



Creating natural opportunities for young autistic children to learn social skills in their early childhood centre.

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OVERVIEW

The Social Stations program was developed to provide early childhood educators with a way of teaching social skills as part of the usual daily program.

The Social Stations program is part of the group program so it can benefit all children in the group. It is particularly useful for those children who are struggling to develop social skills such as children with autism spectrum disorders or language disorders.

A Social Station is a learning centre where pairs of children sit together to practice social skills during indoor play time. Social Stations focuses on three broad skills:

We sit together

- Playing with other children

We play together

- Sharing toys with other children

We talk together

- Chatting to other children

THE RESEARCH BEHIND SOCIAL STATIONS

The Social Stations program was developed from recommendations in the research literature for teaching social skills to young children with autism.

Naturalistic learning

Social skills researchers recommend that therapy targeting social learning occur in the child's natural **social setting** during natural **everyday activities** while interacting with **typically developing peers**.

Child centred learning

Many children with autism or social skills difficulties find it difficult to learn as part of a group. Instead, they may be more comfortable practicing social skills with just one child.

Peer mediated learning

Peer-mediated interventions (PMI) involve peers engaging with children with a diverse range of abilities in a mutually enjoyable, positive experience. Children with autism learn from their peer models. Similarly, typically developing peers also learn to value diversity and enjoy supporting their friends.

Visually structured learning

Visual approaches such as cue cards (which remind the child what to do or say) and video models are research-based approaches for teaching social skills.

<p>Peer-mediated intervention for pre-schoolers with ASD: Effects on responses and initiations</p> <p>ESTHER KATZ & LUIGI GIROLAMETTO</p> <p><i>Speech-Language Pathology, Faculty of Medicine, University of Toronto, Toronto, Ontario, Canada</i></p> <p>Purpose: This study investigates the effects of peer-mediated intervention on the responses and initiations of pre-schoolers (aged 4:2-5:1) with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD).</p> <p>Method: A speech-language pathologist and three early childhood educators trained typically-developing peers to facilitate responses and initiations from three pre-schoolers with ASD during playtime. A multiple baseline design across subjects used to determine the effects of the intervention. Play sessions between the children with ASD and their typically-developing peers were videotaped. Videotapes were analysed using an interval coding system in order to collect information regarding responses and initiations.</p> <p>Results: All three target children demonstrated improvements in their responses and initiations to their peers during intervention. Moreover, they maintained these gains 4 weeks later and generalized their response and initiation skills to an untrained peer. Social validity data, obtained using unbiased, independent, lay observers to rate the children's performance provided external validation of an observable treatment effect (i.e. increased responses and initiations) following intervention.</p> <p>Conclusion: The results suggest that training typically-developing peers to implement intervention strategies using the collaboration between a speech-language pathologist and early childhood educators may be an effective model of service delivery to enhance peer interaction skills of pre-schoolers with ASD.</p>	<p>The Effects of a Buddy Skills Package on Preschool Children's Social Interactions and Play</p> <p>Kristy Hughett, MAE¹, Frank W. Kohler, PhD¹, and Donna Raschke, PhD¹</p> <p>Abstract</p> <p>The purpose of this study was to examine the impact of a buddy skills package on the social and play interactions between three preschoolers with developmental delays and their peers. Each child participated in sociodramatic play activities with two peers who exhibited age-appropriate social and play skills. Following baseline, the children participated in three sessions of training on the strategies of stay, play, and talk with your friends. The intervention consisting of teacher feedback, praise, and picture cards was then used to support children's social interactions and play. A multiple baseline design indicated that the package was effective for increasing children's cooperative play in the exchange of activity-related comments. In addition, each playgroup continued to demonstrate these positive outcomes during a maintenance condition.</p> <p><small>Topic in Early Childhood Specialization 22(4):240-254 © Humill Institute on Disabilities 2013 Reprints and permission: http://www.inqub.com/journals/permissions.asp DOI: 10.1177/0271321414264927 http://ecsp.sagepub.com SAGE</small></p>
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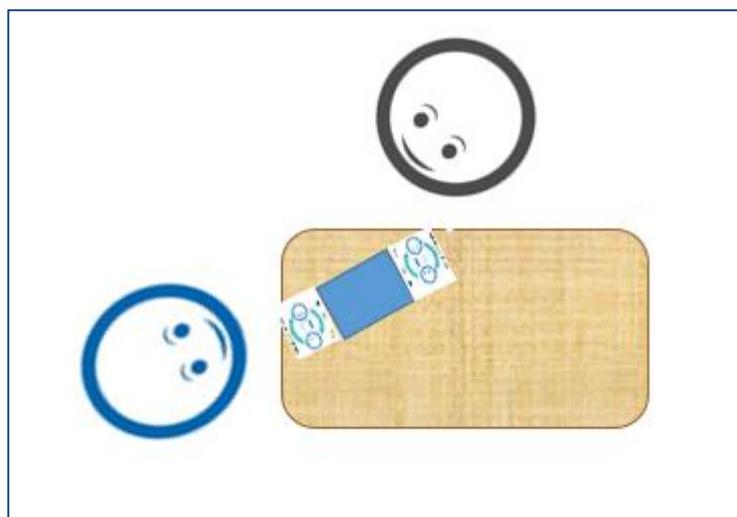
A SOCIAL STATION

A **Social Station** is a learning centre where two children sit together to practice social skills.

A **Social Station** consists of a small table with two chairs.

The **Social Station** becomes a permanent learning centre in the room in the same way that home corner or book corners can be found in most early childhood rooms.

Children are seated opposite each other at the corner of the table with an activity between them. Each child has a visual support to remind them of the expected social skill.



THE SOCIAL STATIONS PROGRAM

Structured, visually supported interactions with peers

The child with social difficulties and another child sits at the **Social Station** to talk and play together.

Utilising materials and activities in their natural setting

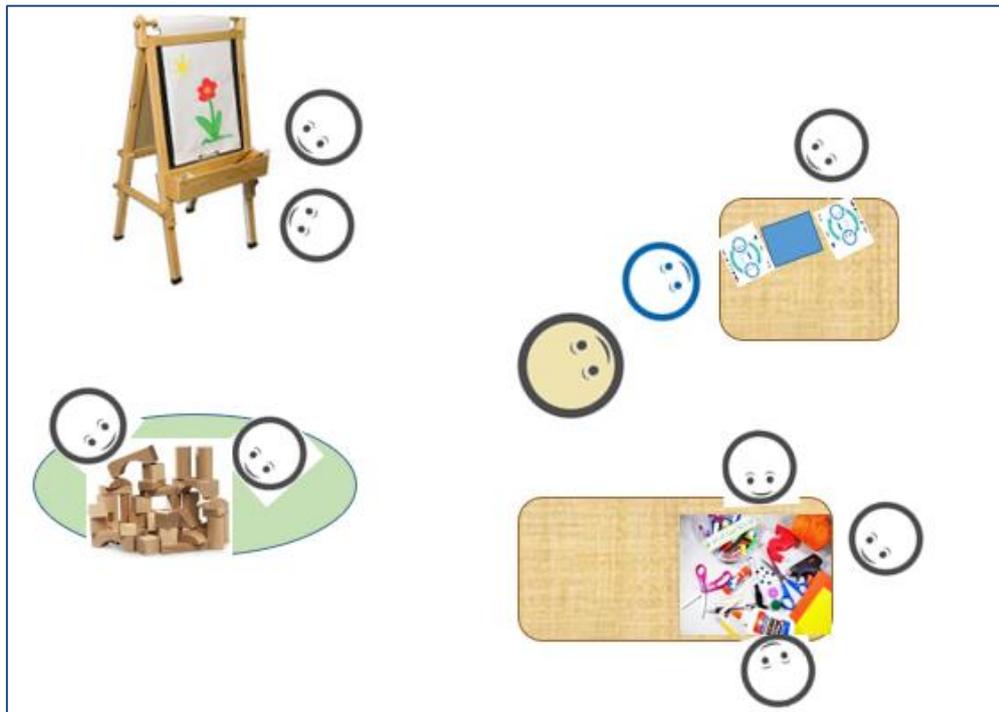
Children play together with indoor play materials such as a peg board or painting.

Embedded into the program

Social Stations provides an opportunity for social interactions as part of the normal early childhood program. Children are not withdrawn into empty rooms to work with a therapist.

Learning Centre Activity

The **Social Station** becomes a permanent learning centre in the room in the same way that home corner or book corners can be found in most early childhood rooms.



MATERIALS REQUIRED

Social Station

- One small table
- Two chairs positioned at the corner of the table facing each other.

Place the Social Station in a quiet area of your room.

Visual supports

Visual supports are located in the Appendices of this manual. Please laminate these and place them at the Social Station.

- **Social Station Sign**
 - The sign is placed on or near the **Social Station** to show the children this is a designated social area.
 - This is located in the Appendices of this manual. Please print off two copies of the sign and attach to the Social Station or to the wall near the Social Station.
- Cue Cards
 - These cards remind the children what to do.
 - These are located in the Appendices of this manual.

Video Model

- A video model shows the children the expected behaviour.
- The children watch the video model to learn what to do or say.
- Your therapist will help you make the video models on your centre's iPad, tablet or phone.

SUGGESTED SOCIAL STATIONS ACTIVITIES

- Kinetic sand
- Peg board
- Lego/Duplo/blocks
- Small animals
- Construction activities
- Magnet activities
- Blocks/Lego/Duplo
- Shared painting
- Shared picture to colour e.g. Easter Egg at Easter
- Shared picture to collage



WHICH STAGE SHOULD YOU START?

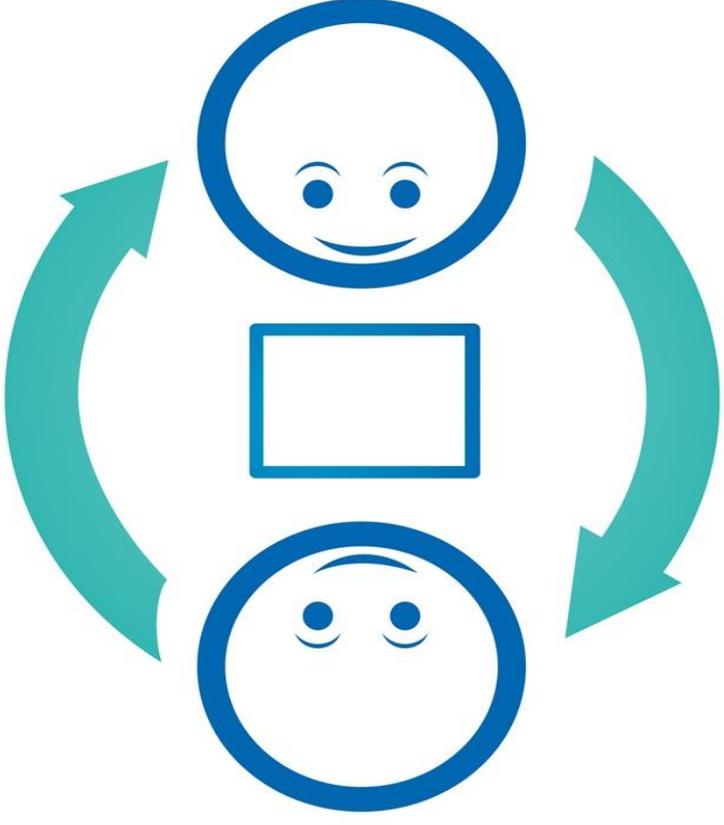
Social Stations may not be suitable for children who are stressed, anxious or struggling to stay calm.

Stage	Goals for the child
Sit	Play next to another child
Play	Play with the same toy as another child Wait while another child has a turn with the toy Give a toy to another child when they ask for it Offer a toy to another child during play
Talk	Ask for toys e.g. Can I have Ask for a turn e.g. Can I have a turn Chat to another child about the toys Chat back (respond) to what another child says Say the name of another child to gain their attention

STEPS IN THE SOCIAL STATIONS PROGRAM

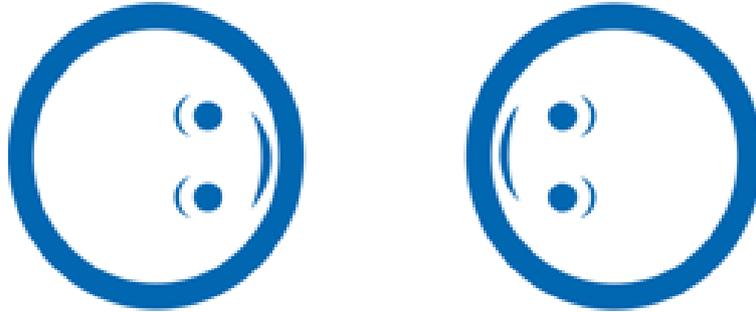
1. Introduce the **Social Station** at group time
 - Explain that a **Social Station** is a place to sit, play and talk to your friends
 - Explain that two buddies sit together at the Social Station
 - Show the children the materials at the Social Station
 - Show the video model
2. Select the **Social Station** buddies
 - Either put all of the children's names in a hat to draw out two people to sit together
OR
 - Choose a buddy to sit with the child with autism
3. Direct the buddies to the **Social Station**
4. Praise the children at the **Social Station**
 - "I like how you are sitting together"
 - "Well done. You are sharing the blocks together"
 - "I just heard you both talk together about the painting. That's terrific"

APPENDICES

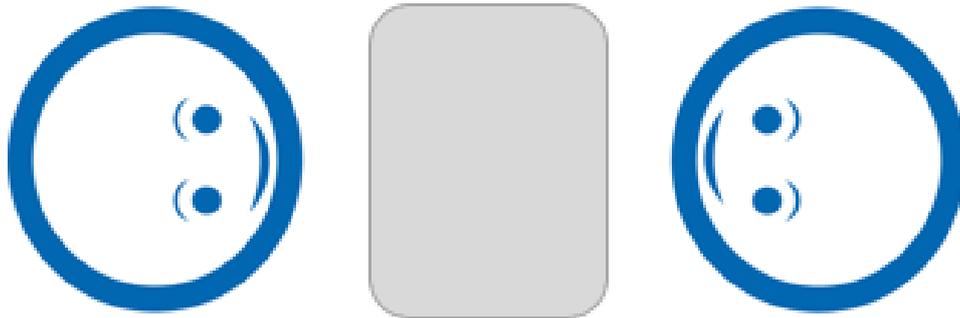


SOCIAL **STATIONS**

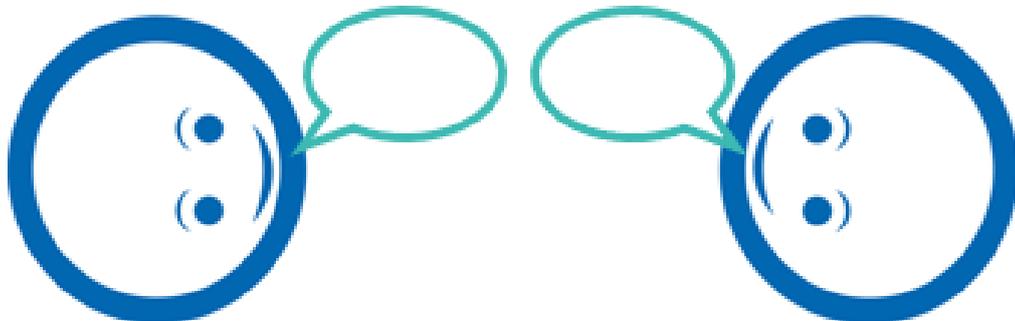
We sit together



We play together



We talk together



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