

# SOCIAL SKILLS

## GOAL

Understand the importance of social skills and some common assumptions made about autistics and social skills. Learn the components of this complex skill

## BACKGROUND

Social skills are a group of skills that help us relate to and interact with other people. These include verbal and nonverbal communication as well as other skills needed to navigate interactions such as joint attention, social play, asking for help, accepting feedback, and reacting calmly to the behavior of others.

These skills are essential for a high quality of life and success in a job as an adult. Despite this, we need to make sure that we carefully consider which social skills to teach.

## FALSE ASSUMPTIONS

Many false assumptions about social skills have developed based on the experiences of neurotypical individuals. These assumptions include:

- Everyone needs a big group of friends to be happy
- All autistics are introverts
- Everyone needs the same social skills
- All people with autism are disinterested in social interactions

Remember that a lot of the assumptions we make about social skills and social interactions are based on our personal experiences.

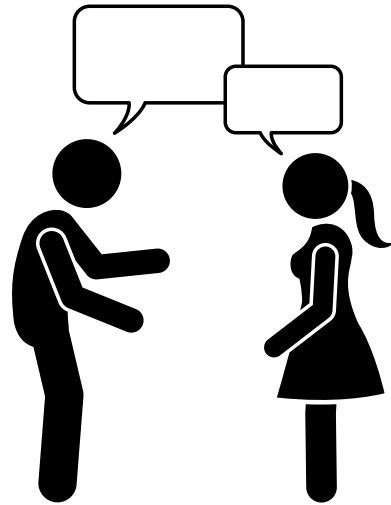
Challenge yourself to see social interactions from a different perspective.

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IT LIES IN THE  
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OTHER PERSON'S  
POINT OF VIEW.

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**Dale Carnigie**



## **Why Social Skills Matter**

Social skills is a broad term used to describe skills that help us interact with those around us. These skills help us make friends and navigate our social world in school, at home, and in the community.

Later on, these skills are important to having a job and a high quality of life.

Think about times when you use social skills. How do you have a conversation with a friend? How do you handle conflict with a coworker? How do you react when your boss gives you feedback? What happens when someone cuts you off in traffic? Whether you realize it or not, these situations all require social skills.

# COMPONENTS OF SOCIAL SKILLS

Social skills look different for everyone and change according to a variety of different factors. As children grow and mature different social behaviors become expected. These skills also vary by culture. The environment or activity also plays an important role in determining which social skills an individual needs. Although we often discuss teaching social skills to autistic children, these are skills most young children need to learn. Autistic children just might need to learn these skills a bit later or using different teaching strategies.

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## **SELF-REGULATION AND AWARENESS**

Self-regulation is the ability to manage your emotions and behavior in relation to the demands of particular situation. Self-regulation requires at least a minimal ability to adjust to changes in routine or expectations and adapt to unexpected developments.

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## **SOCIAL COMMUNICATION**

Social communication refers to both verbal and nonverbal behaviors that include conversations, body language, and facial expressions. Social communication is both what we say and how we say it.

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## **PERSPECTIVE TAKING**

Perspective taking involves the ability to understand that someone else may have thoughts, ideas or feelings about a particular situation that are different from your own. Often this involves understanding that someone's history and past experiences are different in important ways. This helps us develop realistic expectations and respond appropriately to other people.

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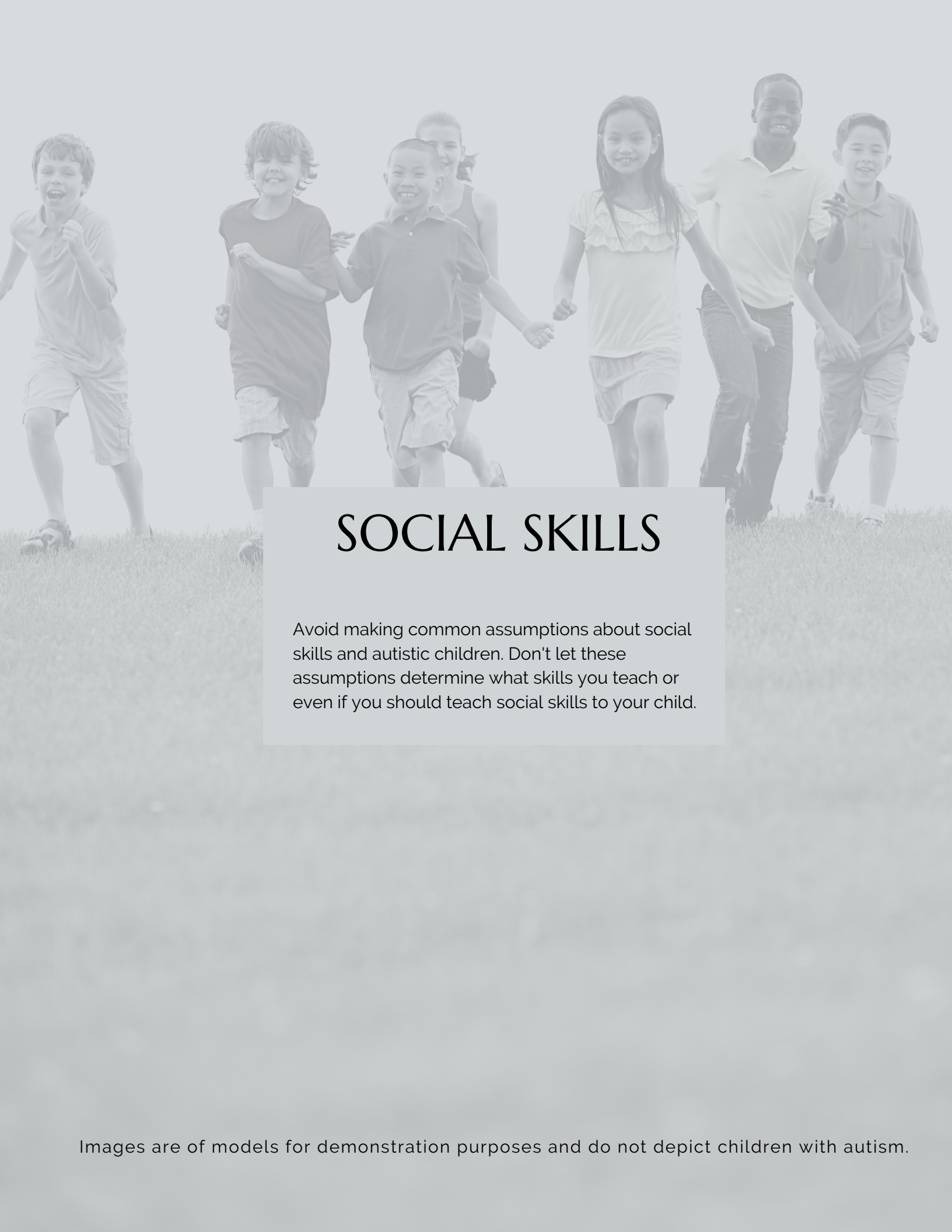
## **PROBLEM SOLVING**

When interacting with those around us, we frequently encounter various problems. Problem solving involves several steps including identifying a problem, seeking different options to resolve the problem, then selecting and implementing one of the solutions.

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## **SOCIAL PLAY AND WORK-RELATED SOCIAL SKILLS**

The ages related to each of these components varies depending on the individual's skills, interests and activities. Upper elementary- or teen-aged children might be ready to learn some of the work-related social skills such as asking for help, accepting feedback, or asking for clarification. Similarly, elementary-aged children might still need to learn some social play skills.



# SOCIAL SKILLS

Avoid making common assumptions about social skills and autistic children. Don't let these assumptions determine what skills you teach or even if you should teach social skills to your child.

Images are of models for demonstration purposes and do not depict children with autism.