

SOCIAL SKILLS GROUPS FOR STUDENTS WITH AUTISTIC SPECTRUM DISORDER

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Abstract:

Autistic spectrum disorder (ASD) is a lifelong, pervasive developmental disorder, presented with difficulties in social interaction, communication and repetitive, limited patterns of behaviour, interests and activities. Students with ASD in regular schools usually have good cognitive abilities and can reach high academic achievement. But they are facing challenges in their peer relations. They have less friends and are more often victims of bullying, compared to their neurotypical peers. They need to learn social skills to engage in their social interaction more competently and to avoid negative experience. At our school I have been conducting social skills groups for several years. A small group of students with difficulties in social interaction and communication meets regularly. The activities during the meeting are structured and the visual support is used. Students learn how to start, maintain and end the conversation, how to make compromises, how to resolve conflicts, how to recognise other people's feeling and how to express their feelings and many other social and communication skills. During the meetings students develop a feeling of acceptance, share their experience, help each other to resolve challenges they are facing and start developing friendships within the group. I evaluate social skills groups to be an effective method of teaching social skills and should be a part of the individualised educational programs of students with ASD.

Keywords: autistic spectrum disorder, students, social skills groups, peer relations