Autism & PDD™ Intermediate Social Skills Lessons

Controlling Behavior

Pam Britton Reese
Nena C. Challenner

Skill Areas:	Social Skills/Language
Ages:	8 through 12
Grades:	3rd through 7th

LinguiSystems®

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Printed in the U.S.A.

ISBN 0-7606-0416-9

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Acknowledgment

We would like to thank all the wonderful parents and professionals who responded to our e-mail request for information on the special challenges facing preteens with autism.

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Introduction

A few years ago, we were working together to facilitate the inclusion of several children with autism in elementary classrooms. Behavior problems often occurred due to breakdowns in communication. Although the classrooms had been structured to aid inclusion, inappropriate behaviors repeatedly interrupted both social and academic learning. Typical behaviors included climbing on desktops, darting, squirting glue on tables, screaming, and having tantrums at breaks in routines.

We learned of Carol Gray's success with stories describing social situations to teach children with autism (*The New Social Story Book*, 1994). Based on those, we began writing shorter, one-page lessons with each sentence supported by one or more pictures. Our lessons targeted typical needs of preschool and early primary students.

As parents began to see how the lessons worked at school, they requested lessons concerning behaviors at home and in the community. In addition, the lessons were used successfully with children with other disabilities and with typically-developing children. *Autism & PDD: Primary Social Skills Lessons* (1999) was the culmination of the work we did with teachers and families of these students. This set of social skills lessons was followed by a set written for the needs of adolescents (*Autism & PDD: Adolescent Social Skills Lessons*, 2001).

We then began to hear over and over from parents and professionals we met at schools and conferences that we were leaving out a very important group of children: preteens. In an effort to target the needs of this age group, we used the Internet to solicit problems and specific social topics experienced by parents and professionals that needed to be taught to this age group. We had a tremendous response and many of the social skills lessons in these books are a result of those responses.

About the Books

The lessons are grouped into five separate books:

- Communication
- Controlling Behavior
- Healthy Habits
- Middle School
- Special Events & Activities

In each book, we have included two types of lessons: instructional and behavioral. The instructional lessons are intended to teach preteens what they need to say or do in social situations that are sometimes overwhelming (e.g., *Expressing Sadness*, page 12). The instructional lessons can be used as part of a social skills curriculum with small groups. The behavioral lessons target specific social problems that need to be stopped (e.g., *Making Others Repeat*, page 25).

The lessons are not intended to be used in the order presented, but chosen according to the needs of a particular individual.

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This book has two types of lessons. The lessons in *Controlling Behavior* about expressing feelings can be used to instruct at any time. The lessons about inappropriate behavior should not be used unless they address an existing problem. When overwhelmed with frustration or sensory stimulation, students with autism sometimes exhibit aggressive behavior. Immediate intervention by a teacher, parent, or caregiver is necessary when safety is the issue. The behavior lessons should be used after the student has calmed down, NOT while a dangerous behavior is occurring. The *Anger* Choice Sheet on page 49 can also be used as an instructional tool to teach appropriate responses to anger and frustration.

Modifying the Lessons

No two people are the same! Although the lessons are ready for use as they appear in the books, it will undoubtedly be necessary to make changes in some lessons to fit each preteen. For example:

- Use a photograph of the preteen in place of the generic preteen in the books.
- Edit text if necessary to make the lesson fit the individual situation.
- Fill in the blanks provided to individualize the lesson.
- Use pictures from the picture index at the back of each book, photographs, line drawings, or computer-generated art to modify lessons as needed.

Using the Lessons

Identify the skill to be taught. No student will need every lesson. Search for the source of the problem. Is it sensory? Is it a communication breakdown? Is the preteen sick? Some problems can be solved by ignoring the behavior or changing something in the environment. Limit the number of lessons presented at one time. Start with one or two. Wait until they are learned before introducing more lessons.

Choose the appropriate lesson and change the story as needed. Make two copies. Place one copy of the lesson in a notebook for the student. As skills are presented and learned, use the notebook for reviewing lessons and for sharing the lessons with other teachers, parents, and caregivers.

Use the second copy for direct instruction as follows:

1. Identify the time and place the social situation occurs. The *Tracking Multiple Behaviors* form, page 51, and/or the *Initial Behavior Analysis* form, page 53, will help you.

2. When you teach a new skill, the social lesson should immediately precede the targeted situation. For example, before the preteen enters the bathroom, read *Leaving the Bathroom Naked*, page 21.

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3. Present the lesson. Sit with the student one-on-one in a quiet area and read the lesson aloud. Point to the pictures for emphasis. Read the lesson again. (You might also want to copy the lesson onto a chart for group instruction at a later time.)

4. A common error is reading through the lesson too quickly. Allow adequate processing time. Pause after reading each line. Wait and observe the student's reaction before proceeding.

5. Give the student a copy of the lesson. Keeping a notebook of lessons presented allows the student to review each lesson repeatedly and to refer to it when needed.

Document the lesson(s) taught using the *Record of Progress*, page 55, and/or the tracking forms on pages 57-60. These records can serve as documentation for IEP objectives and behavioral intervention.

Special Considerations

Pronouns can be difficult for some people with autism. We have used "I" extensively throughout the books as a way to help teach the pronoun. If pronoun use prevents comprehension of the lesson, substitute names in the text and/or use photographs in place of the "I" symbol.

Be sure to use words that the student is familiar with (e.g., *gym* vs. *P.E.*).

The lesson and pictures on one page may be overwhelming for some students. You can use a blank sheet of paper to mask the rest of the lesson as you read each line. The lessons can also be used to make a small book. Cut the lesson into sentence strips. Place each sentence with its accompanying pictures in the center of a sheet of paper. Staple the pages together to make a book.

These lessons can be easily adapted to a student's language and comprehension level. If necessary, delete words to shorten sentences. Some students may also need fewer pictures per sentence.

We hope that you will find these social skills lessons as effective as we have.

Pam and Nena

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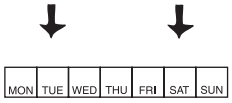
Expressing Anxiety



All people feel anxious sometimes.

They may cry or yell or run away.

_____ makes me feel anxious.
(person/item/event*)

I need to tell someone when I feel anxious.

I will try to say "I am worried about _____."
(person/item/event*)

It is okay. Someone will help me.

*Indicate what makes the child anxious, such as another child (person), my backpack (item), eating lunch (event).

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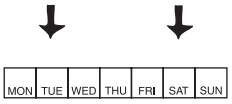
Expressing Frustration

All people feel frustrated sometimes.

People feel frustrated when they can't do what they want to do.

They may cry or frown or feel angry when they are frustrated.

I feel frustrated when _____.
(frustrating circumstance)



It is okay to feel frustrated sometimes.

I will feel happy again.

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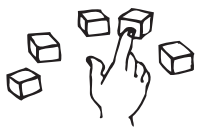
Expressing Anger

_____ makes me feel angry.
(person/event*)

When I feel angry, I _____.
(inappropriate activity)



This is not a good choice.

I can say "I am angry."

I can _____.
(appropriate activity**)

*Indicate what makes the child angry, such as another student (person) or losing a favorite book (event).
**Use the *Anger* Choice Sheet on page 49 when teaching this lesson.

When I stop feeling angry, I can _____.
(desired activity)

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Expressing Sadness

_____ makes me feel sad.
(person/item/event*)

It is okay to cry when I feel sad.

I can tell someone I feel sad.

I can say "I am sad because _____."
(sad event)

_____ may make me feel better.
(comforting activity)

It is okay. I will feel happy again.

*Indicate what makes the child sad, such as a sick grandparent (person), looking at photos of a deceased family pet (item), or a friend moving away (event).

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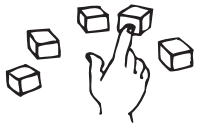
Expressing Disappointment

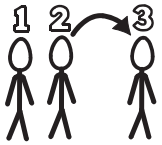
I feel disappointed when I _____.
(disappointing event*)



When I feel disappointed, I need to make a good choice.

I can tell someone I feel disappointed.

I can say "I am disappointed because I _____."
(disappointing event*)



Maybe I can _____ next time.
(desired event)

It is okay. I will feel happy again.

*Indicate a disappointing event, such as not getting to go somewhere (e.g., to the zoo) or not getting something (e.g., an A on a test).

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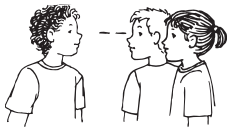
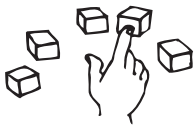
Seeking Attention with Inappropriate Actions

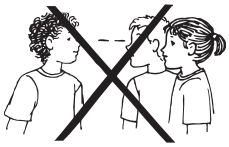


Sometimes I want people to look at me.

I _____ to get them to look at me.
(inappropriate behavior)



This is not a good choice.



Friends do not want to see me _____.
(inappropriate behavior)

I will try not to _____.
(inappropriate behavior)

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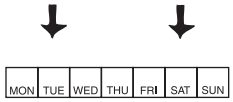
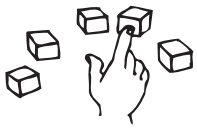
Inappropriate Drawings



Sometimes I like to draw _____.
(inappropriate drawings*)

People don't like to look at _____.
(inappropriate drawings*)



This is not a good choice.

Drawing _____ embarrasses people.
(inappropriate drawings*)

It is okay to draw.

I will try to draw something else.

*Indicate inappropriate drawings (e.g., specific private body parts).

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Inappropriate Laughing

Sometimes I laugh when people are not laughing.

This bothers people. It is not funny.

Sometimes people laugh and I laugh too.

This is okay.

It is fun to laugh together.

I will try to be quiet if it is not funny.

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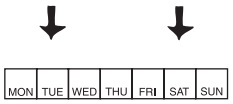
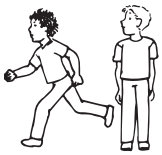
Running Away





Sometimes when I am with people I run away.

This is dangerous.

When I hear "Stop," I wait.

I stand still.

This is important.

I will try not to run away from people.

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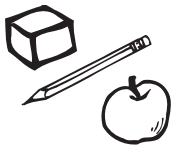
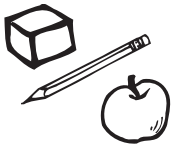
Stealing



Sometimes I see things I want.



These things don't belong to me.

If I take them, it is called "stealing."

Stealing breaks a rule.

People who steal things get in trouble.

I will try not to take things that don't belong to me.

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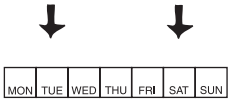
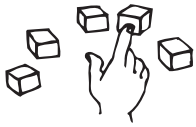
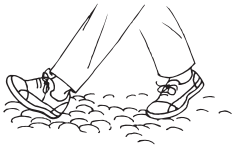
Taking Shoes Off



Sometimes I take my shoes off at _____.
(place)



This is not a good choice.



Shoes protect my feet.

I might step on something sharp and hurt my foot.

I can take my shoes off at home.

I will try to leave my shoes on.

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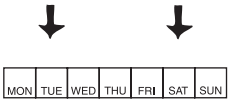
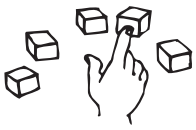
Keeping Clothes On



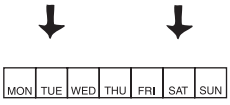
Sometimes I take off my _____ at _____.
(clothing item) (place)



This is not a good choice.

It is not time to take off my _____.
(clothing item)

I take off my _____ at home.
(clothing item)



Sometimes I take off my _____ in a dressing room.
(clothing item)

I will try not to take off my _____ at _____.
(clothing item) (place)

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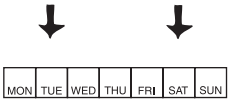
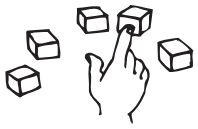
Leaving the Bathroom Naked

When I take a bath or shower, I am naked.

Naked means I don't have any clothes on.



Sometimes I leave the bathroom when I am naked.



This is not a good choice. Being naked is private.

People always wear clothes in public.

I will try to put on my clothes before I leave the bathroom.

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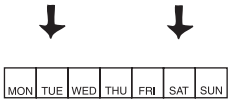
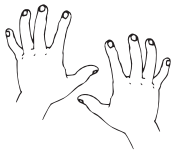
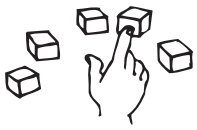
Hands in Pants

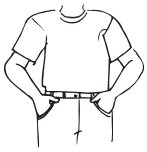




Sometimes I put my hands inside my pants.



This is not a good choice.



It is okay to put my hands in my pockets.

I can fold my arms.

I can _____.
(appropriate behavior)

I will try to keep my hands out of my pants.

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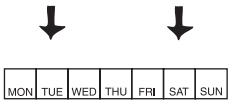
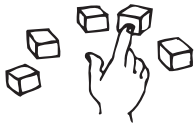
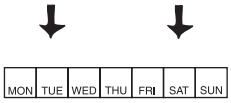
Touching Others



Sometimes I touch people on the _____.
(body part)

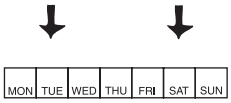


This is not a good choice. People do not like it.



Sometimes I can give a hug. That's okay.

I may touch an arm. That's okay.



Sometimes I can pat a back. That's okay.

I will not touch _____.
(body part)

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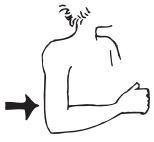
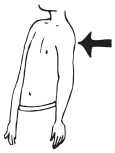
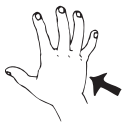
Touching Breasts

Sometimes I touch women's breasts.

Women don't like it.

It makes them angry.

Women's breasts are a private body part.

I can touch people on the arm, back, or hand.

I will try not to touch women's breasts.

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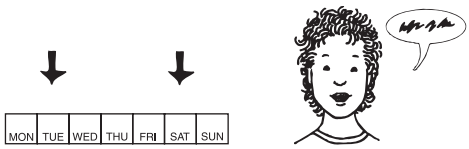
Making Others Repeat

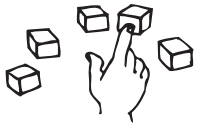


Sometimes I say "_____."
(favorite saying)

I want _____ to say it.
(person)

repeating

People don't want to say my words. This is called "repeating."



People choose their own words.

I will try not to make people repeat my words.

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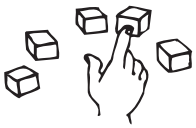
Obsessive Collecting

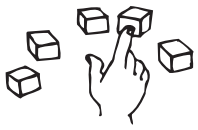
I like to collect _____.
(items)

I pick up every _____ that I see.
(item)



This is not a good choice.

I can't make friends if I collect things all the time.



_____ can help me decide when to collect _____.
(person) (items)

I will try not to collect _____ all the time.
(items)

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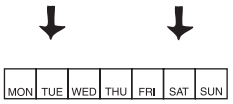
Making Noises



Sometimes I make a noise with my mouth.

It sounds like _____.
(noise*)

People don't like that noise.

The noise bothers them.

I will try to keep my mouth quiet.

I can make the noise _____.
(time/place allowed)

*Substitute any noise specific to the child.

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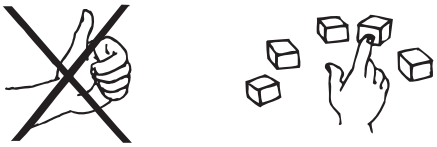
Whining

Sometimes when I am mad, I whine.

It sounds like this. (*Imitate whine.*)



This is not a good choice.

It bothers people.

I will try to talk with no whining.

I can say "I am mad" with no whining.

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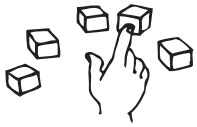
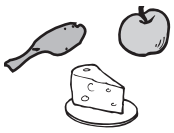
Putting Things in My Mouth

I like to put _____ in my mouth.
(inappropriate item)



This is not a good choice.

It might make me sick.



I can put food, drinks, or ice in my mouth.

I can _____ when I feel like putting something in my mouth.
(appropriate behavior)

I will try not to put _____ in my mouth.
(inappropriate item)

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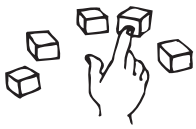
Licking

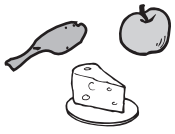
Sometimes I lick _____.
(inappropriate item)



This is not a good choice.

It might make me sick.

People don't like it when I lick _____.
(inappropriate item)



It is okay to lick some foods, like ice-cream cones.

I will try not to lick _____.
(inappropriate item)

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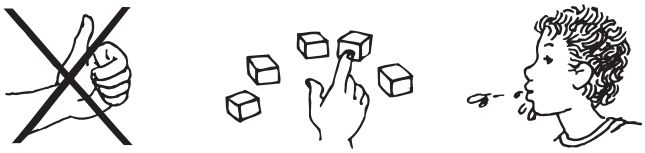
Spitting



It is not a good choice to spit my saliva.

Spitting is not healthy.

People do not like spitting.

Saliva stays in my mouth.

I swallow my saliva.

I do not spit my saliva.

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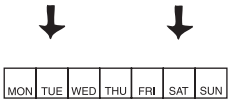
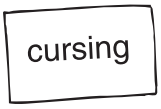
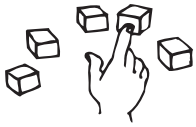
Cursing



Sometimes I feel mad and I say bad words.



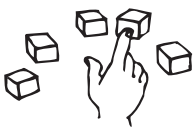
This is called "cursing." _____ is a curse word.
(inappropriate word)



Cursing is not a good choice.

I will try not to curse.

I will try to _____ when I am angry.
(appropriate behavior*)



This is a good choice.

*Use the *Anger* Choice Sheet on page 49 when teaching this lesson.

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