

# SOCIAL COMMUNICATION

## More Than Words



### What is social communication?

- Social communication refers to the language we use to interact with others in a variety of social situations.
- It is the rules we follow when interacting with others. It is how children **approach** their peers, **participate** in conversations, **retell** past events and **negotiate** conflicts.

### SOCIAL SKILLS

The specific skills you learn to facilitate interactions with others (e.g. eye contact, turn-taking, initiating conversations)

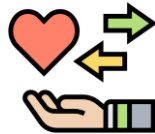
### SOCIAL COMMUNICATION

The ability to determine *when* and *how* to use social skills based on one's understanding of the other person and situation (e.g. reading non-verbal cues, understanding perspectives)

## Why do we need social communication?



To make friends



To have empathy for others



To engage in successful conversations



To succeed in school and work



A child with **good social communication skills** is:

- Aware of their own intentions and perspectives
- Able to “tune in” to the thoughts of others by paying attention to their body language, facial expressions, tone and eye gaze
- Able to consider others’ point of view and empathise with others

#### References:

Social communication disorder (SCD). (2019, May 22). Retrieved April 16, 2021, from <https://raisingchildren.net.au/guides/a-z-health-reference/scd#:~:text=Social%20communication%20disorder%20is%20a,communication%20appropriately%20in%20social%20situations>  
Social communication (Pragmatics). (2016, November 27). Retrieved April 16, 2021, from <https://childdevelopment.com.au/areas-of-concern/play-and-social-skills/social-communication-pragmatics/>  
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## The Development of Social Communication Skills

### Social Communication in Early Years (1-3 years)

- Understand and use a variety of gestures (i.e. share their interest by pointing to objects they want others to look at)
- Use words for a variety of reasons (i.e. asking questions, sharing something that they think the other person will be interested in)



### Social Communication in the Preschool Years (3-5 years)

- Understand what another person may be thinking or feeling
- Share own views, thoughts and feelings with others
- Consider others by making a comment or asking a question about what the other person just said in conversation
- Play collaboratively with others and take turns



### How do I know if my child has Social Communication Difficulties?

Your child might find it difficult to:

- Follow social rules (E.g. listening to others, taking turns in conversation, staying on topic).
- Pick up and/or read non-verbal cues (e.g. facial expression, body language).
- Maintain eye contact with others.
- Have conversations with others.
- Play with children their own age.
- Understand someone else's point of view.
- Make friends.
- Talk about things that interest someone else.
- Tell stories in an organised manner.
- Learn and participate in school.



***Speak to a speech therapist if you have concerns about your child's social communication skills.***

#### References:

Social communication (Pragmatics). (2016, November 27). Retrieved April 16, 2021, from <https://childdevelopment.com.au/areas-of-concern/play-and-social-skills/social-communication-pragmatics/>

Sussman, F. (n.d.). A closer look at social communication difficulties of children with autism spectrum disorder. Retrieved April 16, 2021, from <http://www.hanen.org/Helpful-Info/Articles/A-Closer-Look-at-Social-Communication-Difficulties.aspx>

Acknowledgment to Ms Kristen Kiong for the beautiful illustrations. Icons from Flaticon.com

# TIP SHEET



## How can I help my child develop Social Communication Skills?

### 1. Model good social communication skills in everyday situations.


- Explain to your child why you said or did things a certain way.


### 2. Use stories to discuss social communication skills:

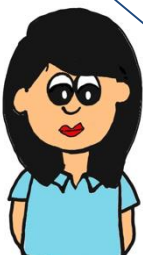
- Talk about the character's facial expressions, feelings, thoughts and what they were doing
- Discuss what was done well and what could be done differently.
- Here's an example:

You observed that your child is flipping a book. In the book, the character is getting an injection, and the character looks very scared. You noticed that this is an opportunity to discuss the character's thoughts and feelings.

Look! I wonder what he's thinking about?

Yes, good looking at his eyes. His eyes are **looking at the needle**, so it means **he's thinking about the needle!** How do you think he feels? 

Yes! Look at his face. **His mouth is wide open** and **his eyebrows are going up**. His **whole body is also moving away from the needle**. He is feeling scared. 



He's thinking about the needle.

Scared.



# TIP SHEET



## How can I help my child develop Social Communication Skills?

### 3. Talk about feelings in daily situations.

- Talk about the feelings of your child or other people, and why they might be feeling that way.

### 4. Praise your child when you observe appropriate behaviour.

- Catch your child in the act of doing something expected. Praise your child for appropriate behaviours. This helps to boost your child's self esteem and encourages the expected behaviour.

#### • Here's an example:

You observe that your child is listening attentively and keeping quiet when you are talking during story time. You realise that your child is showing good listening during this activity, and highlighting this can help him/her learn about good listening and how it affects others.



Yes, mummy.

Wow, **good listening with your whole body!** Your eyes are looking at the book, your mouth is quiet, your ears are listening and your body is still.

**I like it when you listen to me while I read. It makes me feel happy.**

