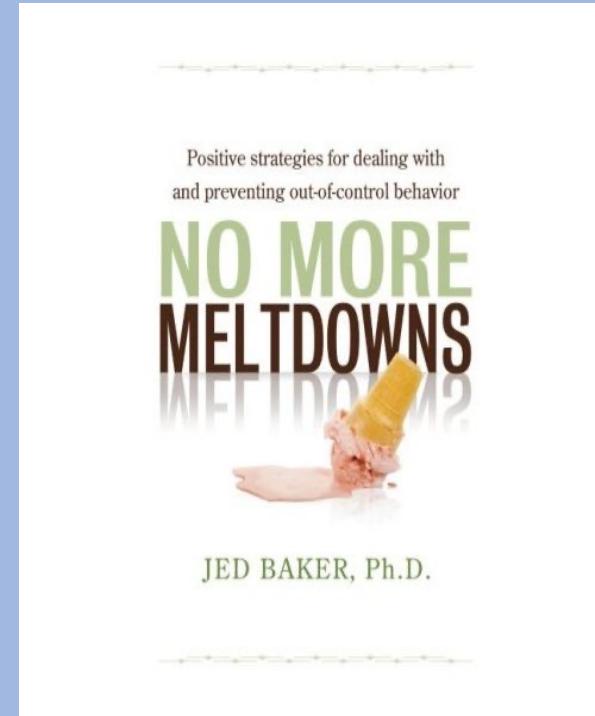
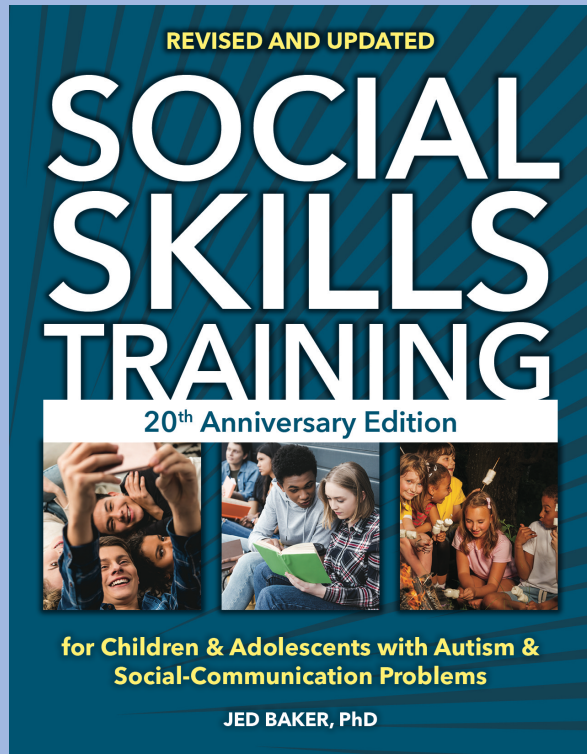


Empowering Neurodivergent Learners: Emotion Regulation, Meltdown Support & Social Growth Strategies



Jed Baker, PhD

Overview of Seminar

- Neuro-affirmative framework
- Predictors of successful outcomes
- Creating environmental supports and developing coping skills to handle and prevent challenging moments
- Key components to creating social connections

Neuro-affirmative framework

- Language issues:
 - Identification is a personal choice: “Person with autism”, “Autistic”, “Neurodivergent”
 - Differently abled not disabled.
 - Clients not patients
- Acceptance of asd/nd profile as a difference not a deficit.
- Appreciation of particular asd/nd profile in crafting supports.
- Interventions are two fold:
 - Creating environmental supports: what can we do to help.
 - Developing adaptive behaviors or “skills” to reach a client’s own goals rather than to simply look neurotypical.
- We work collaboratively with clients. Prevention plans are not imposed upon clients but created with clients.

What is a successful outcome? Quality of Life

What increases quality of life and life satisfaction?

1. Self-determination (Moser et al., 2025 with autistic youth)
 - Getting some **choice** in where/how you work, live and play, like pursuing interests
2. Sense of belonging –value through positive social connections
 - Harvard study on well being over 80 years (Waldinger and Schulz, 2023).
 - Moser et al showed frequent social participation related to satisfaction for ASD and Parenteau et al., 2023 emphasized quality of relationships as key. Participation in society related to adult ASD satisfaction (Schmidt et al., 2015)
3. Financial stability (Jachimowicz, Harvard Business School) translates to less day to day stress/pain (for ASD, service needs met -Moser et al. 2025)

Focus on predictors of greater quality of life outcomes

- **Person environment fit** – we need to provide good supports (Lai et al, 2020)
- **Communication/conversation** skills predict more independent living (Friedman, 2019)
- **Social/Emotional intelligence** stronger predictor of business success than math/analytical skills for neurotypicals (Harvard Business School). Predicts employment, residential status, and friendship in ASD (Clarke and Lord 2024)

Frostig Center study (Goldberg et al, 2003, Frostig Center) outcomes: employment, education, independence, life satisfaction

- **Self-awareness:** Especially of strengths and then compartmentalize challenges
- **Proactivity/motivation:** Self-determination, engaged in decision making, and problem solving
- **Emotional stability/coping:** Modifying environmental triggers and teaching coping skills

The starting point: build a positive relationship with the client

- Increased self-awareness of strengths (by client and or team)
- Create a collaboration to work on client goals and solve problems
 - Client's stated goals
 - Estimate of client goals based on an attempt to take their perspective
 - Awareness of those skills and supports that lead to better quality of life
 - E.g. to communicate and connect with others

Building Positive Self-Awareness (Team Awareness)

- Build positive self awareness, sense of optimistic future
 - List many strengths that will take you places in life for verbal client and for team working with less verbal client
 - List a few challenges that do not need to be overcome, just modified enough not to interfere with strengths.
- Use parts of testing results to build positive case
- We all need someone to believe in us more than we do sometimes. WHO DID THIS FOR YOU?

Example student

Strengths	Challenges
1. Good memory for facts 2. Good reader	1. Organization 2. Focus, comprehension and frustration in classes
3. Great at video games	3. Socializing comfortably
4. Expert in Japanese Anime	
5. Loves animals	
6. Good singer	
7. Kind and caring 8. Entertaining Can lead to a great academic and work career!	<u>Supports</u> : HW system, breakdown concepts, possible med for focus, teach social/frustration related skills

Problem Solving Life's Obstacles

- Understanding the problem from the student's point of view
- Respect their preferred way to solve life's issues with our guidance
- We do not do behavior plans to students, we create these plans with students



Collaborative and Proactive Solutions (Ross Greene's work) <https://livesinthebalance.org>

- The first step to solving unresolved problems is to explore the **student's perspective** (for both verbal or less verbal clients)
 - “I noticed that . . . What's up?
Explore student's reasons for the problem
 - Reflective listening: “So let me see if I understand the issues . . .”
 - “Is there more?”
 - Validate and Empathize, “It makes sense that you feel that way . . .”
 - For less verbal: put yourself in their shoes. How would you want to be treated? Seek to understand trigger and function of behavior to help modify trigger and teach a replacement.



Collaborative and Proactive Solutions (Ross Greene's work)

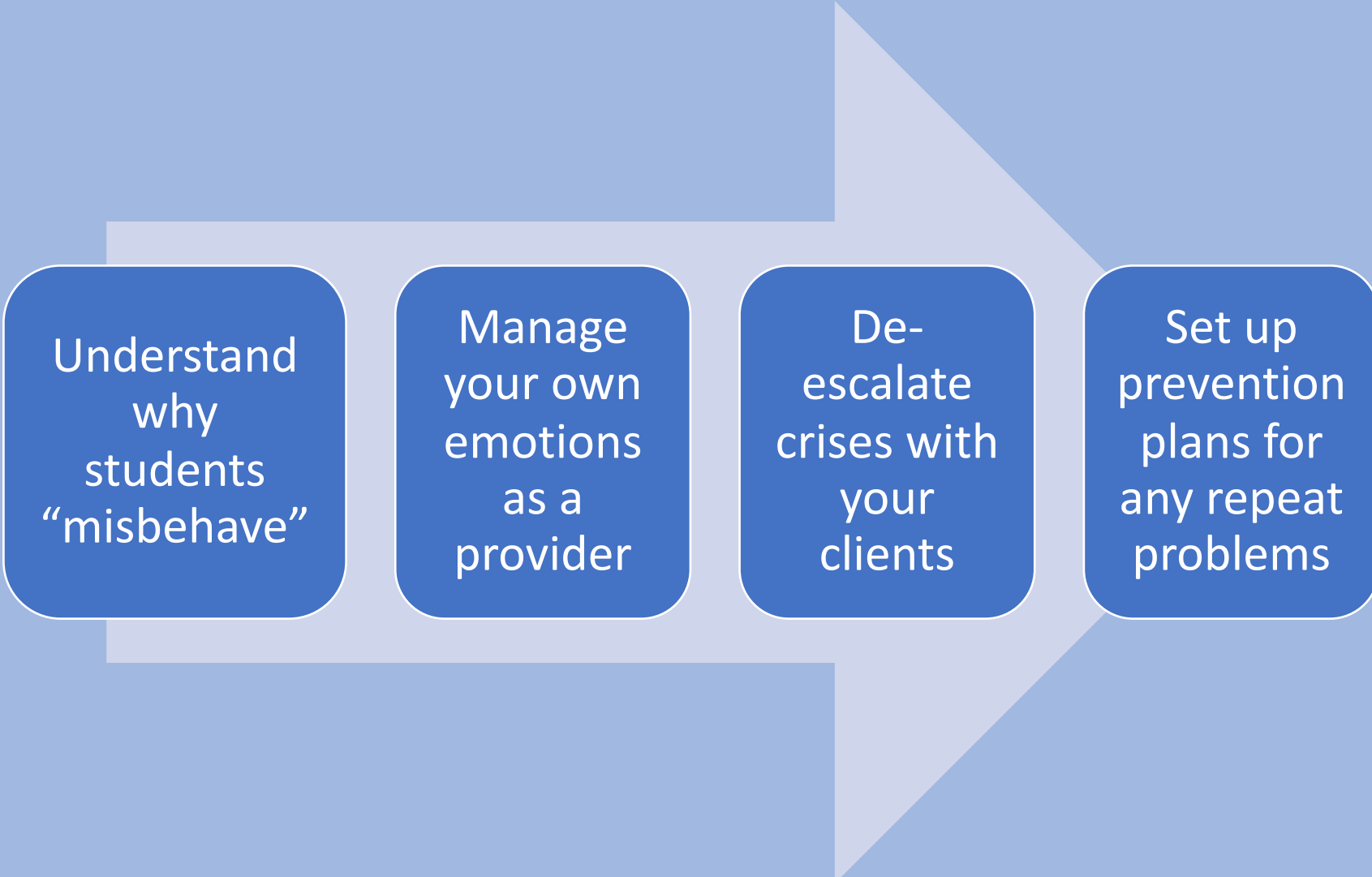
- Solutions are sought by **inviting** student to solve the identified problems
 - Choose an issue that student identified and ask, "I wonder if there is a way . . ."
 - Solutions must work for both parties and be realistic
 - Consider probability that it will work.



So client is now engaged and participating as collaborator, now what?

- Consider modifications to reduce challenges
- Consider developing coping skills to handle challenges

First help caretakers have the right attitude



Understand
why
students
“misbehave”

Manage
your own
emotions
as a
provider

De-
escalate
crises with
your
clients

Set up
prevention
plans for
any repeat
problems



- Hope also leads to better outcomes with challenging behavior in our clients!

How Hope Impacts Parenting

- Allows us to see difficult behavior as solvable
- Hope!
 - Temporary not stable
 - Specific behavior not a character flaw
- Is my kid doing this on purpose? Does not matter if it's a repeat problem.
 - Define problem as a gap between the demands placed on individuals and their coping skills
 - Therapy is: How to learn a better way to cope

“Kids need the most love when they seem to deserve it the least.” Rick Lavoie

Discipline versus Educating

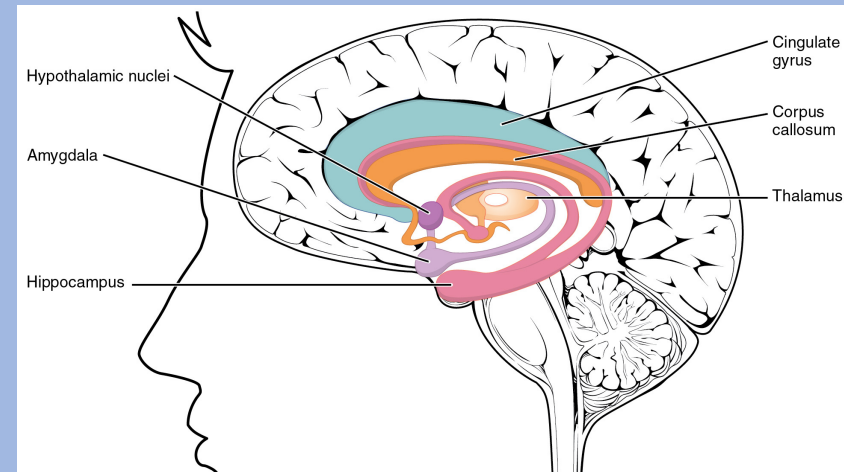
- Discipline, rules and consequences can be a first step (especially for well regulated individuals)
- But when it does not work (especially for dysregulated individuals):
 - Continue in an escalating power struggle?
 - Or ask why is it happening so we can prevent the problem rather than simply react to it.
 - Prevention is: Alter demands, teach better ways to cope



Biology of Fear and Frustration

- Low Frustration Tolerance

- Limbic system: Controls emotions and fight, flight or freeze response
- Forebrain: Reasoning and planning
 - Dr. Banner before he becomes the Hulk
- Limbic system can hijack the rest of the brain
- Prevent rage and distract when in rage.



Crisis Management of the Hulk

- Don't threaten further at that moment
 - Non-verbal skills to increase safety.
 - Listen, agree, apologize when necessary
 - Collaborate: Ask "what do you want? Lets find the right way to get that."
- When logic is gone: Distract
 - Novel items
 - Special interests
 - Sensory activities
- Distraction versus Reward
 - Avoiding a task?
 - Cue asking for a break and simplify task



EMOTIONAL REGULATION TOOLS

Social communication

- Compliments/increase awareness of strengths
- Calm tone and pleasant facial expression
- Reflective listening and empathy
- Cognitive reframing when reasoning is accessible
- Humor and play
- Social engagement with safe/friends family

Sensory-motor

- Touch/hug for some, best for family members to do with permission
- Movement/exercise
- Food
- Music
- Ice

Refocusing attention

- Breathing/mindfulness meditation/ground in senses www.fragrantheart.com
- Imagery
- Progressive muscle relaxation
- Novel distractions
- Passions/hobbies

Use a Relaxation Folder to Cue Self-Regulation

Angry



Do something
fun



Talk to your helper



Prevention plans start with asking WHY

- Explore why it happens: Interview, observe & and keep a journal to find triggers
 - ABCs of behavior, yet focus on triggers
 - Interview client and family
- Develop a good prevention plan
 - Modify triggers
 - Increase ability to cope with trigger (skill training)

ABC Log

Name: _____ Student Observed: _____

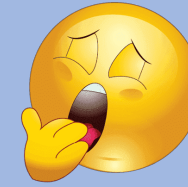
Date of Observation: _____

Antecedents/triggers may include: 1. Internal triggers like illness, hunger or tiredness, 2. Sensory triggers like too much stimulation or too little (boredom), 3. Lack of structure or visual supports leading to confusion, 4. Difficult or demanding tasks, like schoolwork, 5. Denied access to something desired (e.g., having to wait or not get something desired), 6. Threat to self-esteem like making a mistake, losing a game, or being teased or criticized. 7. Unmet needs for attention (e.g., being ignored or trying to be center of attention).

Antecedent		Behavior	Consequence	
Teacher/Parent	Peers	Student	Teacher/Parent	Peers

Typical Triggers

- Internal issues: hunger, tiredness, illness, pain, med change.



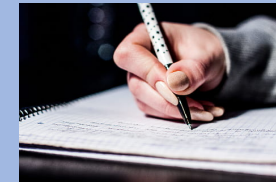
- Sensory issues: noise, light, touch, over-stimulation, boredom



- Lack of structure/visual support/schedule



- Challenging or new work, feared situations



- Having to wait, not get what one wants, disappointments



- Threats to self-esteem: losing, mistakes, criticism

GAME
OVER

- Unmet wishes for attention: ignored, want others to laugh



Internal Triggers

1. Change the triggers

- Basic needs: Feed if hungry, drink if thirsty, rest if tired
- Are they holding a body part indicating pain? Recent illness or change in meds?
 - Reflux, gas pain, ear infection, menstrual cramps

2. Teach “Expressing a pain”

- Use a doll and bandage to show where a pain is. “The boy’s head hurts” or the girl’s stomach hurts.
- Arthur’s tooth video example Dr Mary Barbera

Internal Triggers

3. Reward system

- Natural reward is relief of discomfort

4. Avoid loss system when dysregulated by internal triggers

Sensory Needs: Self-Stimulation

1. Change the triggers

- TOO MUCH STIMULATION : quiet/safe space identified when going to overstimulating environments. Auditorium, gym, malls and crowded public spaces.
- TOO LITTLE: For boredom, reduce wait time and engage. Larger classroom instruction, Art, Gym, Music
- Modify frustrating work

2. Teach skills

- Alternative ways/times to self-stim if it is disruptive to others
- How to be a self-advocate for better environment

Sensory Needs: Self-Stimulation

3. Reward system

- Reward new ways to self-stim
- Natural reward for requesting a quiet space

4. Loss systems:

- Maybe response cost if disruptive self-stim persists despite teaching alternative

Self-stim: scripting or movement

- Needing to soothe, regulate.
 - Schedule rather than eliminate
- Not engaged with instruction
 - Alter instructional strategy? Less words, more movement or visuals
 - “Touch your nose, touch your shoulders . . .”
- One more challenging self-stim...

Private

Bedroom



Public

School



Mall



Living Room



Schedule

- School



- Bus



- Home



- Private time



Okay touch

Handshake



High Five



Not okay touch

Hug



Kiss



Private parts



Lack of Structure

- Change Triggers
 - Use visual supports
- Teach replacement skills
 - Advocate for more structure when confused

Visually based strategies

- One can visually represent:
 - Schedules: APP – visual scheduler
 - Employment tasks, school work, routines
 - Building something
 - To motivate: For example “First/Then”
- The Teacch Approach to Autism Spectrum Disorders (Mesibov, Shea, Schopler, 2004)
- Visual Supports for People with Autism (Cohen and Sloan, 2007)

First/Then approach

First

Then

Find letters



iPad



Demands for Work (Pathological Demand Avoidance)

1. Change the triggers

- Model, prompt rather than test, explain learning curve
- Make it fun/multisensory (cooking, treasure hunts, videos)
- Visual supports: instructions, webs, outlines, labels
- Reduce length, use timer

2. Teach “Trying When It’s Hard”

- Try a little
- Ask to watch first or ask for help
- Take a break and try again
- Negotiate how much

Doing Home Work



Demands for Work

3. Reward system

- For trying, not for being correct
- Trying Poster

4. Avoid **loss system** when frustrated

“Nothing beats a failure but a try!”

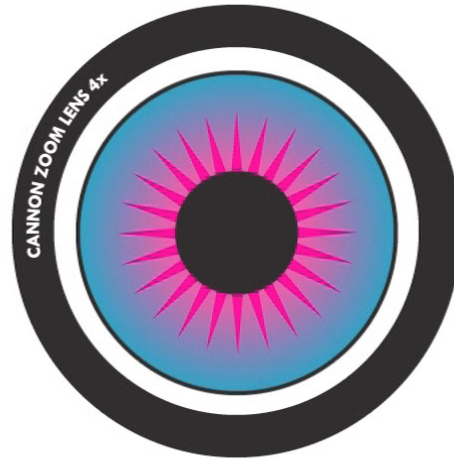
Carol Dweck's Mindsets

Mindset	Preferred task difficulty	Response to Mistakes	Acceptance of help	Learning outcomes
Fixed	Easy	Lose motivation	Avoid	Lower
Growth	Hard	Stay motivated	Welcome	Higher

Trying When Its Hard from Jed Baker YouTube Channel

From YouTube Channel: No More Meltdowns, Jed Baker

T C I F I L M S C H O O L
P R O D U C T I O N S



Trying When Work is Hard

(from Baker's Picture Book)

1. Try to do the work.
2. Ask for help if you need it.
3. Negotiate or compromise rather than refuse to do the work.
4. Ask for a short break if you get upset.
5. Go back to doing your work.

1. Try to do the work.



Helpful Way
The instructor give him
work to do and he tries
it.



No Helpful Way
He crumples the work
in anger without even
trying.

2. Ask for help if you need it.



Helpful Way
He asks for help when he has trouble.



Not Helpful Way
He gets mad when he has trouble.

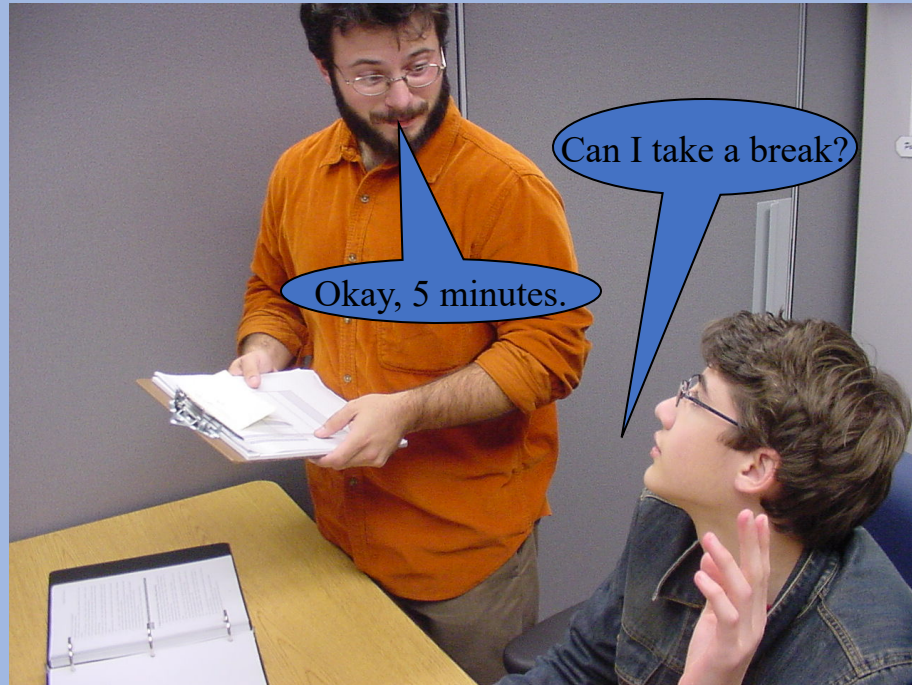
3. Negotiate or compromise rather than refuse to do the work.



Helpful Way

He asks nicely to compromise when there was too much work.

4. Ask for a break if you need one.



Helpful Way
He asks for and takes a short break.



Helpful Way
He takes a short break.

5. Come back and try again.



He tries the work again.



The instructor is impressed with his efforts.

Break out activity

9 year old Jimmy refuses to do most any schoolwork. He can articulate basic needs but is not conversational and has had a history of intermittent non-compliance with schoolwork since first grade.

- In order to address Jimmy's non-compliance, what would you want to know?
- Based on our discussion, what kind of interventions might one consider?

Dealing with Fear

1. **Change the triggers:** Avoid or modify stressors
2. **Teach ways to manage fear/anxiety**
 - Win them over to working on issue
 - Explain anxiety: True versus false alarms
 - Gradual exposure to fear: Create fear ladder
 - CBT: Think like a scientist
 - Add exercise, meditation/relaxation
 - Consider neurofeedback, meds if needed
3. **Reward system**
 - For facing each step of a fear
4. Avoid **loss system** when anxious

Dealing with Fear: Change the triggers

1. Can avoid feared situation when easy, but some situations we may need to face
2. Fire alarms vs. doing school work
3. Larger context of stressors
 - Work demands
 - Social demands
 - Traumatic living conditions

Dealing with Fear: Teach Skills

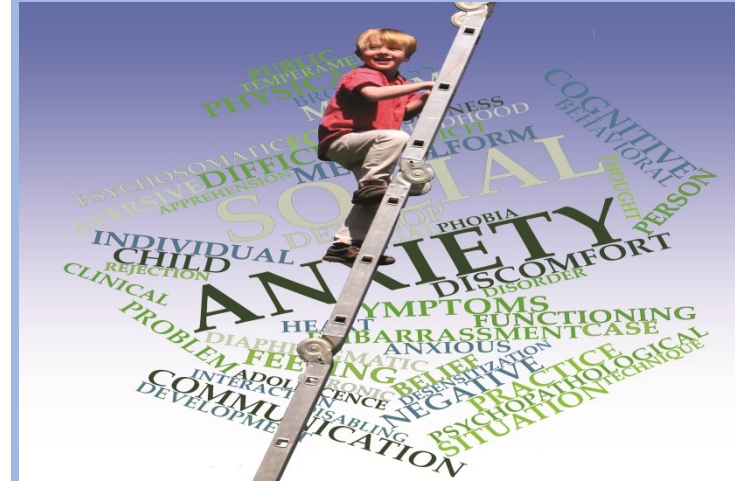
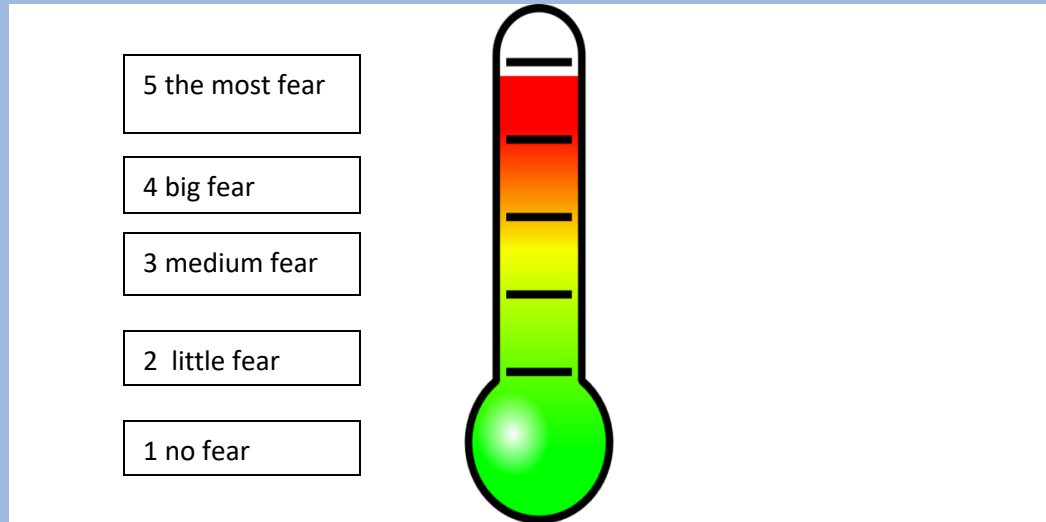
1. Win them over to working on issue
 - Many strengths versus few challenges
2. Explain anxiety: True versus false alarms
 - Incredible hulk has great value when danger is real, but not when it's a false alarm.
 - Accept presence of anxiety but don't be controlled by it. Worries are like false news in the background.



Dealing with Fear: Teach Skills

3. Gradual exposure to fear: Create fear ladder

- Rate anxiety in different situations on 5 point scale



- Set up ladder from least to most feared situation
- Always give client option to control when they will attempt a particular rung on the ladder
- Use external rewards when client has trouble understanding intrinsic reward for facing fears

Selective Mutism: Fear Ladder

Situation	Points
Nod "yes" or "no"	1
Whisper to best friend who can then tell others what she said	2
Whisper to other peers or teacher	3
Talk in louder voice to peers or teacher	4
Talk to any classroom visitors	5

Dealing with Fear: Teach Skills

4. CBT: Think like a scientist

- Assess validity of worrisome thoughts
- Ask two questions:
 - “Am I overestimating probability of something bad happening?”
 - “Am I overestimating how bad it would be if it did happen?”
- Create “think like a scientist cue card” for client



OCD: Think like a scientist

Feared situation	Anxious thought	Realistic Outcome
Touching germs	I will get a lethal disease.	I have skin that will protect me if I leave it intact and do not over wash or crack the skin. Germs I encounter are not lethal and can only cause minor treatable illnesses.
Not being able to wash repeatedly	The germ will remain on me and lead to illness.	Data show that washing once after exposure to germs, using warm not hot water is all that is needed. Washing more can damage the protection of the skin. If I refrain from putting fingers in eyes or mouth, I am not likely to allow the germ to enter my body.

Think like a scientist cue card

Feared situation	Anxious thought	Realistic Outcome
Going outside	I will get COVID.	If I stay 6 feet away and wear a mask outside the risk is extremely low.
Having COVID symptoms	If I do get COVID I will die.	Probability of death or hospitalization for most of us is extremely low, especially for younger folks without any comorbid conditions like diabetes or heart disease.

OCD: Fear ladder

Situations	Fear level 1-5	Points earned
Come out of room to common living space for 5 plus minutes	2	2
Stand by closed front door for at least 2 minutes	3	3
Stand by open front door with mask on for at least 2 minutes	3	3
Walk outside with mask on for 30 seconds	4	4
Walk outside with mask on for at least 1 minute	4	4
Walk around neighborhood with mask for at least 5 minutes	5	5
Do an outdoor outing with mask for 30 minutes or more	5	5
Do an outing to an indoor space with mask for at least 5 minutes	5	25

Dealing with Fear: Teach Skills

5. Physical anxiety reducers

- Aerobic exercise
- Meditation/relaxation: www.fragrantheart.com, music (weightless), special interests and hobbies. What's your meditation?
- Neurofeedback: Reinforce EEG patterns through video monitor feedback
- Medications
 - Evaluate risk/benefit ratio



Social Anxiety(Fear of negative evaluations)

Creating an accepting social atmosphere

- Peer buddy programs
- Protect from teasing

Teach social skills rather than only doing exposure

- Minimally expected social behavior (a type of masking) that makes you not stand out: melding into background, speak if spoken to.
- Identifying kind receptive/non-judgmental peers. Finding people with whom you do not need to mask. ASD cohorts, interest based groups.
- Conversation skills to initiate, maintain, GET TO KNOW SOMEONE KNEW.
- Asking to get together around a shared interest.
- Cognitive reframe: others' are generally not thinking about you or they think YOU do not like THEM
- Teasing: check it out 1st, stop, ignore, report

NO YOU CANNOT HAVE A PIECE NOW, BUT IF YOU ARE CALM, MOMMY HAS SOME BEAUTIFUL CONSOLATION PRIZES BEHIND CURTAIN # 2.



Waiting, Accepting No, Stopping Fun

1. Change the triggers

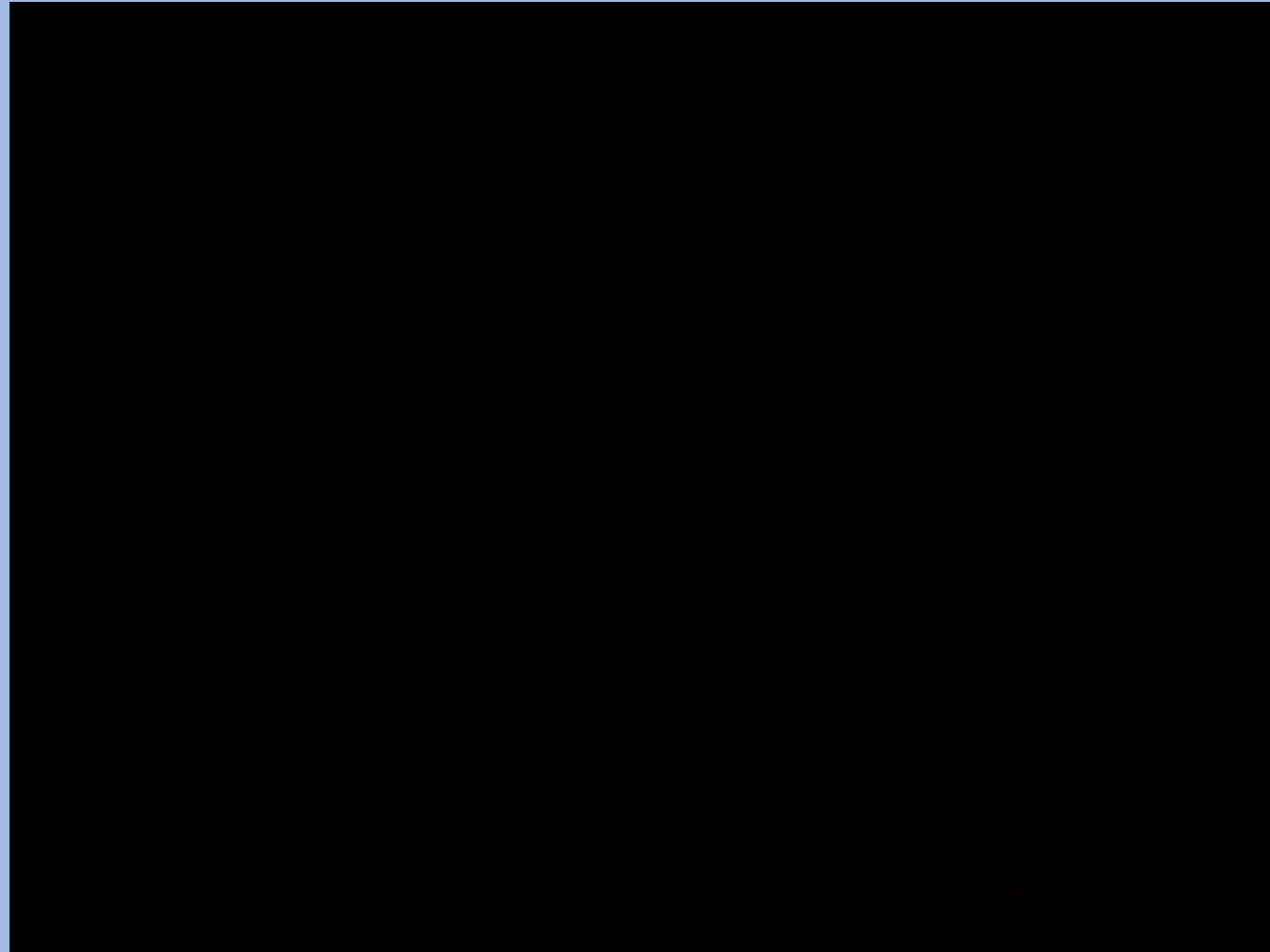
- Use a visual timer and shorten wait time
- Create a visual schedule. Use a “to do” box
- Videotape perseverative routine
- Highlight reward for waiting/accepting no & prime ahead



2. Teach skills (invisible payoff)

- Waiting: get some later
- Accepting no: get something else later
- Stopping on time: get to go back later

Video Accepting No



Waiting, Accepting No, Stopping Fun

3. Reward system

- Points for waiting, accepting no and stopping on time
- Disappointment poster

4. Natural loss systems:

- Can't stop, can't do it again

More Disappointment: Sharing, Compromising, Taking Turns

1. Change the triggers

- Use a visual timer and shorten wait time
- Create a visual schedule

2. Teach skills (invisible payoff)

- Sharing: get something back
- Compromising: Others will play with you again
- Taking turns: You get your turn and others will play with you
- Remind ahead of time about rewards for sharing, compromising and taking turns

3. Reward system

- Points for sharing, compromising, taking turns: kindness Jar

4. Natural loss systems: Might have to play alone

Compromising visual

This

Both

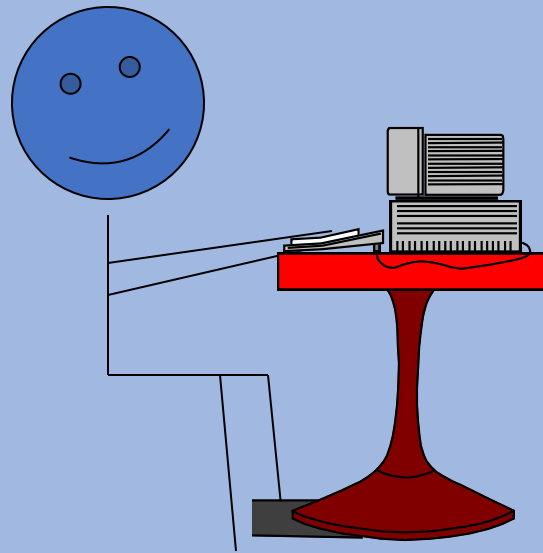
That



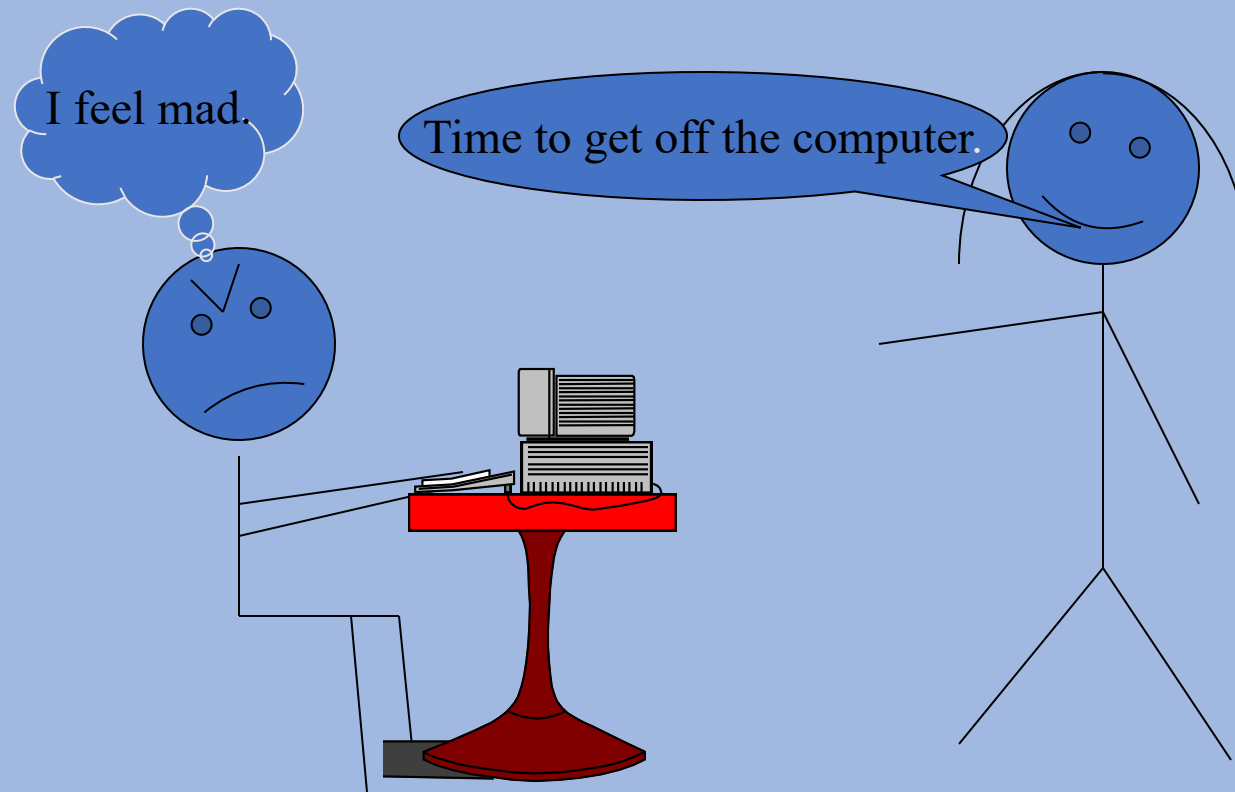
Stopping something fun: a Cognitive Picture Rehearsal

- Antecedents: Triggers to problem behavior
- Behavior: Appropriate behavior or skill
- Consequence: Rewards, not punishments.

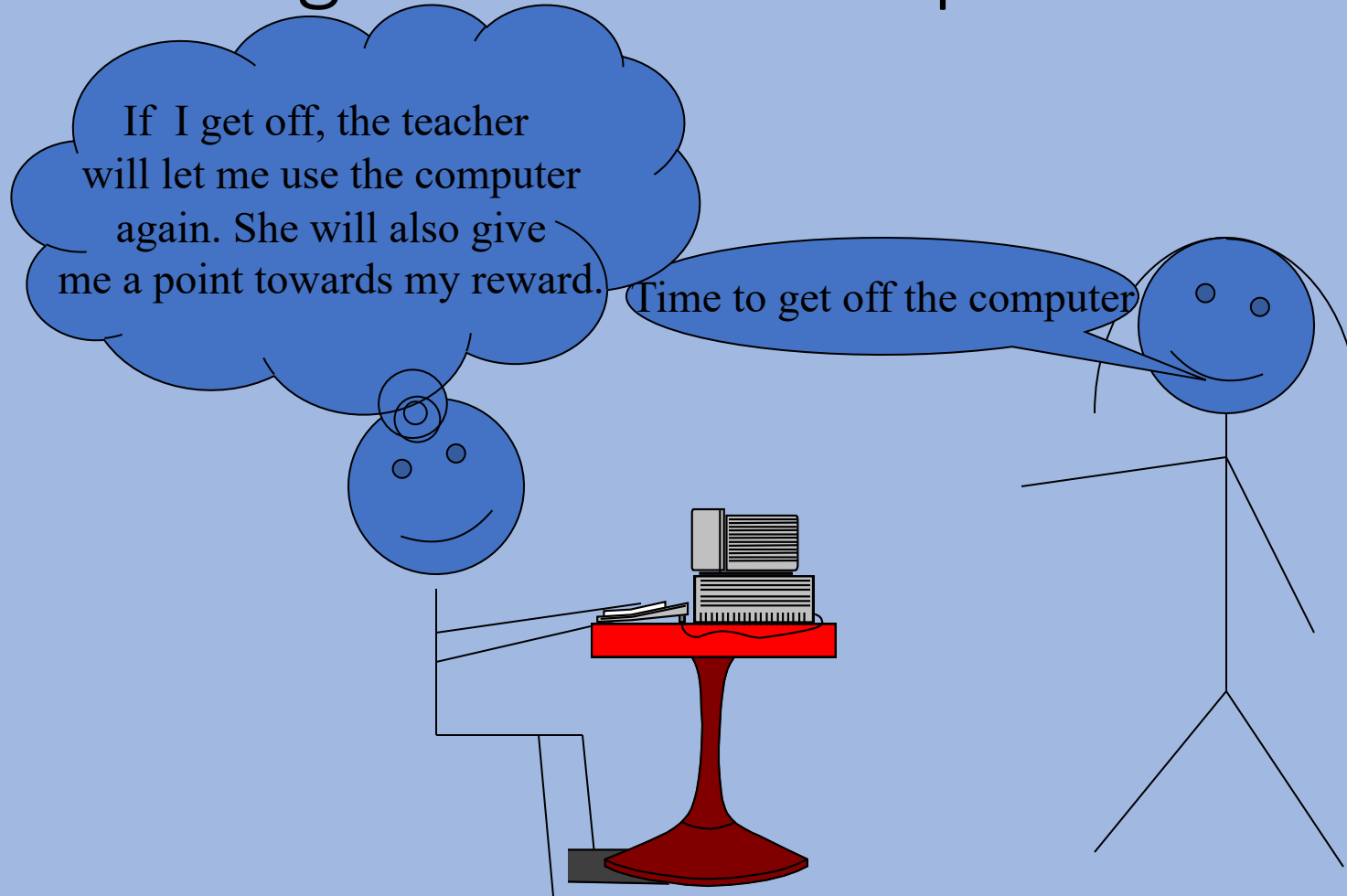
Matt is playing at the computer.



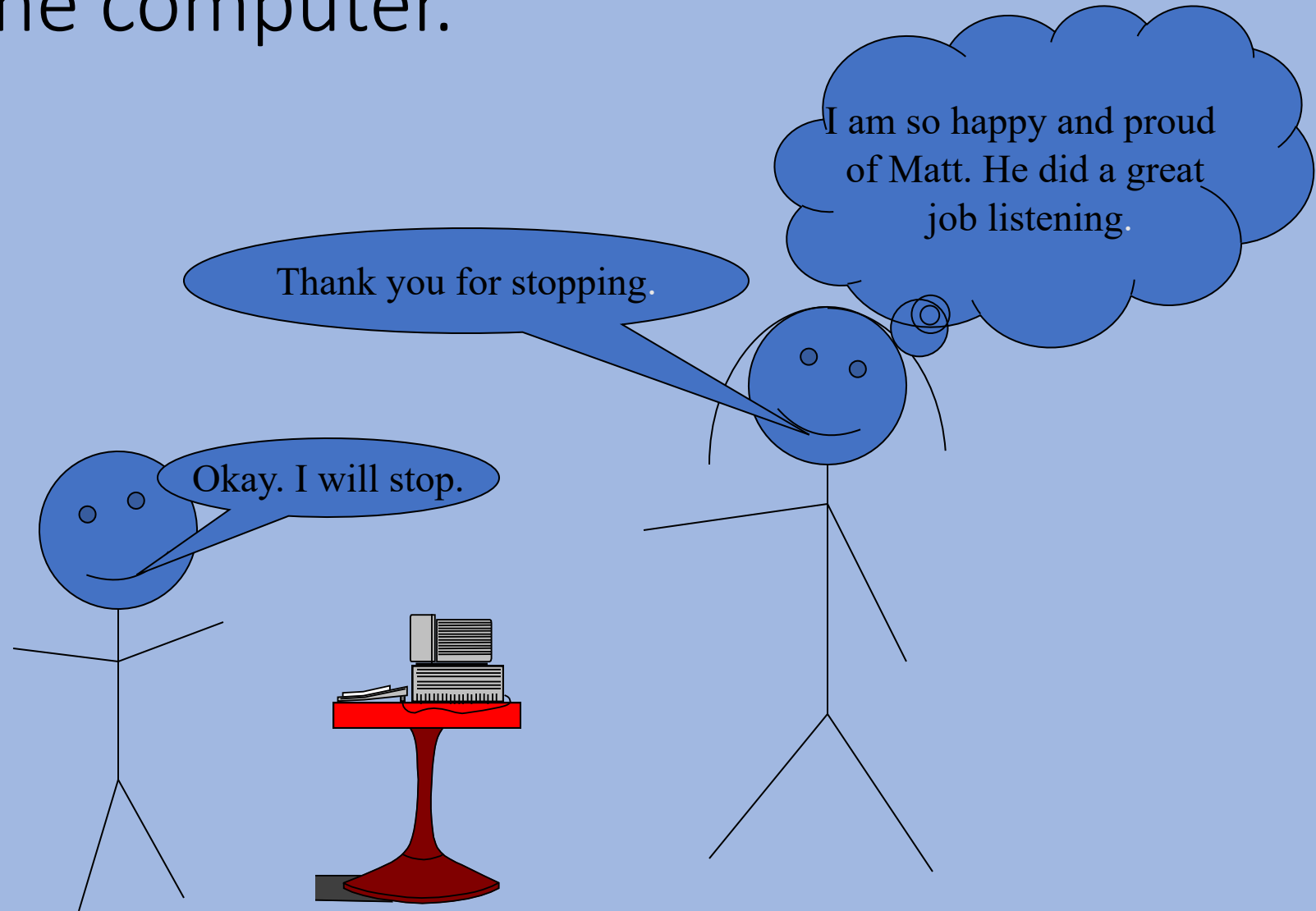
The teacher tells Matt to get off the computer.



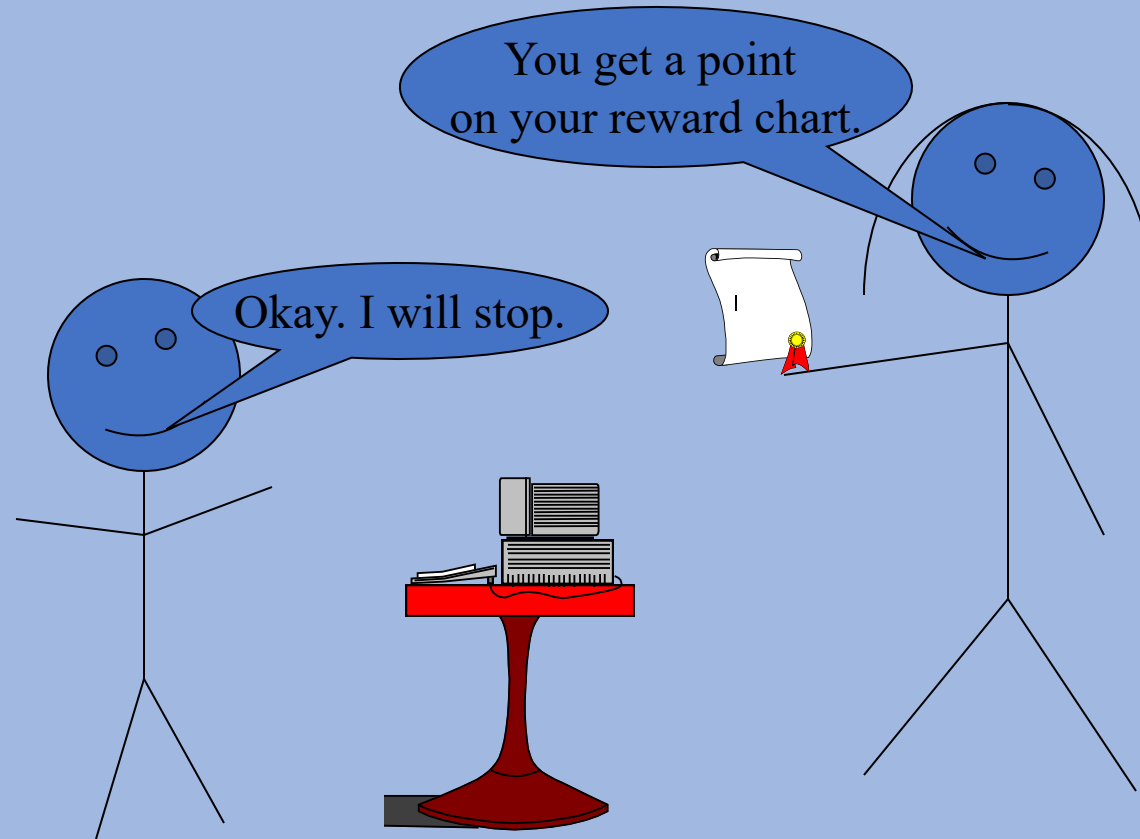
Matt remembers what will happen if he gets off the computer.



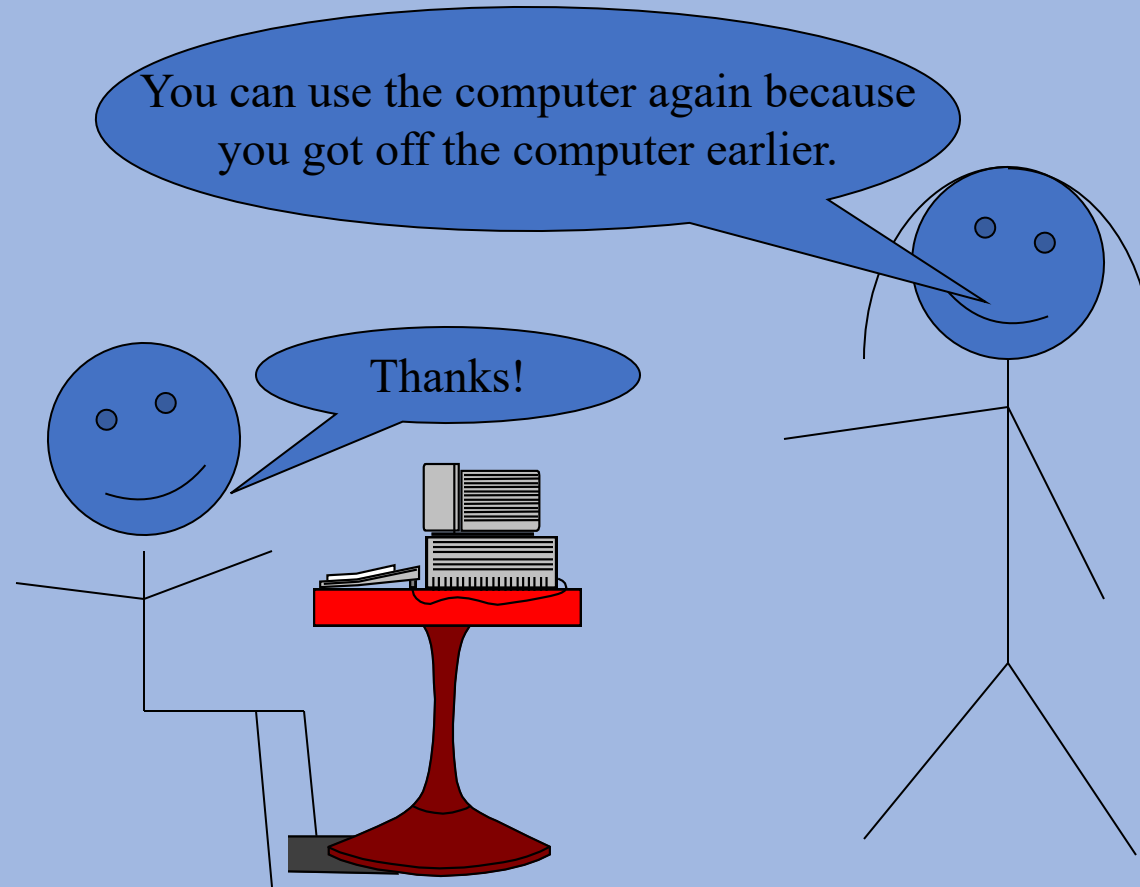
Matt decides to accept that he must get off the computer.



The teacher rewards Matt for getting off the computer.



At 2 pm, the teacher lets Matt use the computer again because he did such a great job getting off the computer earlier.



Self-esteem: Mistakes, Losing, Teasing

SILK, SILK.
SILK, SILK, SILK

1. Change the triggers

- Offer choice: let them win or not see mistakes
- Stack the deck: with activities that they do well (80/20)
- Prime ahead
- Protect from teasing

2. Teach skills (invisible payoff)

- Mistakes help us learn
- Win the invisible game: friendship/self-control
- Teasing: check it out 1st, stop, ignore, report

ABC NEWS



Self-esteem: Mistakes, Losing, Teasing

3. Reward system:

- Rewards for handling imperfection are greater than rewards for winning or doing work right.

4. Avoid loss systems when frustrated

Unmet Needs for Attention

1. Change the triggers

- Schedule attention: special time
- Use a timer and red/green cards
- Provide an appropriate outlet: theatre, presentation

2. Teach “Positive Ways to Get Attention”

- How to get adult attention
- How to get peer attention: Public versus private topics
- Rules of comedy: Can’t make fun of vulnerable, use slapstick, random thoughts, and self-deprecation

Public/Private

Public	Private
Past: How was _____?	<u>Avoid sensitive topics:</u>
Future: What are you going to do _____?	Sex, Violence, Race, Religion, Politics
Present: What are you _____?	Avoid insults
Common/other interest: Did you _____?	Avoid curses

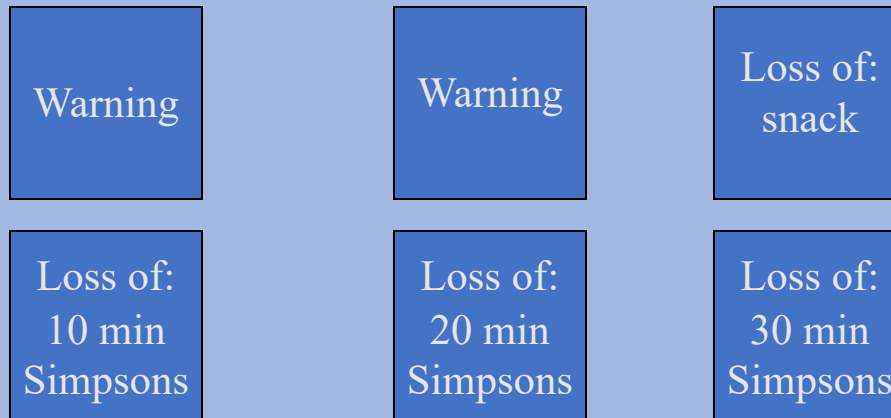
Unmet Needs for Attention

3. Reward system:

- Rewards for appropriate topics

4. Loss systems:

- Response cost



Unexpected Triggers: Self-Calming

1. Prepare for unexpected

- Collaborate on ways to distract and soothe in preparation for the unexpected upsets. Create a relaxation folder.
- Establish a safe person

2. Teach skills

- Self-talk: “All problems can be solved if you can wait and talk to the right person.”
- Draw or write the thing that distracts/soothes you.

Unexpected Triggers: Self-Calming

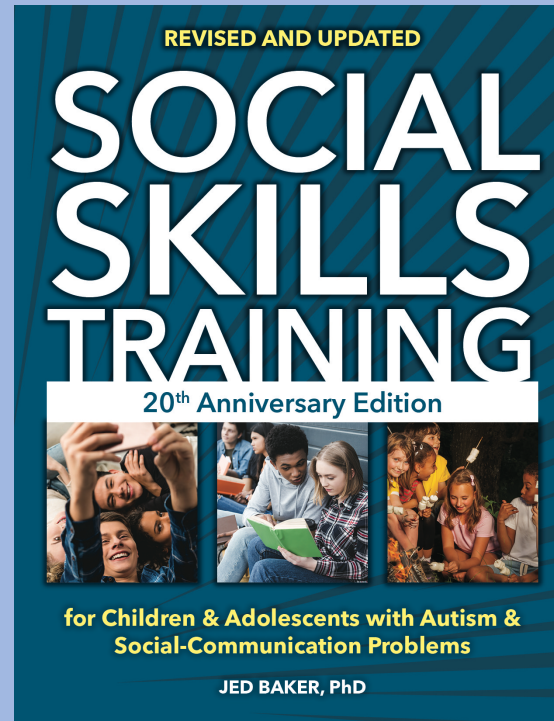
3. Reward system:

- for using calming strategies

4. Natural loss systems:

- outbursts will limit continued participation in certain events.

Key Components of Social Development



Jed Baker, Ph.D.

www.socialskillstrainingproject.com

What is a successful outcome? Quality of Life

What increases quality of life and life satisfaction?

1. Self-determination (Moser et al., 2025 with autistic youth)
 - Getting some **choice** in where/how you work, live and play, like pursuing interests
2. Sense of belonging –value through positive social connections
 - Harvard study on well being over 80 years (Waldinger and Schulz, 2023).
 - Moser et al showed frequent social participation related to satisfaction for ASD and Parenteau et al., 2023 emphasized quality of relationships as key. Participation in society related to adult ASD satisfaction (Schmidt et al., 2015)
3. Financial stability (Jachimowicz, Harvard Business School) translates to less day to day stress/pain (for ASD, service needs met -Moser et al. 2025)

So how do we facilitate social connectedness and help client's reach their goals?

- Creating connectivity and sense of belonging.
 - Create accepting/supportive social environments by targeting peer acceptance (Wagner- Inclusive Programming; Baker-Social Skills Training)
 - Utilize client's interests/strengths (Koegel & Koegel, 2012)
 - ASD cohorts for mutual understanding (Davis and Crompton, 2021)
- Social skill development that is neuro affirmative
 - Excellent results for cognitive-behavioral skill instruction to improve social competence and possibly reduce loneliness (Soares et al., 2020; You et al., 2024)
Baker: honors strengths and meets client goals
 - ABA, visual support strategies, Floortime, ESDM for learners with more language challenges
- May also need to work through past social anxiety/trauma and begin gradual exposure to a more accepting peer group. (Kerns, 2017)

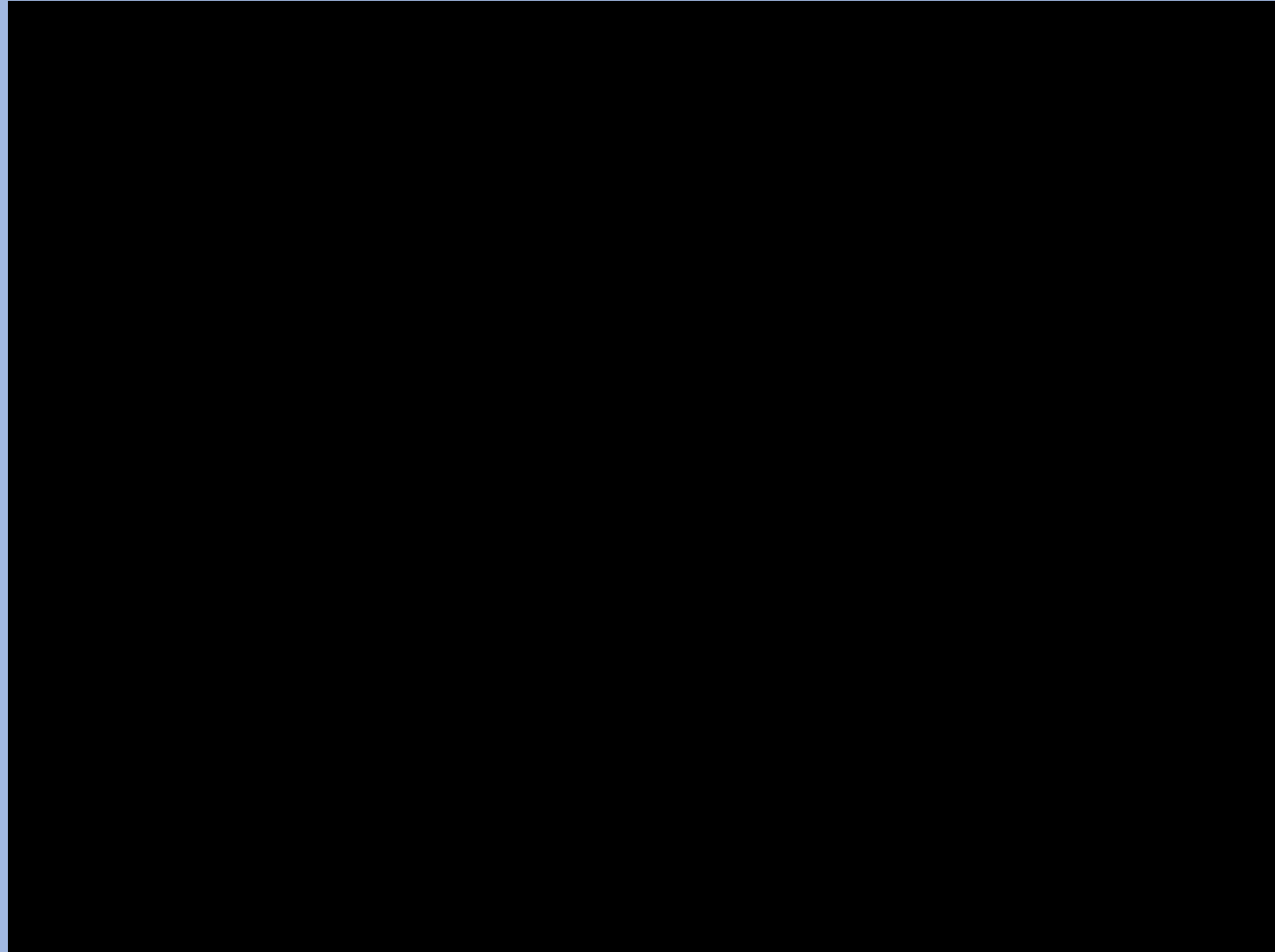
ABC NEWS: Peer buddy program



Connectivity through shared identity and interests:
Rock and Rollers from Music for Creative Arts
Therapy (Jeffrey Friedberg, MT-BC LCAT- Nyack, NY)



Capitalize on interests



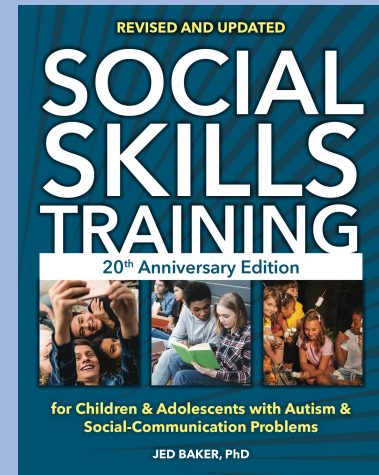
Unresolved issues in past social skill outcomes

- Unclear rationale for targeting skills
- Lack of motivation for some to learn
- Emotional dysregulation, anxiety/past trauma interfering
- What teaching strategies work for which clients?
- Lack of generalization: can they use skills when needed
- Skill development DOES NOT INSURE an accepting peer environment
- How do we measure progress? Knowledge, skill performance, quality relationships



Key questions to address when trying to improve social skills

1. How do you target relevant skills?
2. How do you establish motivation?
3. How can we modify the environment and teach skills to manage dysregulation?
4. How will you teach? Based on receptive language ability?
5. Where will you teach?
6. How will you generalize new skills?
7. How can we create accepting peer environments?
8. How do you measure progress?



1. Targeting Skills: Prioritize what is relevant?

- General Communication : augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) systems: PECS, Sign, Speech Generating Devices.
- Individualized rather than curriculum based. Small number of daily priority skills in order to reach “their” goals.



- Practical questions: (1) What do they do too much or too little to succeed in this setting. (2) What environmental supports/modifications do they need to succeed?
 - Interview client, parents, teachers
 - Observe behavior in environment
-
- When they cannot articulate goals, consider what allows them to achieve greater life satisfaction? Paths to positive relationships, greater independence?

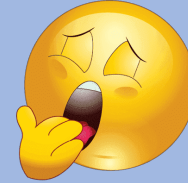
2. Establish Motivation to Learn

- Intrinsic motivation:
 - Make the interaction itself more enjoyable-use their interests or develop their interests!
- External motivation: traditional rewards after task completion. Use a reward menu of activities, objects.



3. Modify triggers to emotional dysregulation

- Internal issues: hunger, tiredness, illness



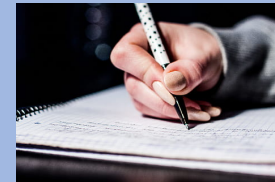
- Sensory issues: noise, light, touch, over-stimulation, boredom



- Lack of structure/visual support/schedule



- Challenging or new work, feared situations



- Having to wait, not get what one wants, disappointments



- Threats to self-esteem: losing, mistakes, criticism

GAME OVER

- Unmet wishes for attention: ignored, want others to laugh



4. How to teach skills?

Skill acquisition matched to language/cognition

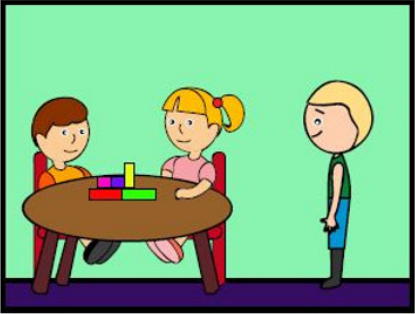
- Level 3: Little receptive language, can't use words only to instruct. Visually based, incidental prompting (TEACH, PECS, ABA, PRT)

- Level 2: Has language but needs visual support to understand. (Picture books, video, conversation webs)

- Level 1: Has good receptive language that you can explain what to do and why -how people feel in response to our behavior. (Structured Learning: Explain, Model and Role-play)

Able2LEARN

I see the game and I feel like playing.



I see the game and I feel like playing.

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The image shows a screenshot of a video player interface. At the top, the text 'I see the game and I feel like playing.' is displayed. Below this is a video frame showing three children sitting around a table with colorful blocks. Underneath the video frame, there are icons for a person, a play button, and another person, followed by the text 'I see the game and I feel like playing.' and a small icon of a person playing. At the bottom, the copyright notice '© 2015 Able2Learn Inc.' is visible.

5. Where to do initial teaching?

Class Format

- When most of class shares similar skill needs. Especially younger grades

Small Groups to foster reciprocal friendship

- Agenda: Talk time, **skill** time, activity time.
- Interest based groups to capitalize on motivation.

Individual: When attention and cooperation may not be available in group.

6. Generalization to natural settings

Prime, Coach, Review

- Use visual cue card, verbal prompts, reminder apps
- Practice in natural setting or facilitated group settings

SAMPLE CUE CARD SUMMARY

	Situation	Wrong Way	Right Way
1.	Joining into play	Ignore others or tell others what to play	Stand an arms length away. Ask to play with others who share your interest -Animal Guessing Game

Key Components of Skills Training

7. Peer sensitivity

- Sensitize peers to needs of those excluded or teased
- Solicit peer leaders/buddies (Heroes vs Bullies)

8. Evaluating outcome

- Sense of belonging, reduced loneliness?
- Observable measures (e.g., frequency of behavior)
- Subjective ratings

1-never 2-rarely 3-sometimes 4-usually 5-always

- Normed scales
 - Constantino's Social Responsiveness Scale (SRS)
 - Gresham & Elliott's Social Skills Rating System (SSRS)



Peer Program to Increase Interactive Play for Students with less Receptive Language Ability

- Explore activities that may be enjoyable to the student. Decrease language and wait time. Examples:
 - Hide and seek, follow the leader, catch/roll ball, red light/green light, guess the animal/feeling, hungry hippos, lucky ducks, go fishing.
- Create visual communications system to initiate and respond to play requests (e.g. choice board).
- Establish routine of playing several games increasing sustained play.
- Teach typical peers to play student's favorite games, use visual communication system, and give target student choice of activities.

Level 3: Significant Receptive Language Challenges

- Challenge: Cannot simply explain with words about how to do things or why.
- Interventions need to be visual, concrete, and prompted in the moment: goals are often JOINT ATTENTION, SYMBOLIC COMMUNICATION
 - Structure of Teacch, pictures, maybe video
 - PECS: Bondy and Frost. <http://www.pecsusa.com/pecs.php>
 - ABA (DTT, PRT, VBT) emphasis should not just be on external rewards, but intrinsic as well
 - Play based programs, especially those combined with ABA, like Early Start Denver Model (Rogers and Dawson, 2010)

Visually based strategies

- One can visually represent:
 - Schedules: APP – visual scheduler
 - Tasks, chores, routines
 - Building something
 - To motivate: For example “First/Then”
- The Teacch Approach to Autism Spectrum Disorders (Mesibov, Shea, Schopler, 2004)
- Visual Supports for People with Autism (Cohen and Sloan, 2007)

Basic Hygiene (Level 2, 3)

Appendix

Encouraging Good Hygiene – Showering Schedule Visuals

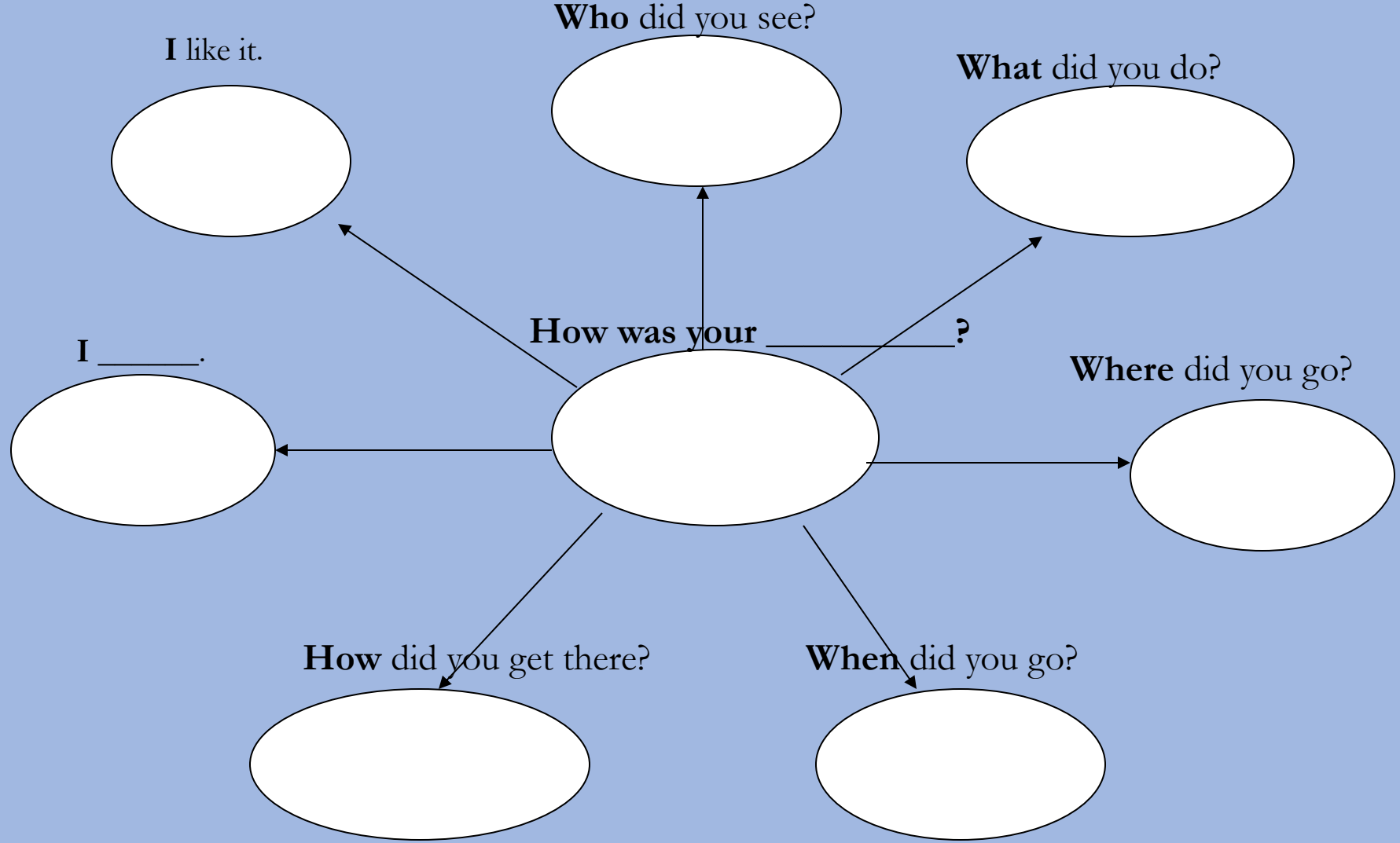


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Level 2: Moderate Receptive Language Challenges

- Challenge: Understands basic directives, can request, but language is still concrete, tied to present moment. Cannot talk about situations in the abstract.
- Interventions similar to Level 3, yet . . .
 - Can add verbal directives and verbal imitation. Example, Say, “Can I play?”
 - Can begin to work on conversation prerequisites like “wh” questions
 - Social Skill Picture Books (Baker 2001, 2006)
 - Video modeling

Maintaining a Conversation (past)



Example of Picture Books (Baker, 2003)

Taking Turns Playing

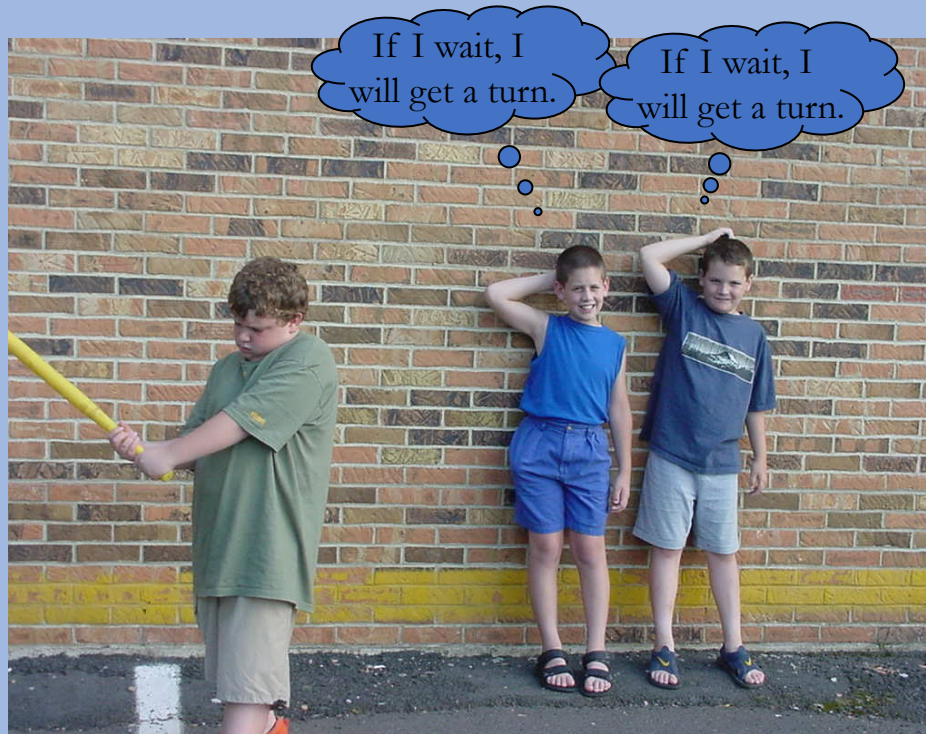
1. Let others play while you wait.
2. Think to yourself, “If I wait, then I will get a turn.”
3. When you wait, others will feel happy and want to give you a turn.

1. Let others play while you wait.



The two boys are waiting while the other boy has a turn at bat.

2. Think to yourself, “If I wait, then I will get a turn.”



Helpful Way

The boys think that if they wait they will get a turn.



Not Helpful Way

The boys don't wait their turn and try to take the bat.

3. When you wait, others will feel happy and want to give you a turn.



Helpful Way

The boy waited so he got his turn.

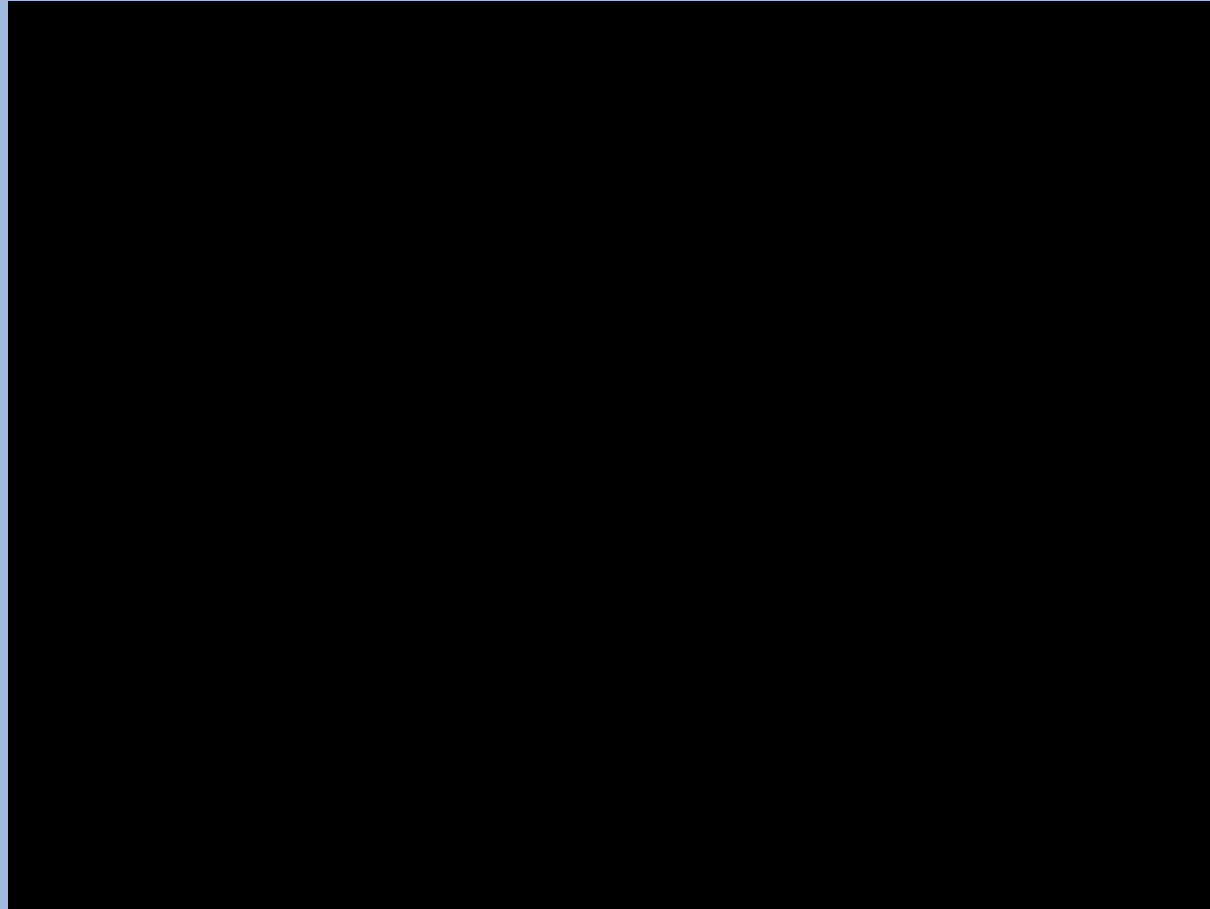


Not Helpful Way

The boys did not wait so they will not get a turn.

Video Modeling or Self-Modeling

- Video peers and then target student. Use to prime skill before situations.
- Better generalization than other forms of learning, except for those with memory issues



Level 1: Intact Receptive Language

- Challenge: Has ability to talk about actual situations in the abstract.
- Interventions can be visually supported, yet one can now explain not just what to do, but why; how other people think and feel.
 - Explaining, modeling and role-playing (Baker; Laugeson)
 - Social Thinking (Garcia-Winner)
 - Video-modeling (with highlighting others thoughts, feelings, reactions).

Structured Learning (Baker; Laugeson)

- Rationale: Why is this a useful skill?
- Didactic instruction of skill steps
 - Explain not only WHAT to do but
 - WHY; how it makes others think and feel
- Model helpful way, and maybe not helpful way
 - Avoid not helpful way for attention seeking clients who may repeat it to get a laugh
 - Discuss impact on others and oneself
- Role-play with feedback until proficient

Structured Learning

- Practice and Generalization
 - Plan when and how they will use skill
 - Skill (cue card) goes home to parents, teacher or aide who
 - Quizzes
 - Models & Role-plays
 - Prompts
 - Reinforces with praise or reward if necessary.
- Need a gimmick for role-play or instruction!
 - Humor, riddle?

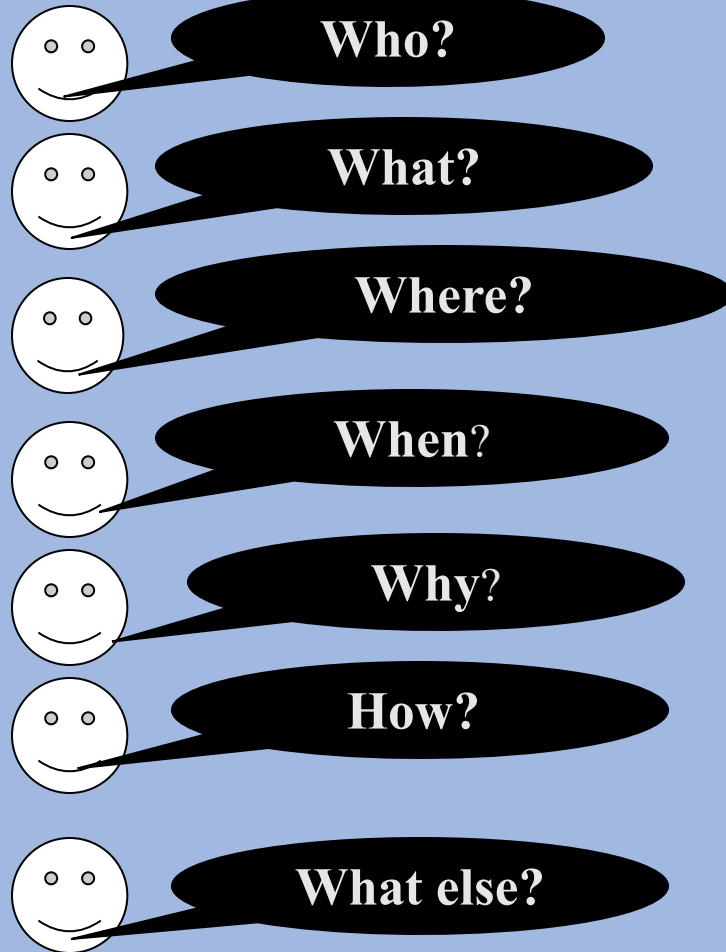
Conversational Skills

- Students who:
 - Lack initiation or responding to others or
 - Perseverate with one-sided monologues or
 - Interrupt others
- Need to learn how to:
 - Start and maintain conversations
 - Be sensitive to the listener's interests
 - Interrupt and shift topics appropriately

Maintaining a Conversation (level 1)

Ask

Tell



I like _____.

I also _____.

I am going to _____.

I went to _____.

Starting conversations with people you know

1. Greet the person.

Say “Hello” the first time you see them during the day.

2. Ask about what they are doing in the **present situation**.

“What are you [doing, playing, reading, eating?]”

3. Ask questions about the **past**.

“How was your [week, weekend, vacation, holiday]?”

Starting conversations with people you know

4. Ask questions about the **future**.

“What are you going to do for the [week, weekend, vacation, holiday, after school]?”

5. **BEST STARTERS:** Ask questions about their **routine or interests**.

“How is [soccer practice, class, work, chess club] going?”

“Did you see [new video game out, new movie out in series they like]?”

Shifting Topics

- Ask a follow question or make an on-topic comment before asking to switch topics
- Ask to switch topic: “Do you mind if I talk about something else?”
- Or use a linking phrase like: “Speaking of . . .” or “that reminds me . . .”

Getting to Know Someone New

3 minutes to find out what you have in common.

- | | |
|--------------|---|
| NAME | What's your name? Mine is _____. |
| SCHOOL | Where do you go to school? What grade are you in? What are your favorite subjects? |
| NEIGHBORHOOD | What town do you live in? What's it like there? |
| INTERESTS | What do you do for fun? What games do you like? What TV shows do you watch? What kind of music do you like? |
| FAMILY | Do you have a big family? Do you have brothers and sisters? Do you have any pets? |

Friendship development skills

- Where to meet friends: interest based and proximity
- Compliment in person or online
- Ask about possible shared interest/Getting to know someone new
- Getting together through developed shared interests
- Reading signs of interest: balance initiations with responsiveness
- Deepening relationships through sharing personal information
- Friendship maintenance: scheduling contact
- Social Media DOs and DON'Ts
 - Compliment and supportversus.... rage, revenge and complain

Socializing online

- Where
 - Interest based groups are best (Koegel, Kim and Koegel, 2013) for engagement and initiations
 - Furry websites (but some participants commission porn art)
 - FurAffinity, Weasyl, Inkbunny, SoFunny, DeviantArt
 - Video game forums and chatroom but can be ruthlessly competitive
 - RPGs like D and D or MMORPGs:
 - Top 5: World of Warcraft, Guild Wars 2, Star Wars: the Old Republic, The Eldor Scrolls, RuneScape
 - Aspie sites, yet can have lots of emotionally reactive folks who take offense to comments not intended to offend
 - Autism Spectrum Disorder Chat Room, Adult Asperger Chat, Autism Forums, Autism Community, Asperger Chat Chatzy, Asperger and Autism Forum Community
 - Meetup.com groups
 - Books, film, theatre, acting, sport chats

Online dating

ASD specific:

- <http://www.aspie-singles.com/>
- <https://www.aspergersdatingsite.com/>
- <http://www.spectrumsingles.com/>
- <https://www.facebook.com/autisticdating/>

General Mental Health Issues:

- <http://www.nolongerlonely.com/>

All disabilities including physical:

- <http://www.dating4disabled.com/>
- <http://www.datedisabled.com/>
- <http://www.datingdisabled.net/>
- <http://www.whispers4u.com/>

Major non ASD players: Match, Plenty of Fish, Hinge, Tinder

All carry risk of Catfishing

Young Adult Case Study – Help me get a second date

- Adult male with frustration over lack of dates and failed dates
- Assessed issue through examining chat streams from online dating and review of dating episodes
- Issue 1: immediate expression of anger/insults when women hesitate to date him.
 - Replaced with compliment, getting to know them, exploration of interest and improved follow up questions/comments, “no rush up to you” regarding setting up a date.
 - Handling rejection so as not to get kicked off site.
- Issue 2: bringing up sex too early
 - Replaced with do not bring up unless they do
- Issue 3: bragging and lying to impress (fancy car, near brush with fame)
 - Replaced with modest yet honest approach regarding employment and interests
- On the date: Hygiene and dress, compliment, show interest and emotional support, compromise regarding activities.

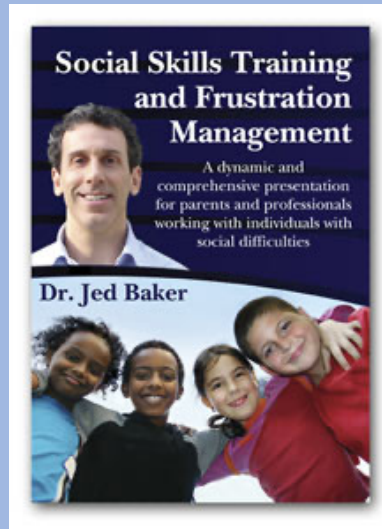
Overriding theme: be decent, kind. Scott Galloway describes kindness as a super power!

So what's the end goal

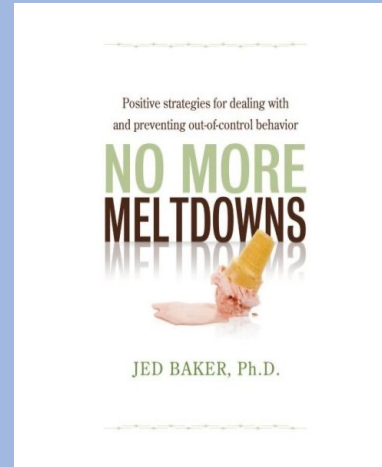
- Life satisfaction
 - Self-determination
 - Stability in terms of support needs
 - Connectedness to others
- And what about you? Whether you are neurodivergent or someone who supports those who are neurodivergent?
 - Though your paycheck may not be providing life satisfaction; know that you are valued, that you provide a meaningful positive impact on others.!

Resources

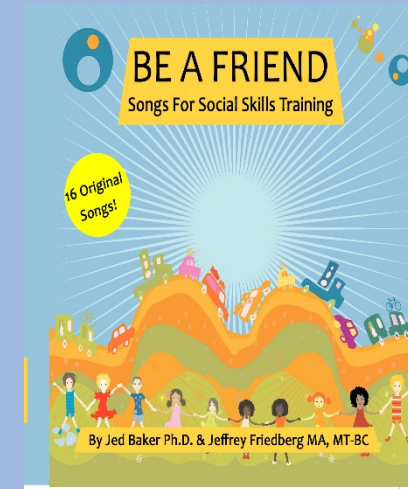
DVD



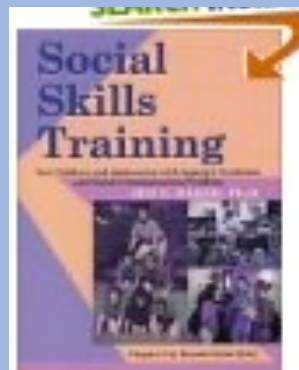
Challenging behavior
Now at the APP Store



Music CD



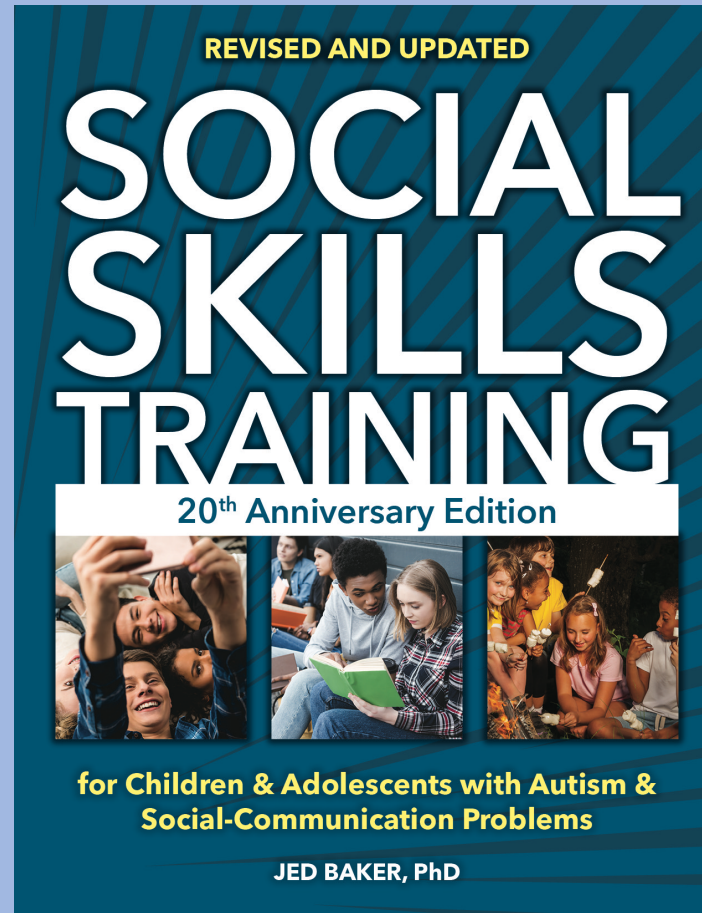
Social Skills Books



Elementary Level

Middle, High School and
Beyond

Updated Edition: 2023



More Resources

- No More Victims: Protecting Those with Autism
Cyber Bullying, Internet Predators & Scams (Baker, 2013)
- Overcoming Anxiety in Children
and Teens (Baker, 2015)
- School Shadow Guidelines
(Liau & Baker 2015)

