

# TEACHING SOCIAL SKILLS

## GOAL

Understand the 5 steps to teaching social skills and ways to incorporate teaching into play.

## BACKGROUND

Teaching social skills should be fun and motivating for both you and your child. Let your child take the lead by watching how he reacts to the activities you suggest. Social interactions are sometimes difficult for autistic children and you want your child as relaxed and happy as possible through the process of learning.

Avoid pressuring your child or requiring that he participate in activities for long periods of time. Some children enjoy these activities and will ask to participate. Allow him to choose how long an activity lasts. He doesn't need to play the game to the end to benefit from it.

## TEACHING SOCIAL SKILLS

Once you know what you want to teach, it's time to start teaching, right? Well, sort of. You actually need to start with a plan for how you're going to teach the skills. Follow these steps.

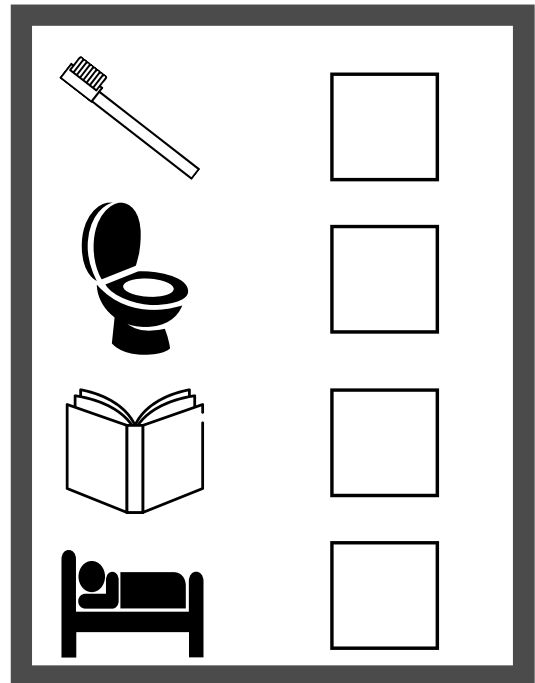
- Break the skill down into its smallest parts or steps
- Design an activity that requires your child to use the skill
- Prepare any visuals or materials
- Prepare your child for the activity depending on what works best for your child
- Prompt your child to use the skill and provide reinforcement when he does

# SELF-REGULATION

## Schedules

Self-regulation skills often fluctuate by situation or even by day. We all experience days when it's easier to respond appropriately to difficulties than other days. To help your child respond to changes in his schedule or routines, you can teach him to use a schedule or calendar.

These tools provide a way for him to see changes and predict what tasks or activities are coming next. The ultimate goal should be for him to create and update his own schedule or calendar.



## Social Stories

Social stories, created by Carol Gray, are quick stories that explain different situations to help prepare someone to encounter that situation. They can be a valuable tool for teaching social skills, especially for teaching self-regulation.

The story should include information that is specific for your child and be written from his perspective.

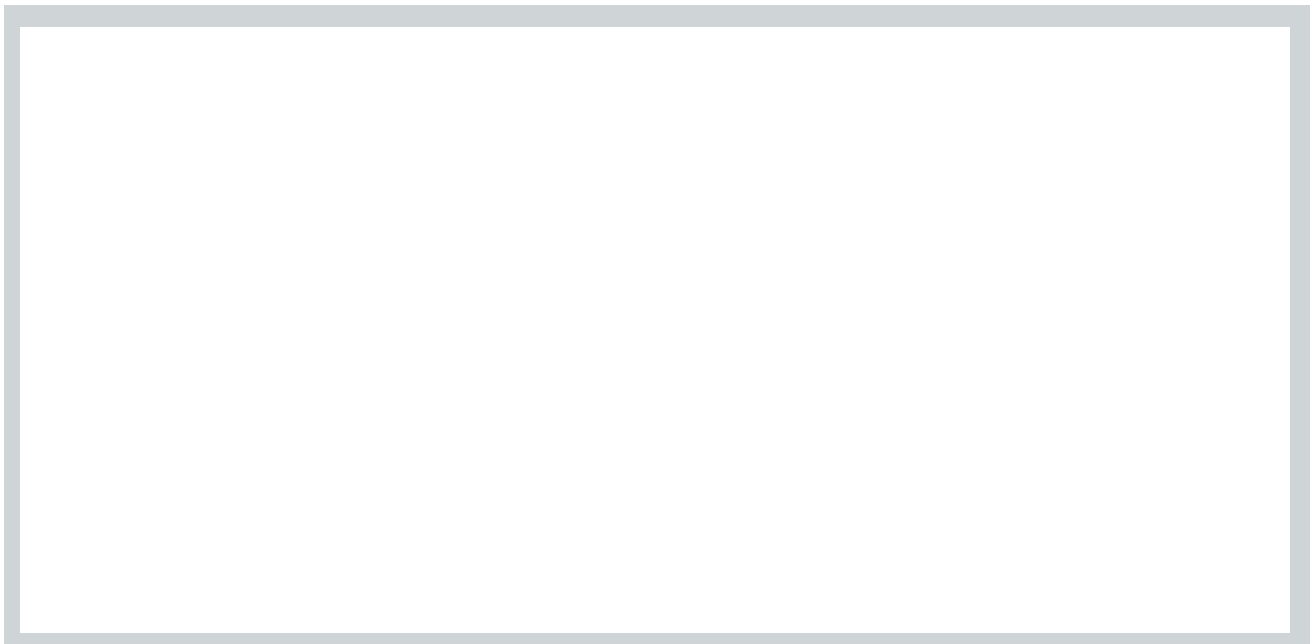
# SOCIAL COMMUNICATION

## **Use games to teach and practice social communication**

Teach social communication skills through a variety of games and activities. Games such as This or That (similar to Would You Rather but with more common items and activities) or commercially available games like Hedbanz or Guess Who? teach communication and even require some basic perspective-taking skills.

Make learning social communication skills fun for your child so he's motivated to communicate.

## **WHAT COMMUNICATION GAMES CAN YOU PLAY WITH YOUR CHILD?**

A large, empty rectangular box with a light gray border, intended for listing communication games. The box is currently blank, providing space for the user to write their answer.

# PERSPECTIVE TAKING

Perspective taking requires the understanding that other people view the world differently and have different experiences. There are a lot of fun ways to teach perspective taking.

## FOR BEGINNERS

For beginners, create opportunities for your child to figure out who can see different objects. For example, at meal time, hold a plate between your child and some of the food. Then say, "who can see the muffin?" Make it fun and mix it up so that sometimes she's the one who can see the item.

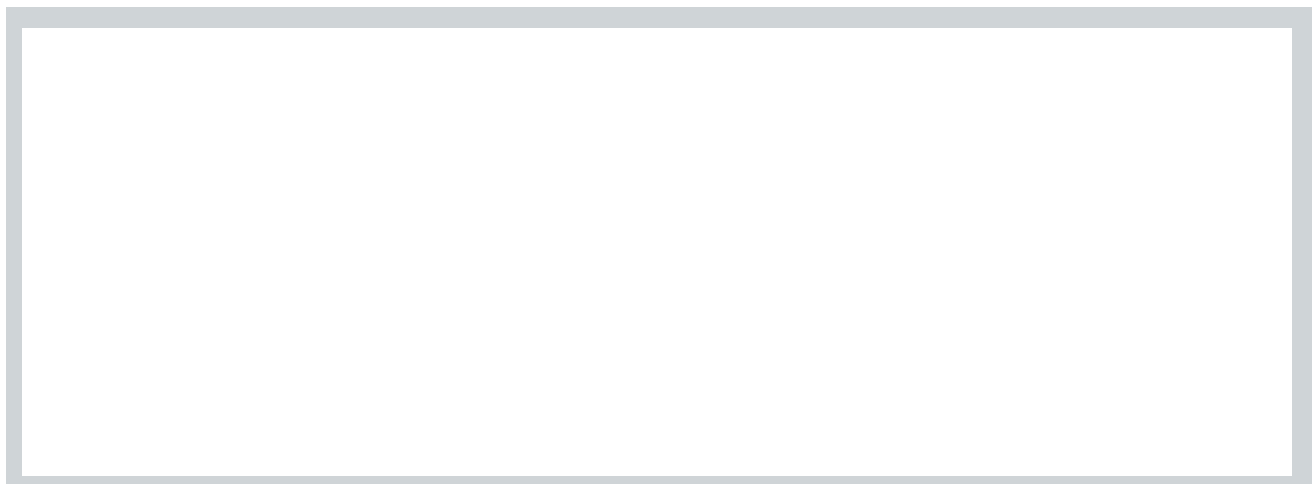
## FOR INTERMEDIATE LEARNERS

How about a fun twist on the classic hide and seek? Take turns hiding a favorite toy. This is a great opportunity to talk about how the person who hides the toy is the only one who knows where it is.

## FOR ADVANCED LEARNERS

For learners who have some basic perspective taking skills, you can focus on more advanced perspective taking by playing emotions charades. Take turns choosing a picture card. That person makes the same face as the one on the card and the other person must guess what emotion they are showing. You can have a list of included emotions to make it a bit easier.

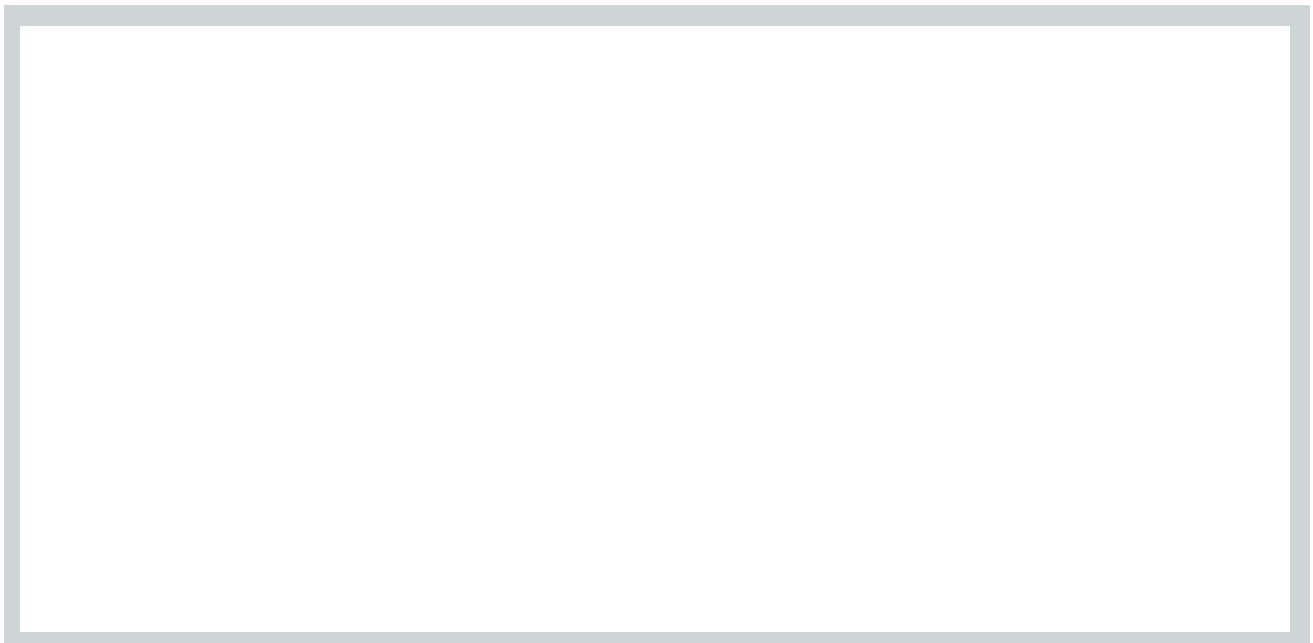
## WHAT PERSPECTIVE GAMES CAN YOU PLAY WITH YOUR CHILD?



# PROBLEM SOLVING

Many games teach problem solving including simple mazes, board games, or pictures with hidden objects. Do these activities with your child and help him through the steps of problem solving process. These steps include identifying the problem, seeking alternatives or options and then choosing one of those options. When you encounter a problem or a decision that needs to be made during an activity, talk through the your own problem solving process.

## **WHAT PROBLEM SOLVING GAMES CAN YOU PLAY WITH YOUR CHILD?**



# SOCIAL PLAY

## Include Special Interests

When teaching social play, think about your child's special interests and find ways to incorporate those items into play that can include other children. For example, if your child is fascinated by numbers, invite other children to join in playing with Playdoh while you help your child shape the dough into numbers or start a game of hop scotch at the playground.

At first, be available to mediate between your child and his peers. Join in the play so you can model skills such as turn taking and sharing without requiring him to do the same until he's ready.

Incorporate social stories if this strategy works well for your child.

## Playing with Friends at the Park

First, I should choose someone I know or who is about my size.



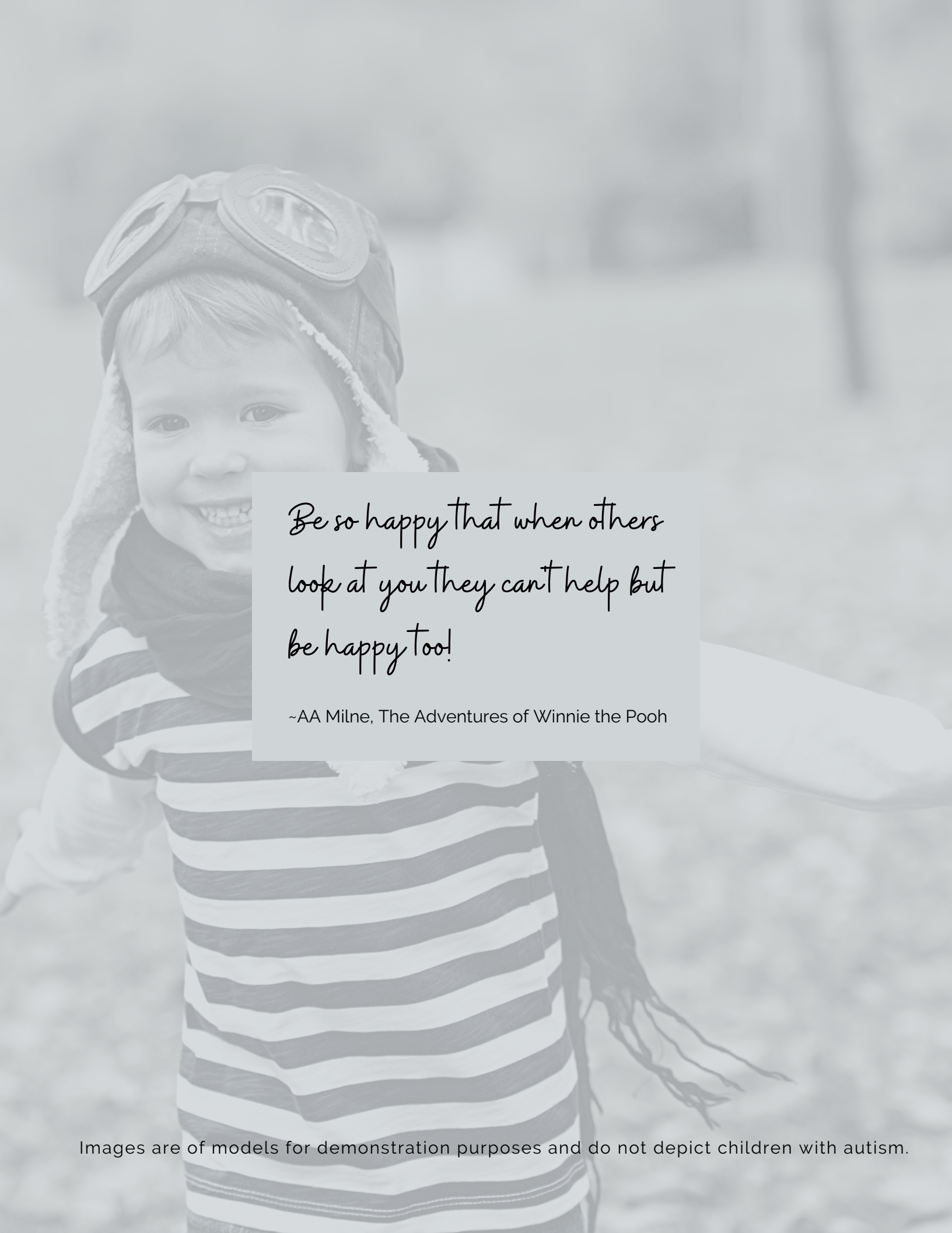
Second, I should choose an activity we can play together. Some activities I can choose are tag, swing, and hop scotch.



Third, I should go up to the person I chose and ask if they want to play the activity.



If they say yes, I will be happy and we can play. If they say no, I might feel sad but I can play with someone else or alone.

A young child with light hair is smiling and looking towards the camera. They are wearing a dark-colored pilot's hat with two round goggles on top. They are also wearing a dark and light horizontally striped long-sleeved shirt. The background is a soft, out-of-focus outdoor setting.

*Be so happy that when others  
look at you they can't help but  
be happy too!*

~AA Milne, The Adventures of Winnie the Pooh