

Supporting Social Skill Development

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(Excerpt adapted from Dr Worling's slide presentation with permission).

"The single best childhood predictor of adult adaptation is not IQ, not school grades, and not classroom behaviour, but rather the adequacy with which the child gets along with other children" (Hartup, 1992).

Getting along with others is termed social competence and involves the ongoing and appropriate use of empathy, humour, eye contact, language (volume and loudness, amount of talking), gestures, closeness (proximity) as well as the ability read social and novel situations and facial expressions for intent and a variety of perspectives.

For girls and families dealing with Turner Syndrome many of the ingredients of social competence need to be taught and reinforced over time. Dr. Worling's general recommendations for social skill development in building social competence for girls with Turner Syndrome include:

- 1) **Continued gentle 'forcing' of social contact with known peers.**
This involves the need to push past the high degree of anxiety often associated with novel social situations for many girls with TS and requires the continued parental/school 'brokering' of social situations.
- 2) **Attaching meaning to emotion.** This involves having adults verbally express their intent or reaction to a given or occurring situation. Dr. Worling suggests that using a 1-10 system to more clearly articulate mood/feelings with facial and verbal cues. For example "when you did/said **** (describe the behaviour) when I was doing/saying **** I was at an 8 for anger/relief/happiness etc.
- 3) **Role-plays.** Provides your daughter the opportunity to practice in a safe environment judgement free. In role plays you can exaggerate poor choices and help her to process constructive feedback on addressing how she responded and could have responded to a given scenario.
- 4) **The use of Social Stories** to assist children to articulate and answer the who, what, where and why questions, thoughts or circumstances of their lives.
Look to www.thegraycentre.org for more information.
- 5) **Supervised dyads and triads.** Allows for direct feedback/instruction on turn-taking, sharing, etc. Start with a successful dyad (your daughter plus one peer) then work up to a triad (your daughter plus two peers).
- 6) **Practice, practice, practice.** TS girls learn best by rote.

- 7) **Walk through social experiences before they take place.** Problem solve throughout your walk through. Provide alternative choices and teach your daughter how to anticipate and predict scenarios and responses.

- 8) **Use video interpretation.** While watching videos help your child to understand by (occasionally) pausing the tape/DVD to question or anticipate what is happening or going to happen.

Pause/question/play, pause/anticipate/play.

- 9) **Use drama programs.** They are an excellent way to enhance emotional expressions and they provide a script for acting and reacting where the meaning is often overt and scripted. A fun activity for all!

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