with a typical peer who can help him “keep on track” in terms of what the class is doing at a specific moment. There is always one child who loves to help another. Children who love to help others will be easy to find.
- \* Introduce the concept of peer tutoring with both the child with ADHD and the typical child *before the child with*

*Caveat!*

*ADHD walks into the classroom.* You should explain to the peer tutor exactly what he has to do in terms of acting as a peer tutor. You should also explain to the child with ADHD exactly why he is receiving a peer tutor and how he is going to help him in music class.

Are you wondering if by having a peer tutor, the child with ADHD will be stigmatized? Think about what the rest of the class's opinion of the child with ADHD's behavior would be when he is distractible and constantly interrupts the teacher? Agree? I hope so!

The last example of a situation where the teacher should teach the children how to compromise is what to do when two children want to use the only computer in the classroom.

This is actually an easy problem to effect a compromise.

### **SCENARIO 6: TWO CHILDREN WANT TO USE THE ONLY COMPUTER IN THE CLASSROOM**

- \* Person A: "I want to use the computer now."
- \* Person B: "I want to use the computer now; it is my turn."

Now, once again, in the best case scenario, the teacher has a predetermined schedule of which child gets to use the computer at a predetermined time. However, there are times, such as when the class has indoor recess due to inclement weather, that are unpredicted and unplanned. Whoever thought that it would rain, and certainly not three days in a row! In that case, you are lucky if you only have two children who want to use the computer at the same time!

*Method!* If the children can read and understand time, then make a deal with them that each child can work at the computer for fifteen minutes at one sitting. That sounds easy unless the entire indoor recess is fifteen minutes! If that is so, here are a

few compromises that the teacher can propose to the students, while also making it clear that using the computer is a privilege and not a “right.”

**Coin Toss:** The teacher tosses up a coin. The child who wins the coin toss gets to use the computer on the first day of the inside recess and the other child gets to use the computer on the next day of inside recess. You will have to write down that fact, however. You do not want the child who did not get to use the computer on the first day of indoor recess to think that you will forget about his turn if all of a sudden the weather turns sunny!

**Working Together:** The other method you can employ is to try to convince the two children (which is not always so easy to do) that they can use the computer at the same time if they can find a game or an exercise that they can do together that very day.

### **Social Skill 21: Responding to Teasing Appropriately**

There is a fine line between being teased and being bullied. Both being teased and being bullied oftentimes have long-term and lifelong detrimental effects on children with ADHD. Listen to what one of the children whom I observed in my research told me when I tried to suggest to him that he have a positive outlook, despite being teased and bullied in school:

I try to [have a positive outlook] but sometimes it's just too hard. I don't know if you go through a certain amount of stuff in public school. It's just hard to look and to feel positive. The kids get in there and leave a permanent scar and you just can't get rid of it.

One of the students to whom I teach social skills, upon being asked by me why he put up with being teased, told me

that “Oh, it’s just for a laugh.” I then replied that nobody, but nobody, has the right to get others to laugh at his expense. He was surprised to hear my reaction. I guess that he had rationalized that if the class had laughed due to his being teased, then so what? He then said to me, “It’s nothing major.” That was all I had to hear. I then told him that being teased was major to me. Why did he feel that way?

Is it possible (as amazing as it sounds) that he liked the negative attention? He was clearly unable to stop the teasing, so he had to rationalize it in his mind. I asked him if the teacher witnessed it and he said “no.” Now, that was more amazing to me. Of course, I have seen children teasing other children by whispering, by using hand signals, and by passing notes that somehow never get found. I also asked him if he reported the teasing that he experienced to a teacher and he again answered, “no.” This behavior by the child with ADHD who is being teased is certainly typical. They fear reprisal from the children who tease them if they report the offenders to an adult.

One of the reasons, among many, that children with ADHD are teased is because (and it is important that I say this over and over again) children with ADHD are vulnerable. When I asked this boy to whom I teach, what he thought they tease him about, he pointed to his stomach. I had to assume that he meant that it was because he was overweight, but he was too insecure to tell me.

This social skill is one of the most difficult for the teacher to try to teach. What do I mean? What might happen if the teacher speaks to the entire class about teasing? The child who has been teased may even be teased more, because the other children think that he may have told the teacher on them. It is hard to win here, isn’t it? How can teachers help these children to deal with the children who are teasing them?

What should teachers tell children with ADHD as to how to face these children who tease them? What should they say? What should they do? There are a few things that these children can try. Here they are:

As I will suggest, when a child with ADHD is bullied the first response should be for that child to try to ignore the child who is doing the teasing. Along with ignoring the teaser, the teacher should advise the child who is being teased to stay away from the teaser. Staying away from another child, especially one who is in the same class as the child with ADHD, is not so easy. So, in consideration of the fact that either ignoring the teaser or staying away from the teaser is not very easy, what else can the child with ADHD do? Remember that the reason a child gets teased, arguably, is because he shows the teaser that he becomes upset when he is being teased. The child who is teased appears vulnerable. As the teacher in this situation, what can you do to help this child who is being teased? *Method!*

The teacher can serve as a coach for the child with ADHD. He must explain to the child exactly why the other child is teasing him. The teacher must explain to the child with ADHD that he is showing that the teasing is bothering and upsetting him. That being said, the teacher then must help this child to have a *definite plan* in order to stop the other child's teasing. If the child has a plan, he will more than likely not only stick to it, but be so involved in building strategies to stop the teasing, that he will no longer appear vulnerable to the teaser. Here are some elements of the plan:

Help the child to make a list of the comments that the teaser is making. If the child has a list such as this, he then has "ammunition" with which to diffuse those remarks, and therefore, the teasing. It does not seem right to advise a child with ADHD to make distasteful comments to another child, even one who has been teasing him. However, the child with ADHD must do *something* to defend himself. *Method!*

Here is a list of some possible statements that the teaser might say to the child with ADHD:

- \* Teaser: What's up, smelly breath?
- \* Teaser: Smart kid, what was your answer?
- \* Teaser: Mars face, is your face from outer space?

- \* Teaser: What do you use your nose for, digging in the garden?

Once the child has compiled the list, the teacher/coach can practice with the child as to how to respond if the teaser “strikes again.” The teacher should coach the child and help him to decide on the method that the child will use to stop the teasing. Some examples are:

- \* Try to appear confident when dealing with the teaser.
- \* Greet the teaser by bringing at least one friend with you.
- \* Use the teaser’s name.
- \* Ignore him.
- \* Stay out of the environment where the teaser resides.
- \* Use humor.
- \* Stand up to him.
- \* Tell an adult that you are being teased and by whom.

*Method!* Here are some possible strategies that the teacher/coach can practice with the child:

- \* When the teaser makes a remark, the child with ADHD can ask, “Jack, excuse me, what did you say?” It is possible that the fact that the child is saying that he did not hear what the teaser said could cause more teasing, but it could also diffuse the teaser’s comments. The teaser could be so annoyed that he has to repeat what he said, he may just walk away.
- \* When the teaser makes a comment, the child who is teased can make a joke. For example, if the teaser says: “Hey, Mars face, is your face from outer space?” The child who is being teased might say, “As a matter of fact, I am leaving for Neptune in a few minutes.” Or, “Not only is my face from outer space, but my legs, feet, arms, and hands are as well!” The teaser might be so surprised by the response of the child with ADHD to his teasing that

the teasing might be diffused. When the teaser says, “Okay smart kid, what was your answer?” The child who is getting teased can say, “I am really smart. I got all of the answers right.”

- \* The teacher should coach the child who is being teased to stand up to the teaser. For example, in response to a comment such as “What do you use your nose for, digging in the garden,” the child who is being teased (always accompanied by a friend) should say in a confident, powerful way, “Howie, that is a ridiculous thing to say. It doesn’t even make sense. Stop making those remarks to me.”

It is vital that all of these methods be practiced with the teacher many, many times. The more the child practices these methods, the more confident the child will appear to be. The teacher/coach should brainstorm strategies or responses that the child could use to respond to the teaser.

As a last resort, have the teacher intercede and speak to the teaser. The only safe way to do this, however, in order to avoid further repercussions with the teaser, is for the teacher to actually witness the teasing. This is easier than you would think. Oftentimes children who tease do it publicly. It is vital that the teacher inform the teaser that the child who he has teased, the child with ADHD, did not tell her. What should the teacher say to the teaser? Make it simple. Just say, “Teasing is not permitted in this school. If I see further evidence of you teasing anyone, I will call in your parents and we will have a meeting with the principal, your parents, the psychologist, and myself.”

### **Social Skill 22: Receiving Criticism Well**

Receiving criticism well maybe very difficult for children with ADHD. In my opinion, they are often less confident than their

typical peers. Why is this? How would you like to hear the following, day in and day out?

- \* “Stop talking!”
- \* “Stop hitting!”
- \* “Biting is not permitted.”
- \* “Go back to your room if you are going to stand there and interrupt us.”
- \* “I told you to do your homework assignment three times: Why don’t you listen?”
- \* “You were supposed to bring a raincoat for the trip? Why did you forget?”

You get the idea. In so many situations, the child with ADHD is yelled at and criticized constantly, as well as being the receiver of negative comments from adults and children. It is seemingly difficult to teach a child to receive criticism well when criticism is the only type of verbiage he receives!

The only way to help the child with ADHD to become better at receiving criticism well is to teach him to separate himself from the criticism that is being directed at him. In other words, the teacher has to help the child with ADHD to interpret the criticisms that are being made to him as meaningless. The teacher must instruct the child not to permit those criticisms to affect how the child really feels about himself. When someone tells the child to stop talking, the teacher should help the child to understand that people are not disinterested in what he is saying, but they just want him to listen more of the time than he talks. The teacher can help the child to listen more effectively.

*Method!* A good way to teach a child with ADHD to listen more of the time and more accurately is to have the child listen to a story on a CD, either recorded by the teacher or professionally recorded. The teacher should have the actual book next to her at the same time that she listens to the story on the CD

along with the child with ADHD. In this way, she will know the amount of text that she wants the child with ADHD to remember.

She should then ask the child questions after each part to see how much he remembers. If he remembers most of the story, then, by definition, he listened to it well. If he interrupts the reading of the story on the CD, say to him, "Let's listen now and stop talking, so we can remember the story." Begin by stopping at short sections that are being read on the CD, even after one paragraph or one page, to ensure that he is listening. Little by little, extend the number of pages that you have read one at a time to see if he remembered the story.

At this point, you can begin to explain to the child with ADHD how much of the time he listened to the story without talking. You can then analogize the way he listened to how he should listen to another child when they are involved in a conversation. You can then explain to the child that when he listens more of the time rather than talking more of the time, people are more interested in what he is talking about. But if the child still receives criticism, how can you teach him to begin receiving criticism well?

Receiving criticism well depends on the confidence level of the child with ADHD. It is more difficult to respond to criticism when a child feels devalued because of that criticism. It is very important for teachers to work with children with ADHD, as we are trying to do here, to diminish their socially inappropriate behaviors. If those behaviors are reduced, other people will respond less negatively to them. Do you see the cycle here? When the child behaves in a more appropriate way, people respond more positively to him, and he receives criticism well. When the child behaves in a more socially inappropriate way, people respond more negatively to him, and he receives criticism poorly. Sometimes when he receives criticism poorly, he needs help in controlling temper in conflicts with adults.

### **Social Skill 23: Controlling Temper in Conflicts with Adults**

When you, as the child's teacher, see a child with ADHD becoming frustrated and showing his temper, you probably ask yourself, "How in the world does this child have the 'where-withal' to show his temper with me, his teacher?" Well, believe it or not, I can guarantee you that the child with ADHD does not want to show his temper with someone with whom he may be embarrassed to interact later. Not that this is an excuse, but all of a sudden, everything builds up and becomes overwhelming in these children's lives.

Think of a soda bottle that has been filled up to the top and then shaken up. What happens when you try to open it, especially if you try to open it too quickly? I am only too familiar with this happening to me at the wrong time and in the wrong place. The soda bubbles overflow uncontrollably. In the same way, when children with ADHD become overwhelmed by perhaps too many instructions, too many transition changes, or being rejected by another child, they may "bubble over." What can the teacher do?

Can the teacher see the warning signs coming? We certainly try to find these "trigger" behaviors, those that "seem" to happen before the child has a temper tantrum. It is difficult to know, sometimes, however. Something, perhaps an altercation with another child, may have occurred the day before or a couple of days before and the child with ADHD may be reacting now. Or, perhaps the child has become overstimulated with events or activities or changes in events and activities that typical children seem to manage quite well. Anyway, realistically, what can the teacher or parent do when the child with ADHD shows his temper?

Children with ADHD need structure and consistency in order to keep their life in order. In the same way, when their life is becoming or has become disorganized, they need consistency as

well. That consistency should come in the form of a plan for them so they can learn to self-regulate their behavior. It is especially important for children who are older than elementary school age to learn to self-regulate their “out-of-control” behavior. How would it seem if a twelve-year-old child threw himself on the ground in the center of town and had a temper tantrum?

Before we discuss a specific method in order for a child to self-regulate his temper, it is important to point out that it is critical for the child with ADHD to understand that he must control his temper with adults. I am a firm believer in being honest and truthful to children with ADHD about exactly the difference between appropriate and inappropriate behavior. They must try to figure out what upset them so much as to cause them to have a temper tantrum in front of an adult.

*Method!*

Let us discuss this plan in steps: You can obviously eliminate any steps that are unnecessary or those that are too numerous for a child with ADHD to remember. Here once again is where a task card might be useful.

1. The child begins to become upset more easily than usual.
2. He takes three big, deep breaths, counting as he is breathing in and out. He closes his eyes and thinks of something pleasant, such as going out to dinner with his parents or getting a video game as a present.
3. Despite trying to do one or all of the things in step 2, he feels his temper coming on.
4. He tries to go for a walk somewhere as an attempt to calm down. For example, he could take a walk down the hall or to another teacher’s room who has been responsive to him.
5. He seeks someone out whom he feels he can talk to about what has upset him. This person could be the school psychologist, a friendly teacher, the school nurse, or an older student who acts as a mentor. He talks to that person about what has upset him.
6. He feels calmer now.

**Social Skill 24:  
Responding Appropriately When Pushed or Hit**

You must be saying to yourself, “Is she kidding? A child with ADHD is supposed to respond *appropriately* when they are pushed or hit?” I would answer to that question, “But of course they must!” Children with ADHD’s behavior are all about choices. They can make the choice to hit and to push as a reaction to being hit or pushed. They can, alternatively, make the choice to walk away from the person who is hitting or pushing them. Certainly the best choice for children is not to push or hit back when they are hit or pushed, but instead, to walk away.

The child with ADHD could also say something to the other child like, “You pushed me but I wouldn’t do that to anyone.” Children with ADHD should be taught that behaving in a socially inappropriate way when someone treats them in this way is not productive. What does that reactive behavior cause? It causes more pushing and hitting. Responding appropriately when pushed or hit is a perfect social skill to learn through role playing. How would that work?

*Example!* Here is an example of a student role playing with a teacher:

- \* Teacher: “Don’t look at me like that.”
- \* Student: “I wasn’t even looking at you.”
- \* Teacher: Pushes the child into the wall. (obviously gently!)
- \* Student: walks away or says “I know I didn’t look at you in an angry way, so it isn’t worth pushing you back.”

It is very important that children with ADHD learn to manage their own behavior no matter what their peers say to them.

**Social Skill 25:  
Controlling Temper When in Conflict with Peers**

Do you remember when we discussed the child with ADHD being able to control his temper with adults? The whole idea of showing temper with adults is the same as showing temper with a child's peers. If a child reacts (and you see that I am purposely using the word *reacts* here instead of responds) to a peer by having a temper tantrum, can the child with ADHD expect that child to be interested in playing with him? I would answer a resounding *no* to that question. It is the teacher or the parents' job to give the child with ADHD an internalized plan for handling reactions to a conflict with a peer.

Try this method:

*Method!*

- \* Do *not* react.
- \* Think about exactly why the peer is disagreeing with you.
  - \* Is the disagreement based on something you said?
  - \* Is the disagreement based on something you did?
  - \* Is the disagreement based on something your peer thought that you were going to do?
- \* Is it so important who is right and who is wrong?
- \* Before you react, think about the questions above. Is there any other way you can respond without using your temper?
- \* Have the child say: "Do we have to argue about this?"
- \* Also have the child say: "How can we both end up being happy about this? This is not worth an argument."

The best thing about this process is that by the time the child with ADHD has answered those questions, his temper has been diffused. You know your child with ADHD's personality and his ability to learn steps in a task analysis such as above.

You can use flash cards with the questions on them. A great method that I have used, which is actually one of my favorite methods, is the following:

*Method!*

- \* The teacher observes that a possible altercation may occur between a child with ADHD and his peer.
- \* The teacher has previously recorded the questions above on a voice recorder. This could work several ways:
- \* The child could listen to each question and write down the answer, draw a picture of the answer, or say the answer aloud to the teacher, assistant, or parent.
- \* The teacher, parent, or assistant could discuss the child with ADHD's answers to the questions that were posed.

I am sure that you are thinking, as many teachers today would, "I cannot possibly spend the time with one child like this. I have to teach content." Would you rather spend your time breaking up a fight between two children? This kind of question and answering method will become a technique that children with ADHD can facilitate for themselves after a short period of time. This is an example of self-regulation, which is the ultimate goal of social skills training.

**Social Skill 26: Diffusing Negative Behavior  
When Someone Is Annoying**

The previous social skill that we discussed, controlling behavior when in conflict with peers, is a good segue to diffusing negative behavior when someone is annoying." If the child with ADHD can diffuse someone else's negative behavior, perhaps an argument between the two children will not even occur. Do not think that children with ADHD are the only children who

can be annoying. Typical children can be annoying as well. Some of the techniques that I suggested before can help the child with ADHD to diffuse someone else's annoying behavior. Here are some other suggestions:

- \* When one child is annoying another, have the child with ADHD begin to have a conversation about another subject. Children with ADHD often have difficulty staying on one topic, so this may be easier than you would think that it would be.
- \* It is important for the teacher or the parent to teach the child with ADHD to look for clues from the other child. Those clues will communicate to the child with ADHD that the other child will be engaging in annoying behavior.

Since children with ADHD have difficulty in understanding behavior from an outside perspective, it is imperative that you try to teach the child with ADHD to look for cues, clues, or signs. These signals will communicate to the child with ADHD that another child may be exhibiting annoying behavior. How do children with ADHD learn to guess if annoying behavior is about to occur?

Look at the other child's body language:

*Method!*

- \* Is he moving toward me?
- \* Does he tap or touch me?
- \* Do his eyes and facial expressions indicate that he is annoyed?
- \* Does he seem to disagree with most things that I say?
- \* Is he simply not nice?

Once again, by the time the child answers these questions, he will probably be able to diffuse the other child's annoying behavior. You can have the child with ADHD answer those questions in any way that you can get him to answer them.

The thought process that goes into answering those questions will help the child with ADHD to learn to self-regulate and to prevent an altercation with another child before it begins.

Children with ADHD-hyperactive type may find it difficult to actually sit down and answer those questions. You can work within their activity level. They do not have to sit down to answer those questions. They can stand, sit, jump, or twirl. They should act in whatever way they do naturally. I understand that as a teacher in a classroom with typical children as well as those with disabilities, you are asking yourself “How do I keep order in the classroom if I permit the child with ADHD to learn within his activity level?” The main point is to get answers to those questions. More important, the teacher’s goal is to teach children with ADHD to ask themselves questions like these every time another child annoys them.

One response you do not want is for the child with ADHD to say “Why are you so annoying?” You can imagine that that question would send off a spark that would impact their entire interaction. It is vital for the child with ADHD to learn self-control. In this case, the child with ADHD must learn *not* to say whatever comes into his mind. We will discuss self-control later, because children with ADHD must maintain some degree of self-control so that they do not become involved in taking something without permission.

**Social Skill 27:  
Taking Something with Permission**

Most of you think that it is assumed that children only take things with permission. Not so. Children with ADHD often do not live according to the rules of behavior that others assume to be correct. They find many things tempting that others do not. Most of the children whom I observed in my field research

touched most things that they saw, whether they had permission to touch them or not. One boy's mother had taught him not to touch another's possessions as well as not to take another's possessions.

However, he simply could not resist temptation. Small items, such as his mother's lip balm, would tantalize him so much that he would have to take it. As I was observing one of the homeschool mothers teaching her son, he took her pair of scissors without permission. His mother then said, "Put my scissors away and get your own." "Johnny, did you take my lip balm? Do you think you should have had my permission before you took it?"

How do you teach these children to resist temptation? That is a tough one. This is where self-talk is a good technique for children with ADHD to learn. The following is an example of self-talk as it is related to trying to prevent oneself from exhibiting impulsive behavior such as taking something without permission.

The setting: The classroom. The circumstance: The child with ADHD notices the teacher's brand new, shiny stapler and begins to walk over to touch it. The child is thinking about and looking at that brand new, shiny, red stapler on the teacher's desk. He begins to walk over to pick it up and to touch it.

1. The child thinks about touching the stapler. *Method!*
  2. He asks himself: "Is that stapler mine? Does it belong to me? Am I supposed to touch and to pick up things that do not belong to me?"
  3. He goes back to his seat.
- 
1. The child thinks about how cool the new stapler is and the fact that he wants to touch it. *Method!*
  2. He self-talks: "I am not supposed to touch a stapler that is not mine."
  3. He begins to walk over to the teacher's desk to pick up the stapler.

4. He stops. Have a stop sign at his desk in paper or cardboard form to remind him not to touch the stapler. He picks it up and thinks about trying to STOP himself from touching the stapler.
5. He asks himself, “Will my teacher be happy with my behavior if I pick up the stapler?”
6. He answers “no” to the previous question nonverbally, and walks back to his seat.

You can also teach children with ADHD not to touch items that do not belong to them naturally through the curriculum.

**Social Skill 28:  
Social Skills Taught through Curriculum**

A great way to teach social skills to children with ADHD is to embed these skills within the natural setting of the classroom through the curriculum you are teaching. Learning positive social skills is all about learning how to socially interact with the diverse people with whom we live. Children with ADHD know all about how they feel about being different from their peers.

These peers include those with racial, religious, and medical differences. Children are all different, and children with ADHD of all types are certainly different. It is typical, unfortunately, for people to treat children with ADHD in a stereotypical way. Because of the negative and discriminating way that people treat children with ADHD, they must learn to be sensitive and responsive to different types of people. This is why it is crucial for children with ADHD to treat people who are different from them in a fair and equitable way. But how do they learn to do so?

There are many books that have been recently written (for young children) that emphasize how to behave toward people who are different from them. The only issue, however, is that sometimes, arguably, the way that many teachers and parents read these books to children with ADHD is oftentimes in a quick way, with no time to discuss the important messages that the book is trying to convey. Children with ADHD are easily distractible, so it is possible that the first read will be barely heard.

It is a good idea for the teacher to stop reading not only after one page has been read, but even more so, after a few sentences have been read. The teacher should make sure that the child with ADHD has focused as he goes along, so that he will understand the story line. *Method!*

Another way to make sure that the ideas from the book have been understood and, better yet, internalized is to ask children if they have ever had an experience that was similar to the one that the children in the story have experienced. If they have had a similar experience, the teacher should try to convince the children to talk about what has happened to them. If they will not discuss their experiences, ask them to draw a picture of what has happened to them. These drawings do not have to be artists' renditions of their experiences. They can use stick figures. The important thing is that the child with ADHD expresses his experience on paper or discusses that experience with an adult. In that way, children with ADHD can learn how to behave the next time they interact with children who are different from them. *Method!*

It is also effective for these children to role play their experiences. However, here is a twist: Do not role play exactly what happened to them. Instead, role play how they would respond to a similar experience the next time it occurs. You can also try to role play various scenarios as to how the child would respond according to another child's reactions to his own socially inappropriate behavior. Of course, in order to do *Method!*

that, the other child would have to have some understanding of the child with ADHD's socially inappropriate behavior. A good way to facilitate that understanding is to teach the child social skills by conversing with him.

### **Social Skill 29: Social Skills Taught through Conversations with the Child**

It would be easy to think that social skills taught through conversations with the child is a natural occurrence. Unfortunately, this is not so with children with ADHD. First, in terms of children with ADHD of diverse populations, parents of lower socioeconomic status speak in fewer and less complex words to their children in response to a question posed by their children than those of a higher socioeconomic status. "Children from different social strata use different-sized vocabularies" (Hoff, 2003, p. 1375). In my field research, I observed this to be true in the families whom I observed. Therefore, it may be arguably difficult for some parents to teach their children social skills through conversations than others.

Second, children with ADHD typically are not adept at listening acutely, which is essential in any conversation between two people. In addition to listening well to another person, what other skill would be optimal in order to learn social skills through conversations? Children have to learn to attend to what other people are saying if they are going to be able to listen to them. What method can teachers use to ensure that children with ADHD are attending and listening?

*Method!*

It is vital, as I said earlier, to make sure that the child with ADHD knows how to maintain eye contact. Just because a child is looking at someone does not mean that he is attending to or listening to that person, however. After the child

maintains eye contact, he must pay attention to every word that another person says as well as listening to every word. How can teachers or parents help children with ADHD to attend and to listen better? A good method to try is to play a memory game.

- \* Say a sentence to the child.
- \* Take some words out of the sentence (verbally) and ask the child to tell you what is missing. For example: Tigers have stripes on their bodies.
- \* Say out loud: "Tigers stripes bodies."
- \* Ask him, "What words are missing?"

If the child is able to write out the answers, have him do so. By achieving closure in terms of the sentence, children will be more likely to remember the sentence.

You can also write the words on pieces of paper and paste them to small pieces of cardboard. The teacher places the words from the phrases above in an incorrect order. She then has the child with ADHD move the words around until they are in the correct order to make a meaningful sentence.

Children with ADHD are often good listeners when they pay attention to things that interest them. For example, when a child with ADHD watches a television show or a movie that he likes, he can tell you what has happened as well as the names of the characters. It is possible, therefore, that children with ADHD exhibit selective attention and selective listening. They may pay attention just to topics that interest them. Subsequently, they may only listen to conversations that they think may interest them. Teachers have to work with children with ADHD to attend to and to listen to what they are not as interested in, as well as what they are interested in. *Method!*

A "deal" or two may have to be made to encourage these children to listen to something with which they are not interested as practice for another time that that topic may come up

in an actual conversation. Sometimes, these children may be so distractible that they may not realize that most conversations can be interesting. Here is an example:

*Example!* Charlie is interested in baseball so he listens intently to any conversation about baseball. His friends are discussing topics not related to baseball, as follows:

“I really like fast cars.”

“How do you know? Have you ever ridden in a fast car?”

“No, but I watch a television show about fast cars. Sometimes, I close my eyes and pretend that I am driving a fast car, like a race car.”

“Then, you must really feel like you know what it is like!”

“I do!”

The teacher can explain to the child that talking about fast cars may be similar to talking about baseball players who are very fast running the bases, such as those players who steal many bases. The next time someone has a conversation about a topic with which he is not interested, he may more readily remain in the conversation. Speaking of topics, are you wondering what happened to the conversation about social skills?

Conversations about what are positive social skills are important so that the child with ADHD can learn to attend and therefore learn to listen better. Let us assume that the teacher or the parent has taught the child with ADHD to attend and to listen more effectively. After the teacher feels that the child has learned to attend and can listen more effectively, she can then begin to teach social skills with intent.

She can teach these social skills intentionally by embedding the social skills training into everyday circumstances. If these children attend and listen better, they can be taught other social skills intentionally and incidentally through conversations. Most of the social skills discussed here can be taught in conversations throughout the day.

### Social Skill 30: Sitting Quietly When Being Taught by Teacher or Parent

Children with ADHD can be taught and encouraged to sit quietly when they are being taught. However, we as teachers have to understand that when possible, children with ADHD should learn according to their activity level. This is easier for a home-school parent or for parents who teach their children after school. However, it is most certainly more difficult for teachers in classrooms to balance teaching children with ADHD within their activity level and requiring all of the other students to sit at their desks.

I always tell my students that each child needs something specific and different from another. Even children who are seemingly “typical” have needs that are different from other children. All the teacher has to explain to the class is that she will be tailoring the curriculum according to the different ways that each of them learns. Okay, so what are some ways that teachers can teach children with ADHD to sit quietly?

One way to teach children with ADHD to sit quietly is to break up or to interfere with their distractibility. A way to do this is simple. Give him a flexible item such as Play-Doh to manipulate as he is doing his work. Now, of course you have to be careful that the child with ADHD does not become so interested in manipulating the Play-Doh that he does not do his academic work! I always compromise with the child in question; “You can hold the Play-Doh until it becomes distracting, and then I will take it away.” I teach social skills to a young child with ADHD and permit him to hold the Play-Doh, but at times doing so does distract him.

*Method!*

I even made a mistake the other day and this child ended up playing with two colors of Play-Doh. He became so hyperfocused, “zoned out” on the colors of the Play-Doh that I had a hard time

bringing him back to focus on the work at hand. So, you have to be aware of the fine line between permitting the child to hold a manipulative as a way to interfere with his distractibility and permitting him to literally play with the Play-Doh.

Method!

Another way to teach a young child to remain quietly in his seat is to place a colored clock on his desk that counts down the time by color that he is sitting quietly. (You can buy this timer, called a Time Timer, from [timetimer.com](http://timetimer.com).) They come in a three-inch, an eight-inch, or a twelve-inch size. If the child is older or can tell time, you can use a timer or a regular clock. You do not want to use an alarm clock, although you would be tempted to do so. However, an alarm clock would be obvious and distracting to the other children, as well as to the child himself.

The teacher can set up a variable interval schedule of reinforcement so that the child receives some sort of reinforcement for sitting quietly in his seat. "An interval schedule involves reinforcing the first correct response after a specific time period . . . In a variable-interval (VI) schedule, the time interval varies from occasion to occasion around some average value. A VI5 schedule means that, on average, the first correct response after 5 minutes is reinforced, but the time interval varies (e.g., 2, 3, 7, or 8 minutes)" (Schunk 2008, p. 52). You can start out with the child staying in his seat for five seconds if that is the longest time that he can sit. Find a reinforcement or reward that really interests him. The teacher needs to give the child the reinforcement intermittently so that the child does not know when he is receiving it. The idea is that if he is not sure when he is receiving the reward, he will sit and sit and sit.

Rewards do not typically work if the child is not interested in what he is receiving, however. Therefore, before instituting this reinforcement schedule ask both the parent and the child to tell you about his interests. You can increase the time required to receive the reward. Eventually, the teacher will fade out the reward so that the child is sitting for longer periods of time.

I have also used music to help children with ADHD to sit quietly so that the teacher can teach them. However, using music does not necessarily mean using quiet, classical music. Oftentimes, a child with ADHD can concentrate better when listening to very rhythmic music. (You can even try rap music!) How could a teacher possibly permit this child to listen to rap music in the classroom? Ah, this is the age of iPods that can be used with headphones, so no one else can hear the music except the child with ADHD. Make sure that the music cannot be heard by others, however. *Method!*

If you are wondering how listening to music works in terms of teaching children to sit quietly when they are being taught, just try it. Somehow, music either interferes with the child's distractibility or simply blocks it out. What do you have to lose by having the child with ADHD listen to music? This brings me to an important point; teaching social skills to children with ADHD is a trial and error process.

You may have to keep trying different methods frequently so that the child is constantly prevented from becoming inattentive and talking excessively, which is typical of many children with ADHD. Teaching the child with ADHD to sit quietly is time consuming. Believe me, though, it is worth it for the child as well as for the teacher. If you need other suggestions, please contact me and I will give you more!

**Social Skill 31: Pulling Hair Back  
When Preparing Food**

**Social Skill 32: Not Touching  
Hair When Preparing Food**

Well, where did I find this social skill? I had an interesting experience during my field research that should be mentioned.

I was sitting observing a mother teach her child at home. Actually, at the time, I questioned myself as to whether or not she was just baking instead of teaching. In fact, I remember asking myself in my notes if there was any teaching going on in this house! This mother was making Christmas cookies for church members who had little money to buy presents or did not have families with whom to celebrate Christmas. They were rolling out the dough (because unlike many of us, they were making cookies from scratch!) before they cut out their sugar cookies.

Penny had very long, straight hair, and slowly but surely, piece by piece, strands of her hair fell into the cookie dough. Needless to say, as I sat there and began to become nauseated at the sight of her hair in the cookie batter, her mother told her to stop mixing immediately. Mary told her suddenly to stop stirring the batter and go to “tie up” her hair and then to wash her hands. They threw out the first batter and started the entire procedure again.

Children with ADHD do not always think of the consequences of their actions when they are preparing food, as indicated here. It is up to the teachers and to the parents to point out the consequences of their students’ or children’s actions. But shouldn’t these consequences be obvious to those children? Not most of the time. Teachers and parents can use the following methods to teach these children with ADHD to be aware of those consequences:

*Method!* A good way to teach children about the consequences of their actions when they are baking or cooking is to play the “if” game. Pose a question to a few children at a time, including the child with ADHD, concerning how they would behave in a certain situation. For example:

- \* If you came in from playing outside and your mom asked you to help make the salad for dinner, what are a few things that you could do first before helping to make the dinner?

- \* If you went to your Girl Scout or Boy Scout meeting straight from your soccer practice and your troop was preparing marshmallow rice cereal treats for children in shelters who could not go out to trick or treat for Halloween, what are a few things that you could do first before helping to cook?
- \* If your class just came in from recess and your teacher asked you to help to give out the snack, what are a few things that you could do first before handing it out?
- \* Certainly everyone needs to learn to be polite.

**Social Skill 33: Being Polite or Asking Teacher or Parent Politely to Hand Him Needed Items**

What exactly does it mean to a child with ADHD to behave in a polite way? Honestly, in all likelihood these children do not know what that means and that is one of the most important reasons why I am writing this book! When you are teaching this social skill to children with ADHD, what is the message you want to communicate? You want to teach children with ADHD that they should treat people as they would like to be treated. For example, the teacher should teach children with ADHD to greet others in a respectful way, by either shaking their hand or by looking at them right in their eyes and saying hello. It is vital to make sure that the child with ADHD understands that behaving in a polite manner includes having good manners and behaving in a respectful way toward others as well.

How would you explain to a child with ADHD what good manners are? Think of your (the teacher's) interactions with others and these manners should be apparent. Using please and thank you is a good beginning. Also, learning not to interrupt others is paramount to having good manners. The teacher

should instruct the students that if they do not hear or understand what another person is saying, they should ask them either to repeat what they said or to clarify what they said.

When the child with ADHD asks someone to hand them anything they should *not* say “Give me that,” but rather, “Would you please hand that to me?” After the other person has handed them the requested item, the child should then say “Thank you.” These interactions occur frequently and children with ADHD must behave by using the same manners as typical children do.

By the way, children for whom English is their second language also could benefit from these lessons. Each culture has different social mores and it is important for all children who live in the United States to learn our unique social mores concerning how to behave in a polite manner. *Be Polite and Kind* by Cheri J. Meiners (2004) is a book that you may want to read to your students as related to being polite. The illustrations are large, colorful, and clear, as is the message.

*Method!* Each student chooses one example of how to act politely and how to practice being polite each day. A child can be taught to behave in a polite way by having the teacher write out a short script that delineates the steps to being polite in interactions with peers and adults. The teacher can model the skill either through puppetry or through role playing. The child also then tries to act out the desired skill through puppetry or through role playing.

*Method!* Another alternative way to teach politeness is for the teacher and the student to write a social story together about a time when the student was polite toward others. This social story serves two purposes. First, by having the student and the teacher collaborate on a project, it encourages further communication between them. Second, the student feels ownership of the ideas of the story and may learn the social skill on a faster, more long-lasting basis.

*Method!* This method is one that my students have discussed with me as one method they have found to be successful in their classrooms. I will pass it on to you. The teacher writes examples

of ways to behave in a polite manner on long, slim pieces of paper. She writes each specific social skill in a different color with one social skill on each piece of paper. The teacher gives each person enough pieces of paper so that they can be stapled together end to end. The teacher and the students make paper headbands that can be worn by the students.

When the teacher feels that the child with ADHD has learned the specific social skill, he can decorate that particular piece of paper that corresponds to a specific social skill. The child may paint each paper with a particular social skill on it, color it with crayons, use glitter, and so forth. When the child with ADHD learns all of the social skills that are represented on the headband, he can then place it on his head and wear it.

It is very important, however, that the teacher is sure that the child with ADHD has practiced and has learned the social skill effectively before she permits him to decorate the strip of paper.

Each child's ability to learn these social skills is variable at the moment that the teacher is teaching it. A child with ADHD who is less distractible may learn the social skill to the full extent of the skill, while a child who is more distractible may only be able to learn part of the social skill at that time. *Caveat!*

It is important, therefore, for the teacher to differentiate how to teach a specific skill according to the child's cognitive or behavioral level, learning style, and motivation to learn. Within the same theme of teaching the child with ADHD to be polite is teaching him to listen to all instructions without interrupting.

**Social Skill 34: Listening to All Instructions  
Given by Teacher or Parent without Interrupting**

This is one of the most important social skills for a child with ADHD to learn. Why? Because whether in a classroom, on an

athletic field, in a music class, or during an extracurricular activity, teachers and coaches give instructions as to exactly what to do. These instructions are typically given to the whole group and are not usually repeated. What happens if the child interrupts? First, the teacher becomes annoyed very quickly. Second, the student misses a step before he begins his assignment; he hasn't listened, so, therefore, he does not know what to do.

Why do children with ADHD have difficulty listening to instructions? Why do they interrupt? Children with ADHD have all of their thoughts spinning around in their minds. They just cannot wait to say what is in their thoughts. They must say those thoughts immediately. What can a teacher or a parent do to help children with ADHD to wait before they interrupt another person? This social skill is one that requires children with ADHD to learn how to self-regulate. Here are some possible steps:

*Method!*

This intervention is particularly good for a child with ADHD who is of an older elementary age, perhaps ten to twelve years old, for example. Within a role playing situation, the teacher practices the following steps with the child with ADHD:

1. When the child with ADHD wants to talk when his teacher is giving him instructions, the teacher shows the child how to take three DEEP breaths and count each one: one deep breath; two deep breaths; and three deep breaths.
2. Instruct the child to write down two things he wants to say. (If he does not write, have him draw a picture or choose from a choice of pictures that the teacher provides.)
3. Write down two instructions that the teacher is saying. (The child can choose pictures here as well, in order to indicate what the instructions incorporate.)
4. As the teacher is speaking, wait for a break in conversation.

5. The child reads the conversation points that he has written down. (Or, he can describe the pictures that he has chosen to represent the instructions.)
6. The child asks himself: Are my conversation points related to the teacher's instructions?
7. If the conversation points are not related, the child does not speak.
8. If the conversation is related, the child raises his hand and WAITS for the teacher to call on him.
9. When the teacher calls on him, he states his two points.

After the child has practiced the previous steps with the teacher a number of times, the child can then try the following steps: *Method!*

1. Deep breaths
2. Write
3. Wait
4. Read
5. Raise hand
6. Wait
7. Speak

You can shorten this list as you wish, especially if you are working with a child with ADHD who is younger than ten years old. For example, some children with ADHD may respond better when they have to follow fewer steps:

1. Breathe
2. Write
3. Read
4. Wait
5. Speak

You can design an acronym for these five steps. One example might be BWRWS, or *Bears and Walruses like Real Water*

Sometimes, or *Babies Will Reach With Spoons*. This acronym does not have to make any sense. In fact, if the child and the teacher create these acronyms together, they will have experienced a good collaborative effort and have become more familiar with each other. The funnier the acronym, the more likely the child is to remember the steps toward self-regulating his interrupting behavior.

*Caveat!* This social skill deficit (not being able to inhibit their verbiage) that characterizes children with ADHD may take a substantial amount of time to diminish. Even after the teacher thinks that the child with ADHD understands why it is important not to interrupt and he has practiced inhibiting his verbiage, he will *still* require a great deal of prompting in order to remember the steps listed here. Just remember: The more relevant and meaningful you make the acronym to the child's life, the higher likelihood that he will remember it and *not* interrupt another person who is speaking.

### Social Skill 35: Not Burping Out Loud

Clearly, people should not reproduce the sounds of bodily functions in public. How do we teach children with ADHD not to burp out loud? Children with ADHD need to understand why a specific behavior is inappropriate. Additionally, they need structure, and most important, rules and standards. They must be taught to understand that burping out loud or any similar sound as related to reproducing a bodily function is unacceptable. This social skill is one that I believe teachers can facilitate by simply telling these children that *they may not do it*. Does that sound simple? Believe me, it *is* that simple. Everyone thinks (and sometimes rightfully so) that children with ADHD have difficulty adhering to rules. On

the contrary, if they are required to adhere to certain rules, there is a higher likelihood that they will behave in a socially appropriate way.

What should you do if a child with ADHD will not stop burping out loud? Burping out loud is a behavior that responds to cues from the teacher. The other children may laugh when they first hear the child with ADHD burp, which will encourage that child to burp even more. However, after a while, everyone becomes annoyed with that behavior.

The teacher should think of some sort of sign or signal that she gives the child with ADHD the moment that she feels that the child is going to exhibit a burp. The child, typically, cannot stop the burp. The object, initially, however, is to quiet down the sound of the burp. One sign might be for the teacher to clear her throat when she begins to hear the child burping. *Method!*

Each time the child hears the teacher clear her throat, the child should try to quiet down the audible quality of his burp. In consideration of the fact that the child is distractible, as we will see in the next social skill, getting him to look at a visual cue might be difficult. So, therefore, I like the verbal cue.

Another signal might be, if the teacher is sitting, for her to move her chair so that it makes some noise. The noise from the teacher's chair is a signal to the child to stop burping. *Method!*

The teacher can create a choice of rewards that is within the child's interest level. She can set up a schedule where initially the teacher gives out rewards every time that the child does *not* burp out loud. Over time, however, as determined by the teacher, the child receives rewards every few times he does not burp out loud. At a certain point, the teacher will fade out the rewards, so that the child, hopefully, will *not* burp out loud at all. *Method!*

If the child has to burp, then he has to burp. The goal here is not to teach the child to stop burping when he needs to burp, but, instead, to quash the loud sound of the burp, as well as other bodily sounds. *Caveat!*

*Example!* Here are some more examples of signals that a teacher can give to children with ADHD to remind them that they should not burp out loud:

- \* Place a hand on the child's shoulder to advise him that the loud burp is unacceptable.
- \* Use a prearranged private signal.
- \* Prompt the child to self-talk, as a self-regulation strategy. (For example, "I am not going to burp out loud. I can stop myself from burping out loud.")
- \* Remind the child about his receiving a reward when he does *not* burp out loud (adapted from Reif, 2005, pp. 130–131).

**Social Skill 36:  
Not Exhibiting Distractible Behaviors**

**Social Skill 37: Learning Socially  
Appropriate Behaviors from Others**

The social skill to not exhibit distractible behaviors really is at the center of the difficulties for a child with ADHD. Think about it; if a child exhibits distractible behaviors, how can he pay attention to the social skills that his parents or teachers are modeling? Well, the answer is that most of the time, he cannot. Distractibility is at the core of these children having difficulty listening to a teacher's or a parent's instructions.

Here are two typical and real-life examples of when the child with ADHD is too distractible to pay attention to the teacher's instructions. The first example is when the child with ADHD was supposed to return a permission slip for a school trip. He was too distractible to listen to the teacher's reminder and did not return the permission slip on time to go on the trip.

The second example is when the child with ADHD was too distractible to listen to the teacher's instructions regarding the night's homework instructions. When he had to do the homework, he did not even know the page number where the assignment began.

This distractibility, by the way, is characteristic not only of children who are of ADHD-hyperactive type, but characteristic of children who have any of the four types of ADHD (APA, 2000, p. 85). What are the distractible behaviors that we want to teach the child with ADHD not to exhibit? I am not necessarily just talking about the symptoms of children with ADHD. More than that, I am talking about the distractible behaviors that children with ADHD exhibit that may be annoying, disruptive, and perplexing to teachers as well as their peers.

These distractible behaviors that all children with ADHD exhibit interfere with their ability to learn social skills successfully. "Elliott and Gresham (1993) attributed poor social skills to the appearance of interfering negative behaviors that blocked the children from acquiring prosocial behaviors" (Rapoport, 2007, p. 10). "A reasonable sample of these behaviors can be . . . temper tantrums, arguing with others, fighting, . . . anxiety, depression, low self-esteem, . . . distractibility, impulsivity, [and] fidgeting" (Elliott and Gresham, 1993, p. 295). Interestingly, inattention could also interfere with children's initial social interactions, as Hubbard and Newcomb (1991) investigated.

What are some of these distractible behaviors? Not every behavior is exhibited by every child with ADHD, and some of these behaviors may only be exhibited to a small degree:

- \* Tunes out—may appear "spacey"
- \* Daydreams (thoughts are elsewhere)
- \* Appears confused
- \* Easily distracted by extraneous stimuli (sights, sounds, movement in the environment)
- \* Does not seem to listen when spoken to directly
- \* Difficulty remembering and following directions

## CHAPTER 6

- \* Difficulty sustaining attention in tasks and play activities
- \* Difficulty sustaining level of alertness to tasks that are tedious, perceived as boring, or not of one's choosing (the little boy I worked with in Brooklyn would constantly say, in a very annoying way and out loud, "This is so boring; this is boring.")
- \* Forgetful in daily activities
- \* Sluggish or lethargic (may fall asleep in class)
- \* "On the go" or acts as if "driven by a motor"
- \* Leaves seat in classroom or in other situations in which remaining seated is expected
- \* Cannot sit still (jumping up and out of chair, falling out of chair, sitting on knees or standing by desk)
- \* Highly energetic—almost nonstop motion
- \* Runs around or climbs excessively in situations in which it is inappropriate
- \* A high degree of unnecessary movement (pacing, tapping feet, drumming fingers)
- \* Restlessness
- \* Seems to need something in hands. Finds/reaches for nearby objects to play with and/or put in mouth
- \* Fidgets with hands or feet or squirms in seat
- \* Roams around the classroom—is not where he or she is supposed to be
- \* Difficulty playing or engaging in leisure activities quietly
- \* Intrudes in other people's space; difficulty staying within own boundaries
- \* Difficulty "settling down" or calming self (Rief, 2005, pp. 4-8)

### DO YOU WANT TO READ MORE?

- \* Much difficulty in situations requiring having to wait patiently
- \* Talks excessively

- \* Difficulty raising hand and waiting to be called on
- \* Interrupts or intrudes on others (butts into conversations or games)
- \* Blurts out answers before questions have been completed
- \* Has difficulty waiting for his or her turn in games or activities
- \* Cannot keep hands/feet to self
- \* Cannot wait or delay gratification—wants things now
- \* Knows the rules and consequences, but repeatedly makes the same errors/infractions of rules
- \* Gets in trouble because he or she cannot “stop and think” before acting (responds first/thinks later)
- \* Difficulty standing in lines
- \* Makes inappropriate or odd noises
- \* Does not think or worry about consequences, so tends to be fearless or gravitate to “high risk” behavior
- \* Engages in physically dangerous activities without considering the consequences (jumping from heights, riding bike into street without looking); hence, a high frequency of injuries
- \* Accident prone—breaks things
- \* Difficulty inhibiting what he or she says, making tactless comments—says whatever pops into head and talks back to authority figures
- \* Begins tasks without waiting for directions (before listening to the full direction or taking the time to read written directions)
- \* Hurries through tasks (particularly boring ones) to get finished—making numerous careless errors
- \* Gets easily bored and impatient
- \* Disrupts, bothers others
- \* Hits when upset or grabs things away from others (not inhibiting responses or thinking of consequences) (Reif, 2005, pp. 4–8).

*Method!* How would a teacher develop methods to teach these children not to exhibit the previous socially inappropriate behaviors? One rule of thumb must apply for teachers and parents, as well. Everything you teach, in terms of social skills, *must* be intentional. What do I mean by that? All of my newspaper words come into play here. Teachers must know to whom they are teaching social skills. They must know why they are teaching the specific social skill they are teaching. They must know where the most optimal place is to teach the social skill. They must know when the best time is to teach the social skill to the child.

I will also add one more point that fits in nicely: Teachers must know how they are going to teach that social skill to the child with ADHD. If you satisfy those requirements, your teaching will be intentional and will have a specific purpose. The other point is that the teacher should try to teach the child the social skill within the natural setting of the classroom, at recess, at gym, and so forth to make the learning of that social skill meaningful to the child.

The next step is for the teacher to begin to delineate a plan of action, be it a task analysis or an outline based on the newspaper words previously discussed. If you are organized in your teaching, the child will feel that it is easier to learn the topic. Before you teach a social skill to a particular child, make sure that you help the child understand exactly what the behavior is and why it is socially inappropriate.

Children with ADHD typically are not aware of the socially inappropriate behaviors they exhibit. If they are not aware that they are exhibiting these behaviors, how can they diminish them? It is up to you, the teacher, to help the child with ADHD to become aware of the socially inappropriate behaviors he is exhibiting, without hurting his feelings or causing him to feel bad about himself. As I have suggested in a previous chapter, if the child has no idea whatsoever as to how obstructive or abrasive his behavior is, ask the child's parents for permission to videotape the child exhibiting the specific behavior.

You do not have to be concerned about whether or not the child will repeat the behavior when you videotape, because, believe me, he will repeat the socially inappropriate behavior again. In my experience, children who view themselves exhibiting annoying behaviors become interested very quickly in diminishing those behaviors. You can preface the videotape by telling the child with ADHD that everyone behaves differently. However, a child can behave differently from another child as long as his behavior is socially appropriate.

After you explain exactly why you are going to teach the child with ADHD a specific social skill, make sure the child understands what the skill is. You can talk about the appropriate way to exhibit the social skill by using visual displays, to which children with ADHD respond well. Somehow the colors and the visuals catch their eyes immediately. Do not forget: children with ADHD, especially those who behave in a hyperactive manner (even though it seems as if it does not make sense), look for something to stimulate them. Visuals will stimulate them so they will be able to remember how to exhibit a specific social skill the inappropriate way as well as the appropriate way.

Despite the fact that you have made sure that the child understands what the specific social skill is that you are teaching to him, how would you assess whether or not the child has learned that social skill? The teacher should involve the child in a self-assessment of whether or not he has learned the newly learned social skill. If the child is involved with his assessment, he will have an added reason to learn the new skill. In fact, by being involved with the assessment along with the teacher, the child will become more aware of exactly how he is learning the new skill and will develop ownership of it.

I always think that in the ideal world a teacher could use modeling to teach children social skills. Researchers such as Elliott and Gresham have found success in using modeling to teach social skills to children with ADHD. I am always skeptical about using modeling, however. I will tell you why: If children with ADHD cannot and therefore do not pay attention to their

parents' modeling of certain social skills and do not therefore learn those social skills, then, is modeling a viable technique to teach these children social skills? If those children have not modeled their parents' teaching of social skills, then how will they model the teacher who is instructing them in learning social skills? Stay tuned and I will tell you how!

*Method!* Perhaps these children need more scaffolding or support in addition to observing adults exhibiting a specific social skill. One way to scaffold the child in terms of learning a social skill through modeling might be if the teacher modeled a specific social skill and cued the child as she modeled it. In fact, a successful method to model a specific social skill is for the teacher to simply tell the child that she is planning to model a certain social skill *before* she actually models it. In that way, a student will be more likely to be focused on learning the social skill at hand.

*Method!* Another method that cues a distractible child is to give the child a set of pictures that show a sequence of the steps to learning the social skill. As the teacher models the skill, the child, assisted by the teacher or an aide, follows along through the sequence of pictures. Then, the teacher takes the pictures out of the proper sequence and has the child place them back in sequential order.

Next, the teacher asks the child with ADHD to repeat or reproduce the steps to exhibiting the socially appropriate behavior. The teacher should permit the child to use the pictures for the first few times they are reviewing how to exhibit the social skill, and then try to slowly fade out the pictures.

*Method!* What helps children with ADHD to learn how not to exhibit distractible behavior? These children need practice, practice, and more practice until they learn to diminish their distractible behavior. How does a teacher get a child with ADHD to practice a specific social skill, such as sitting in his seat for a certain length of time so many times, without the child saying that he is bored? The only answer is that the teacher instructs the child in learning the social skill by making the lesson meaningful to the child. (If I am repeating this concept, it must be critical, right???)

The teacher should find out about the child, his interests, his needs, as well as “what makes him tick.” As the teacher is instructing the child with ADHD to learn how to be more attentive, for example, it is vital that the teacher treat the child with respect and interact with him as one person to another. If the teacher behaves in this way, the child with ADHD will be more likely to stop exhibiting distractible behaviors.

Remember, teaching children is primarily about teaching the human side of the child and secondarily about teaching the specific curriculum, whether that curriculum is academics or social skills. If you teach the *child*, and understand and respect the *child*, he will be more likely to learn these social skills.

Here is an example about helping a child to remain in his seat. The teacher is trying to teach eight-year-old Adam, a child with ADHD, to stop getting out of his seat in class. She has tried talking to him, putting him in time out, and giving him stickers. Nothing has worked. She must, however, have a realistic understanding of his ability to actually sit in his seat for long periods of time.

Example!

Perhaps the long-term goal for Adam is to have him sit in his seat for short periods of time, for example, two minutes, five minutes, ten minutes, or fifteen minutes. She has to ascertain (as was hopefully confirmed on his assessment) the level of his distractibility. Here come my newspaper words again. It is vital to determine the reason why he gets out of his seat. When does he get out of his seat? Why does he get out of his seat? Does he get out of his seat because he becomes interested in something he *has* to get up to see? Does he get up from his seat to dispel some energy? Where is his seat located? Who sits around him when he gets out of his seat? What is occurring in the classroom when he gets out of his seat?

If the teacher has not observed Adam in class (not when she is teaching him, but when someone else is teaching him), then she must observe him for a minimum of one week. In some schools, teachers swap classes so that each teacher can do observations on particular children. If this is not possible,

the teacher can observe him in art, music, or in any other class where he is required to sit in his seat. The results of his “sitting in his seat” behavior in those cases will not be totally accurate because he will not be in your class. However, you will at least have an idea from an observer’s point of view of his “sitting in a chair” behavior. In this example, the teacher found a fellow teacher with whom to swap classes, so she was able to observe Adam for one week. She designed a chart of his sitting in his seat behavior for that week, with frequencies for each. Table 6.1 shows an example of his sitting in his seat behavior that we can analyze. Look at Adam’s behavior. The results of his teacher’s observations are so interesting. As much as I promised myself that I would stay away from research strategies in this book, I cannot do that 100 percent of the time! Without facilitating a statistical analysis, there are certain things that we can say. For example, he got up the least number of times, or the least frequently, at lunch time and in morning meeting time. The teacher must ask herself “Are there any similarities in the required behavior at those times?” It appears not.

However, perhaps he was very interested and focused at the morning meeting on Wednesday because he got to talk about something that happened to him the day before (i.e., he went to the zoo with his mom). Additionally, he listened to other children talk about something they did that was interesting to him.

He sat in his seat, which meant in this case on the rug, four times for one minute each time. On Thursday, he sat for four minutes five times when the class was having lunch. Similar to his focus on Wednesday, he was also focused here not only on eating his own lunch, but in talking to other children as well as “people watching” in the lunchroom. In actuality, five minutes is a reasonably long amount of time for a child with ADHD to sit, *before* the teacher has worked with him.

On Tuesday, as other children were getting up to ask the teacher questions, he also got up to ask a question and to see what was occurring. He did sit, however, for three minutes

**Table 6.1. Example of charting seat behavior**

<i>Day of Week</i>	<i>Monday</i>	<i>Tuesday</i>	<i>Wednesday</i>	<i>Thursday</i>	<i>Friday</i>	<i>Anecdotes</i>	<i>Comments</i>
Length of time that child sits in seat	2 minutes	3 minutes	1 minute	4 minutes	1 minute		
Time period	10:00–11:00	1:00–2:00	9:00–10:00	12:00–1:00	2:00–3:00		
Frequency	4 times	3 times	4 times	5 times	1 time		
What was happening in the class?	Reading	Other children were getting up to ask teacher questions	The teacher was having morning meeting	The whole class was having lunch	The whole class was gathering their things for dismissal		

three times. The rest of the time, he was getting up and down and up and down. (In an actual observation, the teacher would have included anecdotes, as well, so he could see exactly what went on.)

As you see, on Friday, he did not sit for more than one minute at a time. Dismissal (as well as other times of transitions) is very chaotic and overwhelming for children with ADHD. Finally, on Monday morning during reading, Adam only sat in his seat for two minutes at a time four times. During reading, he could not follow along with the teacher as she read a book to the class. He was overwhelmed by the words and the pictures as well as having to listen to the story along with the noises in the classroom.

*Method!* In a case such as Adam's where he "tunes out" when his teacher reads him a book, it is a good idea for the teacher (or an assistant or a parent) to preread the story to the child before the teacher actually reads it to the group. In that way, Adam is already familiar with the characters and the plot, so he would be listening having "owned" some of the book already. He would be familiar with the story, and, therefore, he would be more likely to listen to it with added interest.

I know that you are asking yourself, "Wouldn't he become bored if he already knew the story?" In my experience, this does not happen with children with ADHD and I will tell you the reason. When children with ADHD listen to a story, they just hear pieces of it. If you analogize this to a puzzle containing fifty pieces, the child with ADHD has only fit twenty pieces into the puzzle. Because they have only focused on a part of the story, they can listen again so that they can complete the entire puzzle.

The teacher must find some reward or reinforcer that she can use to teach Adam to sit in his seat. In order to find a reinforcer, all the teacher has to do is to talk to him about his interests. As it turns out, he loves animals of all kinds. He has dogs at home, but loves to hear stories about zoo animals as well. I have two

ideas here. First, use a computer game with animals in it as a reward. Second, permit him to watch (on DVD) parts of *Animal Planet*, a renowned television show about animals. What the teacher can do is permit Adam to watch *Animal Planet* or play the computer game, for example, for the same number of minutes that the child sat in his chair. So, if he sat in his chair for one minute, he gets to watch *Animal Planet* for one minute.

What do you do if Adam cannot tell time? There are these wonderful timers (that I have mentioned before here) that have one color, for example, red. The teacher can set it so it the color winds down in one minute, or two minutes, and so forth. Are you getting an idea of what hopefully will happen? When Adam watches *Animal Planet* for one minute, he wants to watch it more.

When he understands that the amount he watches is contingent on the amount of time he sits in his chair, he will begin sitting in his chair longer. Let us continue on from this social skill, because if we do not, we will be here until eternity! A good way to teach the child with ADHD to behave in a more socially appropriate manner is to teach social skills through the child's interactions with siblings. By involving the siblings in the teaching of social skills to a child with ADHD, it is possible to generalize the social skills that the teacher is working on at school to the home environment.

**Social Skill 38: Learning Social Skills Taught  
through Interactions with Siblings**

Okay, one social skill for the parents that will help to generalize the social skills that the teacher has taught the child with ADHD—good. (The teacher can certainly be involved in school or as support.) Here is a statement that one of the parents from

my field research made about how she teaches her son social skills through the interactions of her two children:

I don't feel that I have to specifically teach them from books about social skills because they spend so much time together and I think that if you can learn to live peacefully with your brother or sister when you're not able to spend a whole day away from your siblings that's pretty good. And so we work on social skills as conflict arises between the two of them.

Many times parents want to teach social skills to their child with ADHD, but they feel that they do not have a vehicle to do so. Siblings can be just that vehicle. We are assuming, however, that these siblings do not have ADHD and have learned the social skills that their parents have modeled. Therefore, why should we not have these siblings model positive and appropriate behavior to teach social skills to their brothers and sisters who have ADHD?

In most cases, children have respect for their siblings and therefore model their behavior, especially if their brothers and sisters are older. But how can siblings help? In natural settings these brothers or sisters can model socially appropriate behavior for their siblings who have ADHD.

*Example!*

This example assumes that the parent has instructed the brother of the child with ADHD how to manage his brother with ADHD's social skill problem. John (the typical brother) takes Eric (the child with ADHD) to the movies. The moment that their mom drops them off from the car, Eric RUNS FULL SPEED AHEAD from the car to the ticket counter, leaving John far behind. John makes Eric return to the curb and walks him (even if he has to physically assist him) slowly to the ticket counter. (John does so even if the time the lesson takes causes the brothers to miss the movie!)

When John observes Eric walk to the counter quietly and arrive there calmly, John says, "I like the quiet way you just walked from the curb to the ticket counter." Eric really respected what John said. However, when the boys were about to

go to the snack counter before the movie to buy a snack, John was already thinking that Eric may run to the counter again. *Before* Eric has the chance to run, John coaches Eric and cues him by saying, “Remember to walk slowly to the candy counter just like you walked slowly from the curb to the ticket counter, Eric.” With this reminder, Eric walks slowly and quietly to the candy counter to buy a snack.

John always has to think ahead as to a behavior that Eric may exhibit that is socially inappropriate. If he anticipates Eric’s misbehavior, he may prevent him from executing it. What does John receive as a result of helping his brother? In my mind, he will feel good because he helped his brother learn how to behave in an appropriate way, and that is all the “kudos” he needs. All children should be taught about their responsibility in a family, whether it pertains to a sibling, a parent, or other extended family members, such as grandparents.

### **Social Skill 39: Learning Social Skills Taught through Temper Tantrums**

Now is when you become skeptical, right? How in the world could a child with ADHD learn social skills if he is involved in a temper tantrum? When a child has a temper tantrum, a good opportunity may present itself to the classroom teacher in terms of teaching social skills to the child with ADHD. If this intervention is difficult for the classroom teacher to implement, in consideration of the fact that she has many other children in her classroom, she can find a “safe place” for the child to have the temper tantrum.

For example, sometimes the gymnasium has an area with padded walls. Hopefully, as in some of the schools I have visited, there is a collaborative effort among the faculty, so that each teacher helps another in an emergency situation. If the

teacher has an assistant or a paraprofessional in the classroom, the teacher must instruct that person how to respond when the child with ADHD has a temper tantrum.

Everyone who is involved with this child must have a clear understanding in how to respond, yet not react to his misbehavior. When a teacher responds to a child's misbehavior, that response is intentional and planned. When a teacher reacts to a child with ADHD's misbehavior, he behaves in an emotional manner, which oftentimes reinforces his behavior in a negative way, therefore encouraging him to behave in that way frequently.

As the child is involved in the temper tantrum, you know very well that he does not see or hear you at all. So you have to wait; in fact, you have no choice but to wait. So, you wait, and you wait, and you wait for the child to stop the temper tantrum. He finally slumps down in the chair and quiets down. Now what? The first thing to do is to talk to the child and try to find out what triggered the temper tantrum.

Most times the teacher might think that the child would not have any idea of what possibly triggered the tantrum. However, you can usually find out a little bit at least about what might have been one of the causes of the tantrum if you have a conversation with the child. That conversation, however, must begin with open-ended questions. Let me give you an example of what caused a temper tantrum in a five-year-old boy with whom I am working.

*Example!* I entered the door of Eddie's home at the same time as he entered. Eddie was five years old with a diagnosis of ADHD-hyperactive type. We often arrived at his home at the same time. He noticed immediately that his toys were not in the same place as they had been before. He started to cry at first, demanding to know the location of his toys. In fact, he was crying and then screaming so loudly that his babysitter (who took care of his younger sister and him when he was not in school) became very upset.

Apparently, it was the *babysitter* who put his toys away in order to try to make the house neat. She certainly did not mean

any harm, but somehow was acting as if she had indeed done a terrible thing. Therefore, she began to give him his toys back.

I was at his house to teach him social skills. I honestly thought that it was unreasonable to reward him with his returned toys when he had been crying, screaming, and shouting. Well, when I mentioned to Eddie that he could have his toys back if he said please, you would have thought that the world was exploding. He even threw some toys at me.

His temper tantrum then escalated into a full-blown tornado. His mother interjected, unfortunately, and infantilizing him, held him on her lap and asked him, "Was someone mean to you in camp today?" Well, come on! I somehow convinced her to permit me to handle it with her in the room, and then finally convinced him to agree to have her exit the room while leaving the door open.

After she left, I slowly began asking him open-ended questions such as, "Did something happen to upset you?" "No." "Did someone say something to you that upset you?" "No." Then my questions became more pointed in order to try to figure out what got him *so* upset that he had the temper tantrum. "Did someone in camp upset you?" "No." "Did someone in camp say something to upset you?" "No." "Did something happen on the way home?" "Yes." Ah . . . now we were getting somewhere!!!!

He then proceeded to tell me (in answer to more specific questions) that his mom had picked him up from school after his entire class went to a Build a Bear store as a class trip. They each received a "Build a Bear." What a school and what a trip; I could not believe it! Anyway, his mom was on her cell phone as she was driving, talking away, as usual, and he kept trying to talk to her over and over again.

She simply did not hear or did not respond to him. He wanted her to stop and buy clothes for his bear RIGHT THEN AND THERE. Atypical for her, and perhaps for the first time ever, she said that she could not do that now because she did not have time. She needed to drop him home and get ready to

attend a fund raiser at his school. She said she would take him the next day to buy the clothes.

Apparently, initially he became frustrated when she would not talk to him in the car and then became frustrated and ANGRY when she refused to buy him clothes for his bear at that moment. THEN, he walked into the house with that frustration all churned up, saw that his toys were not where he left them, and EXPLODED.

After he calmed down, I talked to him about how to control his anger next time. He told me that he could not control his anger because “My body had the temper tantrum and I could not do what my body did not want me to do. My body did that, not me!” He also said that he likes to be angry because then he is “tough.” I told him that a person could be tough and *not* be angry, but he did not understand that concept or accept it.

I decided at that point that he would not be able to listen to my words, so I read him the book *When Sophie Gets Angry* by Molly Bang (1999), to him. Unfortunately, being five years old and having ADHD, he laughed when the little girl in the book became very angry. We talked about the book.

Little by little over a few sessions he began to understand that it was counterproductive to react to something that he was angry about by having a temper tantrum. (I did not use the word counterproductive to him; I said that having a temper tantrum did not help him to figure out why he was angry.) So, I gave him some steps to try the next time he became so angry.

Before his body becomes so angry, I told him to ask himself:

“Why am I so angry?”

“Am I angry at a person?”

“Am I angry about something that happened to me?”

If he cannot ask himself those questions (as one step on the journey to self-regulation), then I told him to take three deep breaths and count to five *before* his “body” becomes so angry. We prac-

ticed the deep breaths together. When we spoke about how he could control his temper tantrum during our next session, he did say that he tried the deep breathing, but he also said that “When my body takes over, it takes over.” I realized then and there that it would be a long process before he would be able to self-regulate his temper tantrums as a vehicle to learn social skills.

Teaching social skills to children with ADHD, as you can see, is not always as easy as it appears to be. It is not just a matter of actually teaching the social skill. As you saw from my example here, the teacher cannot achieve real success in terms of the child learning the social skill and diminishing his socially inappropriate behavior unless the child with ADHD is totally, 100 percent “on board” and in complete agreement that this skill is important for him to learn. Social skills taught through temper tantrums is a good segue to how to facilitate social skills taught when a child becomes academically frustrated, so let us continue on.

### **Social Skill 40: Learning Social Skills Taught When Academically Frustrated**

As you read this section, I can hear you saying, “Yes, the child with ADHD does become academically frustrated, and I never know what behavior may occur as a result of that frustration.” However, a teacher cannot teach social skills to a child if she does not know the reason why the child is frustrated. The teacher should ask herself:

- \* “Why does this child become academically frustrated?”
- \* “When does he become academically frustrated?”
- \* “What behavior does the child exhibit when he becomes academically frustrated?”
- \* “Where is the child when he becomes academically frustrated?”

- \* “With whom is the child when he becomes academically frustrated?”

When a child with ADHD becomes frustrated with his schoolwork, it is generally due to one of many reasons. One of the most salient reasons is that the work that the child is required to do is either too difficult or too easy for him. In order to encourage the child to achieve academically to his optimal level, the child should be presented with work that is just a little bit too difficult for him.

When these children are given work that is much too difficult for them, they become academically frustrated. Because of this frustration, they may exhibit socially inappropriate behavior. If they are required to do work that they have already learned and are bored, they may exhibit socially inappropriate behavior then as well.

What behaviors might they exhibit? Perhaps getting up from their seat; annoying other children who are working; asking inappropriate questions; jumping up and down; racing back and forth throughout the classroom; or simply staring out of the window and not doing the required work, among other behaviors.

So what good is it for the teacher to know the answers to the questions above? Let’s assume that the teacher has not differentiated the curriculum according to individual children’s needs, and that the curriculum is a “one-size-fits-all” curriculum. I do not mean to be critical here. When teachers have been teaching for many years, they are comfortable with what they teach and the way that they teach it. And let’s face it; a technique such as differentiation may seem overwhelming to implement.

Let’s assume, therefore, that the teacher has designed the curriculum according to her, the school’s, and the state’s standards. Well, first of all, if the teacher is aware of what work the child can do and what work is too hard for him, she can watch and wait for the moment to come when the child becomes frustrated. She can also try to teach the child to catch himself

*before* he becomes frustrated and *before* he exhibits socially inappropriate behavior.

So what can the teacher do then? The teacher can design either a verbal or a nonverbal signal so that the student can alert the teacher the moment he realizes that he is becoming frustrated. If the student and the teacher can “grab” the moment right before the child with ADHD becomes frustrated, she can teach him how to use self-talk to try to *prevent* or *inhibit* himself from exhibiting socially inappropriate behavior.

What do I mean by self-talk? Have you ever talked to yourself when you are getting ready to go on a trip? Have you asked yourself, “Have I packed that sweater?” either nonverbally or verbally? Children may use that type of self-talk to tell themselves to exhibit an appropriate behavior. For example, a child may say to himself, “Stay in your seat.” Now in school, the child would preferably tell himself that statement mentally so as not to disturb others!

Children can also rehearse how to exhibit socially appropriate behavior by using self-talk. Back to the signal—when the teacher touches the child with ADHD on the shoulder, for example, the child says to himself, “Sit quietly.” There could be different nonverbal signals for helping the child with ADHD to stop certain types of behaviors. Be as creative as you can be.

For instance, if the child is asking too many inappropriate questions, the teacher can give the child a note with a symbol of a question mark on it that says, “Listen now.” Then the child says to himself, “Eric, listen now.” It is imperative to communicate the socially appropriate behavior that you want the child to exhibit, instead of accentuating the inappropriate behavior that he is currently executing.

Another method that you can try so the child can alert the teacher when he has become academically frustrated is to place a sign on top of the desk of the child with ADHD at all times. If the child can read, the sign can be two-sided. The sign can look like a Ping-Pong paddle either constructed out of cardboard or constructed out of paper. On one side, the teacher should write *Method!*

the word “Stop” in red to symbolize that the *teacher* should stop to help the child with ADHD with the work that is frustrating him. (You could also have a picture of a stop sign on the sign, in case the child has difficulty reading. It is important that the child holds up the correct side.)

On the other side, the teacher can write any word that has *meaning* to the child that symbolizes that he does not require help at that time, perhaps “No Thanks!” Or, you could write the word “Cool,” “Fine,” or the words “No Problem” (in green to symbolize that the teacher should *not* stop to help the child) or any other word or words that show the teacher that the child does not need help at that moment. (For those children with ADHD who find reading difficult, you could have a picture here that symbolizes that the child does not need help.) Is this sign stigmatizing for the child with ADHD?

As I have said before, the teacher must manage the class equitably from the very first day of school and tell the class that each student in the class learns differently. If the students understand and accept that fact, then they will also accept the fact that each student in that class needs different techniques, devices, and strategies in order to learn at an optimal level.

Therefore, when the child with ADHD uses his paddle sign to alert the teacher when he is beginning to feel frustrated with his schoolwork and therefore needs help, no one will think or say a word that is negative or stigmatizing toward the child with ADHD. The previous task seems to link up nicely with teaching that the child stays on task and does not leave the room when he becomes academically frustrated.

**Social Skill 41: Staying on Task and Not Leaving Room When Academically Frustrated**

Children with ADHD sometimes experience what I call “flight” behavior. They may come upon a situation where they are do-

ing their academic work well, for example, math, yet suddenly feel a sense of frustration. This frustration might be related to the distractibility that characterizes children with ADHD or related to the difficulty of the work. Either way, this feeling of frustration builds up and the child is driven to leave the room because he cannot do his work at that time. Clearly, exiting the room is not an appropriate behavior for any child at any time. Children with ADHD must learn that certain behaviors, such as running out of a classroom, are simply unacceptable, and in fact, against the school rules. So, what can a teacher do to help a child who runs out of the classroom?

We cannot begin by managing the fleeing behavior. If we did try to diminish this inappropriate behavior as an end in itself, we would not find out the root cause of the behavior. We have to begin by trying to find out why the child is exhibiting the socially inappropriate behavior. I have discussed previously how important it would be to find someone to teach your class when you have to observe a specific child; now is the time. You are really the only one who knows the child intimately enough to be able to possibly “catch” the specific reason or target what causes the child to leave the classroom.

Did the child become frustrated with the solving of an arithmetic problem? Did he become distracted because some of his classmates were talking so he had difficulty completing his assignment? Did he become upset because the instructions were too complicated on the assignment page? Did he become frustrated because the teacher gave the instructions for the assignment too quickly? How does the teacher find out what upset the child?

Quite simply, the teacher can ask the child what upset him. If that does not work, the teacher can observe the child doing various assignments and observe exactly what frustrates him. If the teacher is right there when the student becomes frustrated, perhaps she can see precisely at what point the child begins to flee the room.

The teacher, therefore, tries to solve the problem of what is so frustrating to the child that causes him to flee the classroom.

After she does so, the teacher must teach the child what we call replacement skills, which are socially appropriate alternative behaviors that serve the same function as the socially inappropriate behavior. This new replacement behavior is an interfering behavior. The teacher, to reiterate, could help to facilitate behaviors that interfere with the socially inappropriate behavior and in fact replace that behavior. If the problem behavior, fleeing the room, no longer serves a useful purpose for the student, the student will cease to do so.

Remember: The teacher should not at this moment be concerned about the fleeing behavior. (Give me a moment and I will explain.) The teacher should more importantly solve the problem of which other behavior can be increased that will make the fleeing behavior unimportant, unsuccessful, and unproductive.

*Example!* One replacement behavior might be having the child write what has frustrated him as well as when it frustrated him on a pad that is on his desk at all times. If he is writing his frustrations down on paper, he is less likely to run out of the room because writing interferes with him leaving the room. If he cannot write, he can draw a picture of what frustrated him or choose a picture from those that the teacher can cut out from magazines or from Microsoft Images.

*Example!* Another replacement behavior could be some kind of low sounding buzzer or a button that emits light that he could touch when he feels frustrated, so the teacher can immediately help him. I observed another replacement behavior in a few of the home schools that I visited. A few of these parents had trampolines that their children immediately jumped on at the first sign of frustration. Obviously, the teacher cannot have the child with ADHD jump on a trampoline in the classroom, but she could create some form of exercise, such as walking down the hallway and back. Any release can interfere with the inappropriate behavior and serve as a replacement behavior.

*Method!* One last possibility in terms of helping the child with ADHD to stop running out of the room when he becomes academi-

cally frustrated is for the teacher to designate a peer-buddy system. Both of the children could have ADHD or one child could have ADHD and the other one could be a typical child. The idea is that each of the children would be responsible for supporting the other child when he becomes frustrated. Even typical children become frustrated from time to time. They may not necessarily run out of the room, but they show frustration in other ways.

The moment the child with ADHD signals the typical child, either by getting out of his seat, going to the other child's seat, or via a hand signal, the peer-buddy takes him to do something else for a few moments. One such activity might be working at the computer. Does it seem as if I am rewarding the child with ADHD by permitting him to work on something else?

Trust me when I say that I am neither rewarding nor punishing the child with ADHD. I am merely trying to find some behavior that interferes with and replaces the child's socially inappropriate behavior. He is not being rewarded by being taken to do work on the computer. He is being redirected so academic frustration does not cause him to exhibit a socially inappropriate behavior that will take the teacher out of the classroom to manage his misbehavior and stigmatize the child with ADHD as well.

**Social Skill 42: Learning Social Skills Taught through Modeling Teacher's or Parents' Behavior**

We have discussed this question previously, but we will focus on it in depth here. According to what I have said so far, you probably are thinking to yourself, "Can children with ADHD model their parents when they exhibit positive or appropriate social skills?" That question has also run through my mind as I am writing this book. It is true that if children with ADHD

*had* modeled their parents' positive social behavior, they would have incorporated appropriate social skills into their lives. I think that with the correct, direct instruction teachers can teach children with ADHD to model their parents' *and* their teachers' positive social skills. This instruction requires the following instructional model:

1. Instruct the child with ADHD to observe the parent or the teacher exhibiting a specific social skill. Say to him: "The teacher is going to say something nice to you when you hand her a certain color of crayon." Then ask the child, "What are you going to listen to that the teacher says to you?" If the child repeats the correct instruction, then continue on to the next step. One such social skill, for example, would be for the child with ADHD to say thank you to a child who has handed him a certain color crayon that he had requested.
2. Ask the child, "What did the teacher say to you when you received a crayon that you wanted?" If the child gives you the correct answer ("thank you"), then have the teacher or parent role play with the child. The teacher or the parent rehearses saying "Thank you" in a similar situation before the child actually says it to someone in the classroom.
3. Have the child incorporate this newly learned social skill into the actual classroom experience. Take advantage of any opportunities that arise where it would be appropriate for the child with ADHD to say thank you when another child hands him an item.

What do you do in step 2 if the child with ADHD does not give you the correct answer? I have had someone do a short videotape of me saying "Thank you" to a child when he has given me a certain crayon in a specific color. This video is approximately one minute long. The teacher should watch the

video with the child and ask him the same questions as above. Then, continue on to the last step.

Please remember that one child with ADHD will learn this social skill immediately and remember it, while another child with ADHD will learn it immediately and promptly forget it. Therefore, the teacher will have to reteach the particular skill. Another child will learn the social skill after many, many rehearsals.

If you have to reteach the specific social skill, reteach it IN A DIFFERENT WAY. If you reteach it in the same way, the child will most likely lose interest in what you are teaching him and cease to listen. What do I mean by teaching the social skill in a different way? You can use a different modality, for example. If you have used a visual teaching method, use an auditory method. If you have used an auditory method, try a tactile-kinesthetic method. Teachers should use a trial and error method in terms of their teaching approach. If they do, this approach will help to facilitate children with ADHD learning social skills through the modeling of the teacher's or the parents' behavior.

*Caveat!*

**Social Skill 43:  
Conversing with Children or Adults**

Don't children with ADHD know how to converse with children or adults? Certainly they know how to speak to another person. However, what I mean by converse is to use words as a way of communication to another person. The way they converse is not always socially appropriate. Three things, among others, happen to children with ADHD when they begin to converse with children and adults.

First, they have a difficult time listening to the other person, based on the fact that they typically have a difficult time attending to the person who is talking. Second, they feel a need

to tell these people everything that they are thinking at the moment, instead of listening to the topic of the conversation. Third, when they want to respond to another person, they have great difficulty waiting for the other person to stop talking, so they tend to interrupt that person.

Those problems, therefore, pinpoint three main difficulties that these children experience: they have difficulty listening to another person; they maintain a constant verbiage unrelated to the current conversation; and they interrupt whomever is speaking.

Let's tackle first things first. How do you teach a child with ADHD to listen? Here is one way:

Method!

Start by finding out what specific learning style is the strongest one through which the child learns. In other words, the teacher should evaluate through which modality the child with ADHD learns most effectively. Let us say, for example, that the child's learning strength is auditory. Find out what kind of story (let's assume that the child is of elementary age) the child likes. Either obtain a CD of the narrated story or, better yet, read the story on to an audiotape yourself. You can read a story into a voice recorder that has a USB drive and download it right on to your computer.

Listen to the story with the child. Ask the child questions such as: Who is the character you like the most? What is the first thing that happened to that character in the story? What is the next thing that happened to the same character? The answers to these questions reflect whether or not the child listened. If he could not answer the questions, listen to the story again with the child. Stop the audiotape or CD the first time something happens to that character.

Then ask the child, what just happened to that character? If this method *still* does not work, in terms of the child learning to listen, try to teach the child by using a different learning modality, such as tactile-kinesthetic, for example, as you will read in the following section.

For example, have the child either draw or paint two pictures, one showing what the main character did first in the story and the other picture of something the main character did not do initially. If the child cannot draw these pictures himself, then the teacher should help him draw or paint each picture. Read the story to the child again and as you are reading, stop at the point that the character executes a particular action. *Method!*

Then, prompt the child with ADHD to answer the question of what happened first to the main character in the story by asking him which picture actually shows what happened to that character. You can prompt the child for as long as it takes to make sure that the child has been listening.

Now, finally, after you are sure that the child with ADHD has learned to listen (you are not looking for 100 percent accuracy here; even children and adults without ADHD do not listen 100 percent of the time!) now is the opportunity to teach him how to converse with children and adults.

### **WAIT (WHEN ANOTHER INDIVIDUAL TALKS)**

*Method!*

Children with ADHD with whom you are working may or may not need this or any other acronym to remember to wait for others to stop speaking in a conversation before they speak. If they do need an acronym to remind them, however, they can use the acronym WAIT, which stands for: *When Another Individual Talks*. But how do they know how long to wait? Yes, you are getting it now, by listening!

Here are some possible steps to teach a child how to converse with children or adults:

1. Walk up to another child and see if he is talking about something that interests you.
2. LISTEN carefully to what he is saying for as long as you can.

3. Before you begin to speak, count to ten slowly and WAIT to see if he stops talking completely to listen to you.
4. TALK, but remain aware (always remain aware) if he is listening to YOU.

Hint: If the child is asking you questions and seems engaged in what you are saying, you have succeeded in teaching a child with ADHD how to converse with children or adults.

*Method!* One way to encourage conversation between the child with ADHD and a typical child is to use the pretend play area. Set up either a pretend tea party or a pretend lunch for the child with ADHD and a typical peer, facilitated by you. The teacher can model what to say and how to say it for the child with ADHD. The child with ADHD can therefore model the teacher, as well as the child's peer.

### **Social Skill 44: Respecting Elders**

Of all of the social skills discussed, this is arguably one of the most important. Why? Because simply put, all individuals, but most importantly, children with ADHD must learn that when they interact with another individual they must be polite and respectful. Why is this behavior so important for children with ADHD to learn? Because no one will interact or be friendly with a person who is disrespectful and rude! What does being respectful entail? It entails showing consideration for another individual. Additionally, respect involves deferring to another person. Children with ADHD need to learn to listen to what other people say, especially people who are older than them.

I have found that sometimes, in fact, the child with ADHD is disrespectful, and the parents support that lack of respect. In some cases, as you see here, the parent will have the child

apologize, even though she did not really believe that the child behaved in a socially inappropriate way!

Remember the example of a child from chapter 2 who was disrespectful to his grandfather. The mother noted.

I can remember when he was four and he talked back to his grandfather. I said nothing, because it was like you know, what the situation was with the grandfather. I don't want to say he asked for it, but the tone and attitude and the behavior was such that Aaron was "back at ya," you know. I did correct him. I told him, Aaron that was not right, even though my thinking was I'd have done the same thing as an adult. You're a child, you don't behave that way. So, it's always been a very tricky situation. I talked to him. At that point I did say to him, Aaron, you know, you need to apologize. That was wrong, to let him know that it was unacceptable. But at that same point in time, I knew that what he said was something that anyone, any adult would have said in the same situation. But the problem was that he wasn't an adult. He was a child. He didn't know he wasn't supposed to say that. That was how he felt, so that's how he handled it.

What the mother did here refers to what I call the locus of control or the blame-excuse game. Some parents somehow cannot and do not acknowledge that their child behaved in an inappropriate way. Instead, even though they make the child apologize, as you read here, they blame the person with whom their child with ADHD interacted. Despite the fact that they made the child apologize, the child knows how the parent really feels. It is vital for children with ADHD and their parents to admit that this type of rude behavior is socially inappropriate. This admission is so important, because even from a young age it is vital for children with ADHD to be accountable for their behavior.

When children are accountable for their behavior, they own the changing of that behavior. There is no excuse for a child with ADHD to be disrespectful to anyone and especially to someone who is older than them. A good book to read to

a child with ADHD that has as its main theme how to treat people with respect is *Accept and Value Each Person* by Cheri J. Meiners (2004).

If you ask children with ADHD how they would feel if someone was disrespectful to them, you often receive the “I wouldn’t care” response. These children do care, trust me. However, they are so well defended that it takes a few years of taking that wall of defense down in order to begin to emote at all and more importantly, to admit that they were disrespectful. It also takes time for these children to learn how to be respectful to other people.

This social skill is a good one to try to teach through social stories. Again, the lessons that are elicited from social stories become more meaningful when the teacher and the student write them together. Here is an example of a social story that a child with ADHD could write himself that incorporates learning to respect other individuals:

- \* Sometimes I talk to people who are older than me.
- \* When I go up to talk to these people, I listen to what they say.
- \* As I listen to them, I wait for them to stop talking before I begin to speak.
- \* I am always polite.
- \* I am always respectful.
- \* I remember that older people have more experience than I do, so I respect what they teach me.
- \* If I do not agree with them, I am still polite and ask them questions about what they said.
- \* When I speak to people who are older than I am, I am always polite and respectful.
- \* When I am polite and respectful, I feel good about myself.

The most important component of writing social stories is to make sure that children write them from their own viewpoint.

That is why it is important that the effort that is expended is a collaborative one. Therefore, the child gives the teacher ideas and the teacher writes those ideas down on a piece of paper. Carol Gray, who first created social stories, explains that a story should be individualized and consist of four basic types of sentences: (a) descriptive, (b) directive, (c) perspective, and (d) affirmative. A great DVD set to purchase is *Storymovies: Social Concepts and Skills at School*, Volume 1, Professional Edition by Carol Gray and Mark Shelley. They offer examples of social stories and instruct you on how to write them.

Teachers can have conversations with children with ADHD as well. Assuming that they have learned how to listen, teachers can really explain to these children what the positive and negative components of being disrespectful may be for them in their future relationships. Teachers must be artful and creative in terms of getting these children to talk about their social interactions with older individuals as well as with peers. Every child would like to have positive relationships with both children and adults, and being respectful is a large part of guaranteeing successful relationships.

### **Social Skill 45: Following Instructions Given by Teachers and Parents**

By this time, you should have seen that many of the social skills that we are trying to teach children with ADHD depend on the social skills that they have learned already. Those previously learned social skills serve as building blocks for the new ones that these children are trying to learn. For example, here we are teaching the child to follow instructions given by teachers and parents.

In order to follow instructions, children with ADHD would have to know how to listen, as we discussed before. If they do

not know how to listen and have difficulty paying attention to the instructions that are given, they will not be able to follow those instructions. How do teachers and parents help children with ADHD to follow their instructions?

One way is to find out exactly how, in other words, what learning modality is the strongest one for a particular child. If the teacher teaches the child by working through a particular learning strength, the child would be more likely to learn how to follow instructions. For example, teachers typically just tell students the instructions that they should follow. If the teacher readily sees that the child has not followed the instructions she has stated orally (instead of becoming frustrated), she can try teaching the child that social skill through another modality.

*Example!*

- \* Try writing the instructions down on a piece of paper. If the child cannot read, paste pictures on a piece of paper showing a stick figure or another child who is following the instructions correctly. If granted permission from the parents, you can even take digital pictures of the child when he follows instructions correctly. Then, you can paste those pictures on a piece of paper for the child with ADHD to view.
- \* Read the instructions on an audiotape that the child can play as many times as necessary in order to follow the instructions. (Nowadays, you would most likely use a voice recorder, as I explained before.)
- \* Sing the instructions to the child to a tune that he likes, such as “Farmer in the Dell,” “Ring Around the Rosy,” or “London Bridge Is Falling Down.”
- \* Type the instructions on the computer, so the child can continually refer to them. Place these instructions on the computer’s desktop so the child can have easy access to them.
- \* Use the child’s gross motor skills to learn how to follow instructions. Take a large piece of paper that is used for murals and draw large footprints on them. Use a colorful

magic marker to write each instruction (or in pictures for those children who cannot read) inside each footprint. Write these instructions far enough apart so when the child has completed one part of the instructions, he can “jump” over that instruction and stop at the one he needs to learn next.

- \* The teacher or another child models the instructions. Stop at each step and have the child repeat each step until he follows the instructions to an automatic level.
- \* Another idea (that is not using another modality, however) is to build an incentive component into your teaching. The teacher offers the child an incentive or a reward when he follows each instruction correctly. If the child loves to work on the computer, use computer time as an incentive, for example. If the child wants to spend his lunch time with the teacher, use that as an incentive.

### **Social Skill 46: Having Good Manners**

We all want our children to have good manners. What does having good manners entail? Most people agree that having good manners includes:

- \* Saying please and thank you
- \* Not interrupting other people when they are talking
- \* Saying hello to people when you initially see them or acknowledging another’s presence by acknowledging them
- \* Respecting people
- \* Being courteous in person or on the telephone
- \* Having good table manners
- \* Not talking about other people
- \* Saying things to people in a kind way
- \* Caring about other people’s feelings

### Ideas for Instilling Manners in Children

By Leah Davies, M.Ed.

Many adults agree that a lack of manners in children is a growing problem in our society. Parents are partly to blame if they ignore their children's rude behaviors. Some parents demonstrate poor sportsmanship, display inconsiderate attitudes and blame educators for their child's problems. Disrespectful conduct portrayed in the media is also at fault.

Educators can play an important role in children's development by demonstrating basic civility. Modeling a respectful attitude and requiring students to be considerate of the rights and feelings of others help create a cooperative learning environment. When people treat others with respect, they feel better about themselves and develop self-confidence. When educators model courtesy, children can learn to be considerate of others.

What else can educators do to instill manners in children?

1. When possible, greet each child as they enter the classroom. Also, send best wishes with them at the end of the day.
2. Take pleasure in being their teacher, so that the children feel valued.
3. Have children name examples of good manners and list them on the board. Then have them identify examples of rude behavior. Divide the children into groups to make posters illustrating desirable and undesirable behaviors. These can be hung on the wall to remind children of appropriate conduct.
4. Discuss socially acceptable behaviors. Read the *Kelly Bear Behavior* book or other books that discuss appropriate conduct.
5. Teach, model, and post a respectful vocabulary such as "Please," "Thank You," "You're Welcome," "I'm sorry," "Excuse me," "I like the way you . . ." "May I?" Have students add to the list.

- \* Apologizing: Saying that you are sorry if you behaved in an inappropriate way, such as when you were rude

In this case, Leah Davies (2005), the author of the Kelly Bear books, has written “24 Ideas for Instilling Manners in Children.” I could not have done better here, so I am passing afew of her suggestions on to you. Her article is excerpted in the box with permission. *Method!*

### **Social Skill 47: Being Responsible**

If a child with ADHD learns to be responsible, he owns that social skill, which makes him feel more confident and helps him to build positive self-esteem. Teaching the child to be responsible is important because if the child with ADHD learns that social skill, he automatically becomes accountable for his materials as well as his actions. However, what do children with ADHD do that characterizes them as not being responsible?

For example, children with ADHD typically forget to do what they are supposed to do, according to the rules of the classroom. They forget their book bag; they do not remember where to place their book bag in the classroom; they forget to hand in homework; they forget to do chores that they were assigned by their teacher or their parent; they forget to do just about anything and everything.

How can teachers instruct children with ADHD to be responsible if these children cannot remember what they are supposed to do? How do teachers and parents teach children with ADHD to be responsible when these children may not see the long-term yield of being responsible? (That yield, as I have said, is to be accountable for your actions as well as your possessions. Along with having accountability is feeling a sense of pride and self-confidence.) The trick to teaching social skills to

children with ADHD is to make the lesson meaningful. Therefore, the act of being responsible has to be tied to some incentive that has some meaning for the child with ADHD.

The first thing the teacher or the parent has to do is make sure that the child with ADHD understands exactly how being responsible is related to his own life. As his teacher, think about what things he would do that would define him as being responsible or acting responsibly. For example:

- \* Does he take care of his personal items as related to school? When I refer to his personal items, I am including, for example, his book bag, his pencils, his crayons, and so forth.
- \* Does he take care of school property by putting it away when he is finished with it?
- \* When he borrows or uses another person's property, does he return it in the same condition as when he borrowed it?
- \* When he does his homework, does he bring it to school and put it in the correct place as required by the teacher?
- \* When the teacher hands out notes that must be returned on a certain date, does he adhere to that requirement?

So how do you teach children with ADHD to be responsible? Decide on one specific element with which you want the child to be responsible. It would be helpful if you set up a hierarchy of specific ways that you want the child with ADHD to show that he is responsible. Let us take one example.

*Example!* Every time that Jim walks into school, he takes his book bag and throws it down on the floor. In fact, he is so excited to talk to his classmates and his teacher that he oftentimes steps on his book bag after he drops it. He inevitably crushes his lunch that is in his book bag. What is the goal here? The goal is for Jim to be responsible for his personal items and to respect where the teacher wants him to put them. I would explain to

Jim initially that he has to care for his own personal items, and that his book bag is one of those.

You have tried to tell Jim many, many times that when he comes into the classroom he must place his book bag on the hook in his cubby. After he does that, he is supposed to take his homework out of his book bag and place it in the homework box. Finally, he is supposed to take his lunch out of his book bag and place it on the shelf where everyone else placed their lunch. After you verbally told Jim the requirements with which he had to comply, and he did not do so, you must try something else.

Write a contract with the student that stipulates that he will receive a particular incentive for complying with either a part of the requirement or with the entire requirement. What might the incentive be? In order to find out about his interests, you should do what is called an interest inventory. This interest inventory comprises any and all interests that characterize the child in question.

*Method!*

You can ask the child about his interests, ask the parents about the child's interests, or simply observe the child or think about what are included in his interests. Some interests that you might use as motivators include computer time; stickers; baseball cards; food (yes, food); reading a certain magazine; dolls; small toy cars; video games, and so forth. Once you determine the interests of the child with ADHD, you can use those interests as motivators. Back to the task that you want Jim to facilitate.

These are the steps in order to get Jim to accomplish this task.

- \* Jim takes his book bag off his back.
- \* Jim places his book bag on the hook in his cubby.
- \* Jim takes his homework out of his book bag.
- \* Jim places his homework in the homework bin.
- \* Jim takes his lunch out of his book bag.
- \* Jim places his lunch on the lunch shelf.

Even though there are multiple steps included here that the child has to accomplish, these steps can be implemented successfully. According to the contract that you and the child with ADHD have written, you can give him incentives for accomplishing each step, every other step, or all of the steps. I am a fan of giving the child a reward for accomplishing the first few steps and then giving him rewards for facilitating every other step.

The most successful way to accomplish this task is to satisfy both your needs and requirements and the child's needs and requirements. After he complies with the requirements of this task, he will definitely feel ownership of it and will be able to behave as a responsible citizen in the classroom.

### **Social Skill 48: Interacting through Teacher or Parental Coaching**

Teacher or parent coaching is one of the best ways to teach social skills to a child with ADHD. You are saying to yourself, "I do not know anything about coaching. Don't athletes have coaches?" You are correct in your statement. When teachers coach children with ADHD to perform positive social skills, they are instructing these children to learn certain social skills as well as to perform them. However, teachers cannot coach children to learn social skills without either creating the opportunity to learn or taking advantage of "teachable moments" when opportunities arise in a natural setting.

Coaching also involves a teacher/student bond. Teachers can only achieve that bond, however, if they take the time to know the child. You certainly want to teach the content of the social skills. Equally as important, however, you want to teach the child. Getting to know the child with ADHD in some cases may be easier than you think. Oftentimes these children are very open and honest in their conversations, even to the point

of saying things that are socially inappropriate. Children with ADHD typically do not inhibit what they say in their conversations. We will discuss that later, but for now, let's talk about how the teacher can get to know the child better.

Ask open-ended questions in order to know the child better. Here are some examples of questions, among others, that a teacher or a parent might ask a child with ADHD to get to know him better: *Method!*

- \* What do you like about school?
- \* What don't you like about school?
- \* What do you like to do for fun?
- \* What activities are you involved in?
- \* What don't you like to do?
- \* What activities in which you participate involve other children?
- \* What difficulties have you had with other children?
- \* Explain situations when you have been teased or bullied.
- \* What did you do when other children teased or bullied you?

After you have collected the answers to the above questions and you feel that you know the child better, you are ready to coach him in social skills. Reflecting back on the answers to the above questions, where would the best environment be to coach this child? Would these settings be recess, the classroom, during lunch, or during gym or art class?

When you figure out where to best coach him, arrive at that time and in that environment. Observe the child in the selected setting. Take copious notes concerning whether or not he is interacting with other children as well as the quality of those interactions.

Ask yourself the following questions: *Method!*

- \* Is he interacting with the other children?
- \* If he is interacting with the other children, how are they interacting?

- \* Is he completely engaged in play with the whole group of other children?
- \* Is he involved with just one or two of the children?
- \* Do people address him and when they do, does he walk away without responding?
- \* When people address him, does he say hello and then walk away without interacting any more?

*Method!* Return to the same setting. Try to embed yourself into that setting. When you see that the child with ADHD interacts with another child in a particular way, walk up to that child and very quietly suggest to him or coach him as to how he should behave.

*Example!* For example, the child with ADHD is interacting with another child during free time. The other child is playing with blocks. The child with ADHD whom you are coaching wants to play with those blocks. He begins to go over to grab the blocks away. When the opportunity arises, intercede at once. Suggest to the child with ADHD that he ask the other child if he could have some of the blocks.

Tell the child what to say, and have him repeat it back to you. For example, the nice thing to say instead of grabbing the blocks from Sarah is: "Sarah, may I have some of those blocks to play with?" or "May I play with those blocks with you?" If the other child does not want to share the blocks with the child with whom you are working, then what?

*Method!* The next lesson to teach or to coach the child with ADHD is to manage the frustration of not immediately getting what he wants. If Sarah says that she either will not share the blocks or will not play with him, then you must teach him to find an alternative toy or book or whatever with which to work, or someone else with whom to play. Unfortunately, many children with ADHD are constantly and continually rejected by other children.

An important social skill for the teacher or the parent to coach is to prompt the child in social situations when he is interacting with other children. Why? What you want to do,

ideally, is to “catch” the child with ADHD before he says or does something that signals another child to say, “I do not want to play with him. He is too annoying. He talks too much. He talks too closely to me.” The child with ADHD should behave in such a way that his peers choose to be around him.

The following is a conversation that I had with one of the homeschooling parents with whom I visited during my field research. She speaks about how she coached her son with ADHD-inattentive type to play with other children.

I guess every parent has a problem of letting their child go, and sometimes not seeing interactions. I guess sometimes when you see the interactions, it's fine and you can teach. But it's when you don't see them, you have to, I guess, hold their values that you have taught them. Sending Carl out to the playground in kindergarten and first grade even at a Christian school, was almost like throwing him out to a pack of wolves and saying sink or swim, because he didn't have the natural social skills to know how to walk up and say “Can I play?” And so what I'm working on, with him especially, is knowing how to interact with a group of kids. When we go out to play with friends to play at the playground, I coach him a little bit, and if I see that he's completely playing by himself, which is what he likes to do a lot of the time, I might go over and encourage him. And I might point out that someone else is doing something fun, and encourage him to go over and say, “Can I play?” And so I'm coaching him through it at this young age, to where he doesn't play by himself the rest of his life. So instead of throwing him out there on his own and hoping he learns how to play with the other kids who want to play with them, it's an interaction that I can help him walk through each step. I back off when he starts growing. I back off. I become smaller and smaller in that relationship when he grows.

This type of coaching involves a constant awareness on the teacher's part of the quality of the social interactions with which the child with ADHD is involved. It is imperative, no matter how many children you teach or how many of those

children have special needs, that a large part of your teaching and coaching is geared toward teaching these children what the social skills are that they have to learn.

In this case, the teacher would instruct the child in how to perform the social skill as well. In order for the teacher to coach the child with ADHD successfully, she should ask everyone for assistance who works with the child with ADHD, whether in the classroom, on the bus, in specialty classes, or his parents at home. It is vital, however, that everyone who coaches the child with ADHD coach in the same way as the teacher does. Consistency is essential when working with children with ADHD.

### Social Skill 49: Keeping Promises

It is very important for children to say and do exactly what they say they are going to do. When children interact in an honest and consistent way, other children trust them and want to be their friend. When a child keeps his promise, another child can depend on the fact that he will do what the promise entails. For example, when a child promises to play with a child with ADHD, that child looks forward to it.

If all of a sudden the other child decides that he doesn't want to play after all, the child with ADHD becomes disappointed. If the other child had not wanted to play from the beginning, then the child with ADHD would have accepted that decision. But to say that you are going to play and then *not* play leaves the child with ADHD feeling rejected and dejected.

*Example!*

The following is an example of how one of the parents in my field research taught her child with ADHD-inattentive type the importance of keeping his promise.

Interviewer: I saw what happened before and I was assuming that Carl wanted to play with William and William wasn't quite

agreeing. You were coaching him, I guess, to understand that William didn't keep his promise.

Mom: It has been kind of an issue since this morning. They had been playing Monopoly and William had been very bossy and demanding, and "I'm not playing now." And "Okay, I'm ready to play again."

Interviewer: So, you didn't know what's happening. I guess that was the Play Doh that broke apart and shocked both of them. [laugh]

Mom: I had been working with William this morning on the fact that that's a controlling relationship, and he had the upper hand there.

Interviewer: William does?

Mom: William sees it in that way because William was saying okay, I'm through playing and walk off. And so I let him know that that was a controlling relationship, which sometimes can feel good, can't it? Yeah. So we talked through that, but is that a true loving friendship relationship? So we talked through what he should say, teaching William to say, "Carl, I've bumped into the fact that I am tired of playing right now, and is it okay with you if I stop soon?"

Interviewer: What about Carl, what did you say to him to deal with that?

Mom: With him on the stairs just now? Carl was holding onto the fact that this morning, William promised he would play at a certain time, and William didn't. However, after I talked to William this morning, they went up and played. So that was William's way of making good on his promise, but Carl wanted to hang onto the fact that William didn't keep his promise. He didn't play when he said he would. So, I coached him through that, and told him "He did play with you this morning." Then I had him answer the question, "Did he play with you?" And Carl answered, "Yes he did." Just the fact that they need to basically communicate, instead of each one wanting his own way was important. And when they've finished their playing, it's been amazing; they've played so well in such a difficult concept game. They've gotten along really well with it. You know,

William's attention span as a six-year-old is only going to be a half-hour with Monopoly. Carl has to understand that also. William is working on communicating and Carl is working on communicating also.

Now, in that case, the child who rejected his brother ended up playing, but at a different time. The child with whom I was working, Carl, still hung on to the fact that even though his brother played with him, it was not when he promised to play with him.

There are two issues here. The first is that the child with ADHD has to be taught to keep his promise. The second is that the child with ADHD has to be taught to respond appropriately to the disappointment that comes when another child breaks his promise. A good way to teach a child with ADHD to keep his promise is to help him to develop an understanding of how other children feel.

In other words, the teacher or the parent can help the child with ADHD to understand how he would feel if someone with whom he was interacting did not keep his promise. Children with ADHD are generally hopeful and look forward to interacting with others. That being said, these children have to deal with many disappointments along the way when their peers break their promises to play with them and decline to do so.

The first thing to do to teach the child with ADHD to keep his promises is to simply ask him if anyone has ever broken a promise with him. If he has been on the receiving end of someone breaking a promise, then you can ask him open-ended questions concerning how he felt at that time. For example:

*Example!*

There was a time that Sam (with ADHD) was supposed to go to a baseball game with his friend Jamie. Jamie promised that he would take Sam and they talked about going to the game for weeks. They talked about the hot dogs and cotton candy they would eat. They talked about the autographs they would get. They talked about the baseball jerseys they would wear to the

game. They talked about what they would do if a baseball was hit near where they were sitting. They even talked about who would win the game! They were supposed to go on a Sunday afternoon.

Every time Sam and Jamie were together, in class, during lunch, at recess, and after school, they talked about the Sunday that they would go to the game. Friday afternoon, both boys were walking off of the school bus and Sam said to Jamie, “Two more days until the game!” Jamie turned around and said, “Oh, I forgot to tell you. I can’t take you to the game on Sunday. I have to take my neighbor, because my dad said that they took us to a game last summer.” Sam almost fell off the bus with shock. He started to cry and just ran to his house as fast as he could.

The following are questions that the teacher or the parent could ask Sam in order to help him deal with the disappointment that he felt when Jamie broke his promise to take him to the baseball game:

- \* How did you feel the moment that Jamie told you he wasn’t taking you to the baseball game?
- \* Were you angry at Jamie?
- \* How would you explain your anger toward Jamie?
- \* Were you hurt and disappointed?
- \* How would you explain your hurt and disappointment?
- \* How did being angry at Jamie make you feel less disappointed?
- \* How long were you upset and disappointed?
- \* Were you able to do anything to make yourself feel less angry and less disappointed?
- \* What was it that you did exactly to make yourself feel better?
- \* How did you behave toward Jamie the next time you saw him?
- \* What did you discuss with him relating to the fact that he broke a promise to you?

A conversation like this will help the child understand his feelings of disappointment when someone breaks a promise to him. It may also make him less likely to break a promise himself!

**Social Skill 50: Learning Social Skills  
Taught Every Day**

Social skills must be taught each and every day in today's classrooms. Why? If children with ADHD do not exhibit appropriate social skills, they will not be able to have a well-rounded, balanced life that includes friends and family. Teaching content areas is important; do not get me wrong. However, if children with ADHD exhibit socially inappropriate behaviors, arguably everyone who interacts with them will reject them.

A father of a child with ADHD (to whom I teach social skills) called me the other day. He told me that he was stopping his son's social skills training with me for a while because his son was involved in so many activities that he did not want him to be overwhelmed. At the same time, he also told me that his son was not interacting well with his peers. I simply could not believe what I was hearing! His child was exhibiting socially inappropriate behavior, yet he was too busy to receive social skills training!

If a child does not exhibit appropriate social skills, peers and adults will respond to him in a negative way. Children will not want to be friends with him and, in fact, will be annoyed when he is around. Additionally, and most important, the self-esteem of the child with ADHD will be affected. I suggested to that father that if he saw any "red flag" (i.e., if the child had temper tantrums) or if he came home upset from school, for example, that he contact me immediately.

I have no doubt that this father loves his son and tried to make the best decisions for him. However, this decision was clear-cut: This child must learn to behave in a socially appropriate manner. As teachers, we must instruct all children with ADHD to learn positive social skills every day of the school year.

You must be asking yourself, “How in the world would I teach social skills with all of the pressures of preparing the children in my classes for the tests that are required by No Child Left Behind?” Easily. How? Social skills, as I have said before, can be taught naturally through the everyday curriculum. If you are teaching reading, for example, you can read books to the children that talk about positive social skills. If you are teaching social studies, you can talk about how people of diverse populations must get along and how to do so. If you are teaching science, you can help the children in your class to work cooperatively.

Teachers can weave how to behave in a socially appropriate way into any and every subject area that they teach, as well as in every setting where they teach. Even if you are preparing the children in your class for the required tests, you can teach these test-taking skills in cooperative groups. For your information: It will not hurt the typical children to learn about positive social skills as well!

### **Social Skill 51: Having a Good Character**

Good character? How do we describe good character? Of course, everyone defines good character differently. I would include the following, among others, in a list of traits that describes a person of good character:

- \* Being considerate of others
- \* Being kind to others

*Example!*

- \* Following through on what you say you are going to do
- \* Being honest
- \* Being reliable and dependable
- \* Thinking about others' needs before satisfying your own needs
- \* Being fair to others in social interactions

How do children build good character? One way is for parents to model good character. However, we all know that children with ADHD are distractible and may not have focused on their parents' modeling of those positive behaviors. You can try to write social stories with children who have ADHD about incorporating the above qualities within their behavior.

You can also role play with these children as well, giving them opportunities to behave as someone who is exhibiting the positive behaviors that are associated with good character. Here is another method that you might try, which involves an open-ended questioning of the child with ADHD:

*Method!*

Ask the child with ADHD the following questions based on certain scenarios. The topics listed incorporate the qualities of having good character that I delineated above.

**Being considerate of others:** You are traveling on a bus. You have a seat, but an older woman does not have a seat and has to stand. What could you do to show consideration to this woman?

**Being kind to others:** A child in school has asked to play with some of the other children. He walks by them as they are playing kickball. He asks if he can play and they say "We have the teams picked already." What could you say to the child who was rejected in order to show how the other children could have behaved toward him in a kinder way?

**Following through on what you say you are going to do:** On Fridays after school, many of the children have play

dates. Sam's (the child with ADHD) mom made plans for him to play with Eric right after school. In fact, they were supposed to travel to Sam's house on the school bus. As the boys were playing in recess in school, Sam said to Eric, "I do not want to have a play date today. I want to play my video games by myself." What would you do to teach Sam how to rectify the situation when he did not do what he said he was going to do? What would you instruct Sam to say and to do next time?

**Being honest:** You are walking down the hallway of school and see a five dollar bill on the floor. What would be the honest thing to do?

**Being reliable and dependable:** Maria and her parents had a fifteen-year-old dog who had trouble walking due to arthritis. Both of her parents worked late, but Maria came home from school at 4:00 every day. What should Maria do each day when she comes home that would be reliable and dependable?

**Thinking of others' needs before satisfying your own needs:** Every day when Erin walks off the bus, she runs home to go on the computer and plays computer games. Steven, a classmate of hers, is also on the bus. He has a club foot that has not yet been operated on. Steven has difficulty getting off the bus and has to walk home by himself because his mom worked. He walked home very slowly, and by the time he approached his house, it was almost dark outside. What is it that Erin could do that would involve thinking of others' needs before satisfying her needs in this situation?

**Being fair to others in social interactions:** Jim is playing Monopoly with Phil. Jim has played Monopoly for a long time with his brothers. Phil, however, does not have much experience playing Monopoly or any other board game. What could Jim do to behave fairly with Phil in their social interactions, as they played Monopoly?

**Social Skill 52: Behaving Properly in Public**

Learning to behave properly in public incorporates many if not all of the social skills interventions that we have discussed here. It also, however, involves self-talk. As we have discussed previously, it is vital to teach children with ADHD how to self-talk as a way of self-regulating their behavior. You must be saying to yourself, how could these children manage to self-talk themselves through so many socially inappropriate behaviors? These children have to learn to manage those behaviors one at a time. If you have not realized it by now, learning positive social skills is a very slow process.

First, children with ADHD have to be aware of or be made aware of their social skills problems and the consequences that ensue as a result of exhibiting them. Second, these children have to be willing and interested in changing their socially inappropriate behavior. Third, they must change their socially inappropriate behavior to socially appropriate behavior. The reason why it is so important for them to change their behavior is so they can behave properly in public.

I always told my children that they can argue and fight at home, but when they were out in public they had to behave. If children with ADHD are observed behaving inappropriately in public, they will be ostracized by their peers. Children with ADHD, especially, are looked upon in ways that are stigmatizing and unfair. People look at these children's behavior as a separate entity.

They do not seem to care about evaluating the child behind the behavior. As I have said before, children with ADHD do not choose to behave in the way that they do. Do you honestly think that they would choose to be distractible, exhibit excessive verbiage, and annoy people with whom they come into contact? I guarantee that they would not choose to be identified and characterized in that way. How can teachers

and parents help these children to learn to behave properly in public?

Teachers and parents need to teach children with ADHD that their behavior labels them. Therefore, these children's behavior separates them out from other children. Since all people see initially is these children's irritating and obstructive behavior, they immediately decide that they do not want to be around these children. The only way to combat other people's prejudiced attitudes is for children with ADHD to behave properly in public.

It is your job as a teacher and as a parent to teach children with ADHD to diminish their socially inappropriate behavior in the ways that have been discussed here. Some of these methods are role playing; writing and reading social stories; conversing with children with ADHD about their socially inappropriate behavior; having children with ADHD view themselves on videotape so they can see the consequences of their actions; setting up a schedule of rewards for their socially appropriate behavior; and self-regulating their behavior, among others.

If you as a teacher or parent have a positive, optimistic attitude that these children can and will be able to change their behavior, **THEY WILL BUILD POSITIVE SOCIAL SKILLS** and, therefore, **WILL** be able to change their behavior in public!!!



# 7

## SUPPORTING SKILL DEVELOPMENT

### **WHAT IS POSITIVE BEHAVIOR SUPPORT?**

Just as children with ADHD need to learn to plan and to execute, teachers and parents need to do so as well, in terms of developing a regimen for social skills training. This plan must begin with an assessment of the child's socially inappropriate behavior in question. The assessment should delineate the antecedent events, which are the events that happened before the child behaved inappropriately. Also included in the assessment is the behavior itself, as well as the consequences of the behavior.

This information is typically called ABC: antecedent, behavior, and consequence. It is important to “determine under what conditions a behavior is most likely to occur (antecedents) and what happens in the environment as a result of the behavior

and maintains that behavior (consequences)” (Steege & Watson, 2003, p. 34).

Who gathers all of this information? Who makes hypotheses about the child’s behavior on the basis of the information that was collected? Who develops social skills intervention plans for the child? A team has to be chosen to do all of the above. Among others who should be on the team are all of the child’s teachers (art, gym, music, etc.); speech therapists; occupational therapists; social workers; and psychologists who work with this child. I also would ask the school nurse and the bus driver to be on the team. It may sound overwhelming to manage all of the individuals on the team, but believe me, it is all for the child’s welfare as well as for the sake of your classroom running smoothly.

If the team is able to find out why the child is exhibiting this behavior, it is easier for them to eliminate it. One way to determine the reasons for the child’s socially inappropriate behavior is through positive behavior support.

Positive behavior support (PBS) is a “problem-solving approach to understanding the reasons for problem behavior and designing comprehensive interventions that are matched to hypotheses about why problem behavior is occurring and to the individual’s unique social, environmental, and cultural milieu” (Bambara & Kern, 2005, p. 3). As I alluded to before, PBS is a team approach to investigate what occurs before a child exhibits a socially inappropriate behavior, what the function of that behavior is, and what the consequence of that behavior is. PBS has been found to be effective with children of all ages and all disabilities (Conroy, Dunlap, Clarke, & Alter, 2005).

The goal of PBS is not to punish the child for his behavior, but instead to prevent and teach. Additionally, by using PBS, teachers can tailor interventions to the individual needs of each child. How can teachers find out why a student is exhibiting a specific behavior? PBS depends on functional behavior assessment to evaluate the relationship between the events in the environment, the child’s response to those events, and the

function that the socially inappropriate behavior provides for the child with ADHD.

## FUNCTIONAL BEHAVIOR ASSESSMENT

Functional behavior assessment (FBA) is “a process of gathering a collection of information about an individual and his/her environment” (Bambara & Kern, 2005, p. 129). An FBA helps you detail the events that may be related to inappropriate behavior. Among these, you will want to “determine which are directly related to triggering the target behavior” (Watson & Steege, 2003, p. 35).

After identifying the triggers, you will then need to determine what *function* the behavior serves for this child. Bambara and Kern (2005) delineate some possible functions:

- To obtain attention/social interaction
- To obtain materials/activities
- To obtain sensory stimulation
- To escape/avoid attention/social interaction
- To escape/avoid materials/activities (Bambara and Kern, 2005, p. 30)

The teacher as well as the members of the team selected will observe the child’s behavior. This step obviously involves having someone else teach your class while you are observing, which will give you great insight into why the child is behaving in such a way, including environmental reasons for the child’s socially inappropriate behavior.

How can you possibly ask someone else to teach your class? That is why you have formed your team! Make sure that not only have the other members of the team been involved with the child in question, but also that the teachers on your team have children in their classes whom they want to evaluate as well.

**GATHERING THE INFORMATION**

What type of information should the team gather? First, even though the child's school has files with information on each particular child, those files may not be up to date. You need to find the answers to the following questions, among others, either through interviews with the child's parents, members of his extended family, or previous teachers. You could also use questionnaires.

1. Where has the child attended school?
2. Has he only attended the school that he attends right now?
3. Find out about the child's educational history. Has he missed many days of school? If so, why?
4. Has the child been officially diagnosed with ADHD?
5. Does the child have an individualized educational plan (IEP)?
6. What services if any does the child receive?
7. Is the child healthy? (Ask for the most recent physician's evaluation.) Is he taking any medications? If so, what is the reason and how long has the child taken those medications?
8. What is the child's life like at home?
9. Does he have siblings? What is his relationship to them?
10. Has his mother had a baby recently? If so, how old is the baby? What was the reaction of the child to the new baby?
11. What is the child's relationship like with his parents?
12. Do the child's parents have an intact marriage? If not, are they divorced? If they are divorced, are their interactions harmonious or acrimonious?
13. How old was the child when his parents divorced?
14. Does the child have living grandparents? What kind of relationship does he have with them?

15. Does he have friends in the neighborhood? Are they of similar age to him, or older or younger?
16. Is the child involved in community activities?
17. Does anyone in his family have a diagnosis of ADHD?
18. Do people in the school and the community know that he has ADHD?
19. What are the child's academic and social strengths?
20. What are his academic needs?
21. What are the child's social needs?
22. In which, if any, extracurricular activities is the child involved?

The answers to these questions will give teachers good background information from which they can determine why the child is exhibiting socially inappropriate behavior. This information also gives you some idea of what the child's life is like outside of school, which, hopefully, will be a good starting point to talk to the child about his home life and, ultimately, his behavior.

## **THE OBSERVATION**

Who should observe the child in question? Everyone on the PBS team should observe the child. Each of these people should keep an ongoing chart (which is easy to create on Excel) of the child's behaviors. It could even be a simple checklist. Just as important as the team charting the child's behaviors is for them to anecdote people's reactions to the child's behavior in his environment.

What do I mean by reactions? When the child has a temper tantrum, do the assistants and the teachers react in a calm or in a hysterical way? Is the way the teachers handle the temper tantrums of the child with ADHD relaxed and orderly, or do they behave in an anxious way that could exacerbate the

child's behavior? When the child makes an inappropriate remark, do the adults who hear him yell at the child, ignore the outburst, or remove the child from the situation that causes the behavior? Do these adults remove the child with ADHD as a punishment to thwart more verbal outbursts or as a way to calm the child down?

What are the observers looking for? They need to observe the child within his daily interactions and specifically, in activities where the inappropriate behavior is likely to occur. The observers are also looking for an antecedent event that may trigger or set off the child's socially inappropriate behavior. The observers also have to anecdote the behavior, of course, as well as the consequences of the child's behavior. In addition to recording the child's behavior, the team needs to record the following:

- \* What happens after the child exhibits the socially inappropriate behavior?
- \* Do the observers react to the misbehavior?
- \* Do these people give the child negative attention that increases the behavior's probability of recurring?
- \* Do they ignore the inappropriate behavior and just pay attention to the appropriate behavior?
- \* What is the body language like of the people who are noticing the behavior? Do they roll their eyes, for example?

### **HOW LONG IS THE OBSERVATION?**

The time of the observations is as long as it takes for the team to determine exactly what circumstances are instrumental in causing the inappropriate behaviors and the purpose or function that they offer the child. The observation should continue over time until the team discovers the specific circumstances that provoke problem behaviors and the function that is served by these behaviors.

## **DEVELOPING HYPOTHESES ABOUT THE CHILD'S SOCIALLY INAPPROPRIATE BEHAVIOR**

At this point, you want to look at the information you have gathered as well as the specific behaviors that you have observed and begin to hypothesize as to the reasons for the child's behavior. Is there an association or a relationship between specific events and the problem behaviors? Can you summarize these events? These hypotheses that the team forms help them to decide what aspects of the child's environment need to be changed as well as what alternative skills for the problem behavior can be taught.

After you summarize all of the information you gathered, you will be able to see patterns of the child's behavior, specifically, why the problems developed initially; under what conditions the behavior occurred; and more important, the recurrence of the socially inappropriate behaviors. What next?

### **QUESTIONS THE TEAM CAN ASK THEMSELVES**

At this point the team can ask themselves the following questions:

- \* Are there conditions that should be changed?
- \* Should we teach the child alternate behaviors?
- \* What are interventions that we should facilitate?
- \* Do we need to implement different strategies for different settings?
- \* What support strategies should we implement (i.e., lifestyle, curricular, social, etc.)?
- \* Do we need to implement different support strategies for different settings?
- \* Are the strategies instructive and preventive instead of just consequence oriented and reactive? (Bambara & Kern, 2005, p. 59)

The answers to these questions are important because once the team can identify the antecedents, they can then attempt to diminish or eliminate them so that the socially inappropriate behavior is no longer caused by these problem events. Additionally, the team can also begin to introduce positive events and encourage socially appropriate events into the child's schedule so that his socially inappropriate behavior will decrease.

However, intervening based on the antecedent event may only be a temporary solution because that means that the team quickly prevents problem behaviors. In other words, intervening based on the antecedent event may only be a short-term solution, as I observed in my field research. Perhaps changing the child's environment will offer a more permanent solution to diminishing the socially inappropriate behavior of the child with ADHD.

## **CHANGING THE CHILD'S ENVIRONMENT**

When the team assesses the child, they are able to determine why a problem behavior is occurring as well as what is occurring in the child's environment and his life. Is it vital to find out what is occurring in the child's environment? Absolutely, because PBS emphasizes changing the child's environment as well as teaching alternative social skills so that the inappropriate behavior is no longer useful to the child.

One of the most interesting elements of my field research was how often the homeschool parents changed the environment in which the child was being taught, such as when the parent judged that the child was becoming inattentive. They would begin, for instance, working at a table and over time, move to the couch, outside, and then back to the original table. Children with ADHD are active. That being said, the parents in my research realized that most of the time it was more effective to permit their children to move around and to learn in other environments than the ones where they began their day's lessons.

As teachers, you are most likely saying to yourself, I cannot change the environment where the child with ADHD learns in my classroom. Well, actually, you can. With the principal's approval, the child can work in the hall, in the library, or perhaps in a cubby in another classroom where the student feels comfortable with the teacher and the students. Clearly, a teacher in a school does not have as much flexibility as a parent at home, but there is, nonetheless, flexibility. All it takes is a little creativity.

Positive behavior support is an extensive investigative method that helps teachers to comprehend the reasons for a child's misbehavior. By using this approach, teachers create valuable long-term interventions individualized for each child's needs and learning styles. After compiling notes from the observations of a child's behavior, the members of an educational team can devise hypotheses as to the causes of the child's socially inappropriate behavior and devise interventions to match those hypotheses. PBS accentuates changing the child's environment as well as offering the child replacement skills, until the child's socially inappropriate behavior is no longer needed. See the bibliography at the end of this book for more information on positive behavior support. Additionally, you can go to <http://pbis.org>, which offers further information on this very important topic in education today.



# 8

## CONCLUSION

There are two questions with which I wish to leave you:

1. What have you learned from this book?
2. How can you use what you have learned?

I have taught you the definition of ADHD. By now you should realize that ADHD really exists and that it is not some made-up excuse for gaining a competitive edge in the world of testing! ADHD has a long history, as you have seen, and it is most certainly a legitimate disorder. After you became familiar with the evolution of ADHD, I then taught you how to recognize and better understand the difficulties that characterize the day-to-day social interactions of children with ADHD. You have learned that children with ADHD have social skills problems.

Most important, I have taught you about the detrimental effects that social skills problems can have on children with ADHD in terms of their life's prognosis. I must reiterate the fact that if children with ADHD do not learn to self-regulate their socially inappropriate behavior, they arguably will become adults who exhibit socially inappropriate behavior. Those adults with ADHD who do not know how to self-regulate their socially inappropriate behavior will most likely have great difficulty making friends, finding a spouse, and obtaining and keeping a job.

For children with ADHD, learning to self-regulate their socially inappropriate behavior is a lifelong process. The more quickly children with ADHD, their teachers, and their parents understand and accept the fact that learning positive social skills is a long-term process, the more likely it will be that they will all have more patience in terms of how long it takes for these children to diminish their socially inappropriate behavior. We have also learned that the socially inappropriate behaviors of children with ADHD are caused by the fact that they have social skills deficits.

I have taught you about the social skills deficits of children with ADHD. These lessons have been facilitated through reading about the real-life experiences of children with ADHD who have social skills deficits. You have read about these children's social interactions, specifically, how they behaved and how they interacted with others. More important, I have also taught you how social skills deficits can actually affect children with ADHD, especially how these deficits can prevent children with ADHD from learning positive social skills.

By reading real-life examples of the socially inappropriate behavior of children with ADHD, you hopefully will now be able to recognize and understand the social skills problems of children who have ADHD in your classrooms. You will also have learned about the emotional composition of these children that causes them to be characterized by having a lack of self-control; having difficulties with transitions; having a lack

## CONCLUSION

of self-awareness of their behavior; misunderstanding others' social cues; being teased; and being bullied.

As the teacher, if you understand the social skills problems of the children with ADHD in your classroom, is that enough to learn? No, it is just the beginning. For example, I have also taught about the sequence of social interactions that children with ADHD must learn. These are the initial interaction of eye contact; greeting another person; initiating conversation; and joining in on activities, among others.

I have delineated two lists of social skills. I adapted one list from Elliott and Gresham's (1991) research. The second is a list of social skills that I created from my field research on observing homeschool parents teaching children with ADHD. Included as well are research-supported lists of social skills that teachers expect children with ADHD to exhibit. I have also incorporated research-supported lists of social skills that teachers rated as vital for school success.

I have made suggestions specifically for teachers in terms of laying the foundation for teaching social skills. Also included are techniques and strategies for teachers and parents to teach social skills to children with ADHD.

These interventions can be used by both parents and teachers. But it is imperative for teachers to assess the children in question before teaching them social skills. These social skills training interventions are accompanied by examples of those methods as well.

I have instructed teachers, specifically, about positive behavior support, which is being heavily researched as we speak. It is a good way to try to understand problem behavior in terms of determining why a certain behavior has occurred. Then, interventions are designed according to those reasons and tailored to "the individual's unique social, environmental, and cultural milieu" (Bambara & Kern, 2005, p. 3). Last, but not least, I have given you a list of resources that you can access that will assist you when you are teaching social skills to children with ADHD.

## CHAPTER 8

I hope that this book is useful to you both in your classrooms and in your homes. One last suggestion: Try to make sure that as you are teaching these wonderful children with ADHD, you remain optimistic and hopeful relating to all of the ways that these children can learn positive social skills. If they feel that you have a positive outlook, they too will have a positive outlook. I hope that you enjoyed reading this book as much as I enjoyed writing it. I look forward to your comments and questions.

# NOTES

## **PREFACE**

1. “The U.S. Department of Education estimates that nearly forty-seven million students are currently enrolled in public schools” (Hayes, 2002, p. xi). In consideration of the fact that “the prevalence of Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder has been estimated at 3%–7% in school-age children, approximately 3,290,000 of those children have ADHD” (APA, 2000, p. 90).

## **INTRODUCTION**

1. <http://www.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/esea02/107-110.pdf>.
2. When I refer to teachers not teaching social skills to children with ADHD, I am making a generalization. Clearly there are many

## NOTES

teachers throughout the United States and internationally who teach social skills to children with ADHD.

3. “[I]dentifying times and activities when a child’s goals and the instructional procedures for those goals can be inserted into children’s ongoing activities, routines, and transitions in a way that relates to context. It involves distributing opportunities to learn goals and apply instructional procedures for those goals across different activities, routines, and transitions of the day” (Sandall et al., 2005, p. 300).

4. “(ii) . . . use effective methods and instructional strategies that are based on scientifically-based research” (Public Law 107–110–JAN. 8, 2002 115 STAT. 1473, 1111(b) (1) (D)).

## CHAPTER 2

1. “Social skills acquisition deficits refer to either the absence of knowledge for executing a particular skill even under optimal conditions, or a failure to discriminate which social behaviors are appropriate in specific conditions” (Gresham et al., 2001, p. 334).

2. “Social skills performance deficits represent the presence of social skills in a student’s behavioral repertoire, but the failure to perform these skills at acceptable levels in given situations” (Gresham et al., 2001, p. 334).

3. Anastopoulos et al., 1993; Gonzalez, 2002; Pfifner & McBurnett, 1997; Sheridan, 1998.

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