

Supporting Children who have Social Communication Difficulties

Understanding Language

Never make assumptions about your child's understanding. When giving instructions use ideas and words that they know. Even if they use a word themselves, they might not understand it.

Learning through Experience

- ⇒ Some children learn by doing and experiencing.
- ⇒ The child may not pick up information from what's happening around them.
- ⇒ You can help your child to understand by taking them step by step through the reasoning process.
- ⇒ They may not use what they already know to help them understand something new (draw inference) so adults will have to do this for them and talk them through the process.



Learning Social Rules

- ⇒ Some children need to be taught the rules of social behaviour as social rules are not always obvious to them.
- ⇒ Some children may only see the extremes of good/bad, happy/sad right/wrong etc.

Learning Behaviours

- ⇒ Some children may seem a bit rude or over-familiar or display atypical behaviours. This may be due to a difficulty understanding social rules or interpreting emotions of others.
- ⇒ You can gently point out what is wrong and what they might say instead. Praise their attempts.
- ⇒ They may keep checking the rules by asking "is this right"; "am I being good?" so praise them when they get it right and give reassurance.

Conversation skills

- ⇒ Children can get stuck on certain topics and keep coming back to them. They feel comfortable and less anxious talking about things they know about.
- ⇒ Acknowledge this interest and gently remind the child of the topic being discussed.

Understanding Time

- ⇒ Some children may be totally unaware of time pressures.
- ⇒ They need you to be flexible about what you expect them to get done in a given time.
- ⇒ Visual cues (e.g sand timer or visual schedule) can be useful strategies .

Understanding expectations

Be clear

- ⇒ Children need you to be very clear about what you want them to do.
- ⇒ For example - "first tea, then computer"; "one more then it's finished"
- ⇒ Don't add an extra activity as this will be confusing. You can always try more next time.

Be visual

- ⇒ Being visual may help a child to focus.
- ⇒ You could use a stop watch or sand timer



Be reassuring

- ⇒ Children may become anxious if they do not know or cannot remember what they are meant to do.
- ⇒ Write a list or use pictures to help.
- ⇒ You can also reassure them by showing them first what they are supposed to do.
- ⇒ If possible, keep an area of the house distraction free. This can be a quiet space for your child to take some time-out. i.e. no pictures on walls, no tv /radio

Being Rewarded

- ⇒ Praise a child straight away for something they have done well.
- ⇒ Make sure they know exactly what you are praising them for.
- ⇒ Rewards need to be something that the child really likes, e.g. computer time, sticker, star on a chart.
- ⇒ Use calm positive talking to encourage the child. For example, Don't say - "you've been doing that for 20 minutes hurry up" Do say – "well done, you've nearly finished. Remember- finish work, then computer."