

How to Make Friends Protocol: A Skill Development Group

Author's Note

While this protocol was developed to improve the socialization and interaction skills of adolescents with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) and Asperger syndrome (AS), the group sessions are general enough to meet the requirements of almost any medium to high functioning cognitive group.

Abstract

The population choice for this group is adolescent and young adults with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) and Asperger Syndrome (AS). Developing friends and improving socialization skills is a lifetime endeavor for most of the population group.

Group title: "How to Make Friends"

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Frame of reference: The frame of reference for this group is cognitive-behavioral. According to Cole and Tufano (2008, p. 156), this frame of reference can be applied to the skills necessary for everyday social interactions. The students in this group will be developing and altering their social skills to enable better social interactions.

Purpose: The purpose of this group is to work on developing friendships and improving social skills. It will work to enhance each student's ability to experience and thus integrate socialization skills that they can use in daily interactions in order to improve their social competence and help develop friendships.

Primarily, this group will focus on the performance skills of communication and interaction, targeting the areas of recognizing feelings and expressions and information exchange. The approach will be to create or refine some basic socialization skills and to identify or modify current behaviors that may be inhibiting social interaction.

In order to fulfill the purpose of the *How to make friends* group, a concurrent adult group of parents or guardians of the members of the main group will be run. This adult group sessions will cover the same topics each week but be adjusted to enable the adults to understand what their child is learning in the main group and enable parents/guardians to provide support to the child in between group sessions, particularly as there will be homework assignments for the children to do between sessions. The adult group will receive copies of the homework assignments provided to the main group so as to help during the time between weekly sessions.

Group membership and size: This will be a closed group. Membership will be from 3 to 8 students. (The adult group may have up to two members per student, for a maximum of 16 people, this is to enable as much inclusion as possible but still keep the size manageable.)

A member in the main group must be a student in good standing at the school where this group is being offered; be aged 13 to 18; have a diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder (ASD) or

Asperger syndrome (AS); have medium to high cognitive functioning; have good verbal, auditory, and visual capacity; understand what the group is for, express interest, and be willing to sign a consent form to participate and do the short, weekly homework assignments; have an adult sponsor (parent, teacher, guardian, or other individual) who will agree to support and participate in the program by attending the concurrent group.

This group is not for adolescents who may be having outbursts or strongly negative social interactions, nor for those adolescents who are having severe difficulty interacting since some verbal contributions will be required.

Group goals and rationale:

Goals:

- Show the ability to identify one's own feelings and demonstrate the ability to recognize feelings in others
- Practice recognizing other people's expressions
- Demonstrate the ability to initiate a conversation
- Demonstrate an understanding that other people may have a different and valid point of view
- Discuss how the course material can relate to everyday interactions
- Demonstrate an understanding of what friendship means and the value of having friends
- Demonstrate the ability to participate in group activities

Rationale:

Adolescents with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) and Asperger syndrome (AS) recognize that they do not have the same number or kinds of relationships as their peers (Gutstein & Whitney, 2002; Hillier, Fish, Cloppert, & Beversdorf, 2007; Laugeson, Frankel, Mogil, & Dillon, 2009).

People with ASD and AS have difficulties in the cognitive processing of emotions, including difficulties both in identifying and in describing feelings (Hill, Berthoz, & Frith, 2004). One central symptom of a diagnosis of ASD, of which AS is a sub-type, is impaired communication and social interaction (Peterson, Garnett, Kelly, & Attwood, 2009). However, it has been shown that people with AS can introspect and identify emotions (Hill, Berthoz, & Frith, 2004). Thus, being able to recognize feelings both in one's self and in others is helpful in enabling interaction with others in a more social way.

Additionally, parents of children with AS and ASD have reported that they wish their children could improve their social abilities with regard to: holding conversations and having relationships with peers; socialization; adhering to standard conversational patterns; discussing topics others could be interested in; taking other perspectives into account; and developing the ability to sustain social interaction as a foundation for genuine friendships (Peterson, Garnett, Kelly, & Attwood, 2009).

Charlop-Christy and Kelso (2003) found improved results in teaching children with AS when they used topics preferred by the children. So, whenever possible, this protocol tries to teach by using topics of interest to the members.

Outcome Criteria: One outcome criterion will be measured by participant attendance – a low fall-out rate will indicate motivation to attend all sessions. Another will be positive feedback from end-of-group interviews that indicate improvement among group members' skills; this feedback can either come from group members or from their associated adults who perceive improvements in the children's skills and daily interactions with others (including family members). By the end of the set of sessions, it is expected that the group members should be more comfortable with each other, and some will be able to hold conversations with other group members without adult prompting or supervision. This interaction will be determined by observation. Additionally, there will be a comparison of the pre-and-post Liking People Scale (LPS) questionnaire (Filsinger, 2007, pp. 437-438) See Appendix C.

Evaluation Tool: The LPS is an assessment for monitoring social interventions relating to shyness and anti-social behavior. The LPS will be completed by the adolescent group members before and after the group sessions (Filsinger, 2007, pp. 437-438).

Method: The primary media used will be structured group activities and discussions with occasional use of time spent in introspection and in writing of thoughts. Weekly homework assignments will be used to make the connection between the weekly sessions and the daily life of group members.

Pre- and post-completion of the LPS questionnaire, by the children, will measure progress of the members and will be accompanied by a post-group interview with each of the associated adults and children (Filsinger, 2007, pp. 437-438). Because the group is formed of people with medium to high cognitive level, during the session leadership will be largely facilitative. However, depending on the abilities and contributions of the group, and the need for structured activity to learn skills, the leader may also be directive as needed.

Time and place of meeting: The Selected School. Mondays from 6 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. for six consecutive weeks. Each group, both adolescent and adult, will have a classroom. Each classroom should include a table, preferably round, where all members of the group can sit. As there can be up to 16 members in the concurrent adult group, seating for that number may require two or more tables. Classrooms should include either a whiteboard or a large, easel-mounted pad.

Session titles:

- Motivation
- Identifying feelings
- Expressing feelings
- Beginning a conversation
- Keep talking
- Talking with peers

Supplies and Costs:

The classroom is provided free of charge by the school.

Pencils, paper, and copies of handouts/homework assignment sheets are being donated.

Appendices:

Appendix A—Optional list of feelings for use in Session 2; the list can also be distributed to members of either the adolescent or adult group

Appendix B—Facial Expressions Handout for Session 3, in format with four pictures per page

Appendix C—Copy of the LPS.

Contract for How to Make Friends Group Membership

By signing below, I _____ (full name) agree I am interested in participating in the six-session How to Make Friends group. In order to participate in the group, I agree to make every effort to arrive on time, participate in group activities, and complete the homework assignments between sessions. I understand I am not required to reveal any personal data in the group that I am not comfortable revealing. I also realize that any specific personal information about any group member should not be discussed outside of group.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

I, _____ (full name) parent or guardian, agree that my child may participate in the How to Make Friends group. Additionally, I, or my designated representative (provide name if it is another person)

_____ agree to participate in the concurrent six-session group for adults. I agree to make every effort to arrive on time, participate in group activities, and to help my child with homework assignments and understanding the skills developed in the group sessions.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

If another person is attending the group either in addition to parent/guardian or in place of parent or guardian, please fill out below:

I, _____ (full name) will be attending the adult group sessions of How to Make Friends group.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Group Session Outline (1 of 6)

Group title: How to make friends

Session title: Motivation

Format:

1. Introduction and warm-up—15 minutes
2. Activity—15 minutes
3. Sharing—20 minutes
4. Processing—10 minutes
5. Generalizing—10 minutes
6. Application—10 minutes
7. Summary—10 minutes

Supplies:

- *Likes and Dislikes* worksheet
- Pencils
- Homework worksheet

Description:

1. Introduction:

(Paraphrase and repeat information and instructions as needed to communicate effectively with group members throughout all sessions).

Welcome—"I want to welcome you all on this six-week journey in which we will be working to create, establish, or refine a number of skills related to developing friends and improving socialization skills. Over the next six weeks we will look the items we all need and use in our everyday lives to help us communicate with people.

"I want to thank you for deciding to join this group and, before we begin with a brief warm up, I would like to ask you to please show up on time each week, do the short homework assignments

during the week in between meetings, and feel free to contact me if you have any questions in between group sessions. As you know, each of you has an adult—parent, guardian, or friend—participating in the related group running next door, and they will also be able to provide assistance or support as we go through a variety of activities.

“To start off, would anyone like to tell me what a friend is?” Asking this question should help to calibrate how talkative the group is and how responsive they are initially to interactive questions. If there is any answer, build on it as much as possible. If the response is not strong, use questions to try and pull out the foundational concepts of a friend: knowing someone; liking them; and trusting them.

“This week we will be working on understanding your own individual interests, what hobbies and activities you like, and how these activities can be helpful in creating the motivation and interest necessary to create and maintain friendships. Knowing what you like to do and what you do not like to do can give you common ground to share or at least give you something to talk about.”

Warm up:

Ask each member of the group to introduce themselves by stating his or her name and by providing an example of one of his or her favorite television shows, movies, or books. Explain to members that they can also tell the group why this is one of their favorites. As an example, the group facilitator should start. During the warm up, if a response evokes a reaction, the facilitator should allow a discussion to evolve, evoking as much information and interaction as possible.

2. Activity:

Hand out the *Likes and Dislikes* worksheet, and make sure all members have a pencil.

Example of *Likes and Dislikes* worksheet:

Likes		Dislikes	

Now that the group members have talked about their favorite shows, it is time to consider the leisure activities they most like and most dislike to do. This activity consists of asking group members to create lists of their favorite and least favorite activities.

Ask group members to write down, on the forms, a list of their favorite and their least favorite activities to do during their free time. Suggest that a list of at least four items under each heading is good.

When the group appears to be finished, ask them to look at their list again, and prioritize each list. “When you have a list of at least four of each, likes and dislikes, I would like you to think

about how strongly you like or dislike each. Please look over your list of likes, and put them in order of preference. Which one do you most enjoy doing? On the sheet, there's a small box next to each line, put a one next to your favorite item. Then put a two next to your next favorite. Once you have completed ordering the items you like to do on your likes-list, do the same with the dislike-list. That is, what item on your dislike-list is your least favorite thing to do? Put a one in the space next to this item. Then the second least favorite would be number two." It may be useful depending on the group's understanding to write out an example on the white board.

3. Sharing:

When time is up, ask each person to say what their top like is and their top dislike. Write them up on the whiteboard in two lists for the group as a whole. If an item is already up there, put an extra check by it to show that more than one person has it as a like or dislike. Go around the group, asking for the second favorite/least favorite items until all items that the group puts forward are on the board.

Draw attention to similarities between members' likes and dislikes. If there are any commonalities, such as a number of people in the group like to do outdoor activities, point these out. If an item one person likes to do appears on another's list of dislikes, point it out.

4. Processing:

- Was this an easy activity for you to do?
- Did you find it easier to list your likes or your dislikes?
- Do you like all things to the same degree?
- As a group, did we all like and dislike the same things?
- Did you notice any other people liking or disliking some of the same things as you?
- Are there any items on either of the lists that you have not heard about before?
- Are there items on the list that you have been interested in, but have not done?
- Are the activities or things you do in your life that you neither like nor dislike?

5. Generalizing:

- How might you find out if someone likes or dislikes the same things as you?
- If someone likes the same thing as you, why do you think that is?
- If someone does not like something that you do, why do you think that is?

6. Application:

- We have looked at how we all like some things and dislike other things. Sometimes our reasons for liking things may be similar (if possible draw on some similarities or differences noticed during the sharing part of the discussion) or they may be quite different.
- As we go through our days, there are times when you can see that other people like or dislike the same things as you. For instance, at lunch, some people like the same foods and other people do not. Or, have you noticed, when someone bakes cookies, people begin to show up in the kitchen?
- Hand out Homework Assignment: "Over the next week, I would like you to take notice of the people around you. For instance, if a family member, or a classmate, or someone you see when you are out, does something that you like to do or dislikes something that

you dislike, make a note of it. You can also use characters from television shows. It would be nice if you could come in with three examples. I am giving you a sheet to make a list on.

Homework sheet example:

Please write down at least three examples of times during the week when you noticed someone either liking or disliking the same things as you.
1.
2.
3.

7. Summary:

- In this session we have found that we all like and dislike a variety of leisure activities.
- It can be both puzzling and interesting when others do not like the same things as we like.
- If someone likes or dislikes different things than us, this does not make it wrong. Some say it adds variety and interest to our world.
 - It also means that people have a different way of looking at the world and that we value, and find pleasure, in different things.
- By talking to people we can explore the many ways people find value in the world and this can be very interesting.
- When we understand, and are interested in, other people it is easier to be friends with them.

Homework Sheet for Session 1
Motivation—Likes and Dislikes

Please write down at least three examples of times during the week when you noticed someone either liking or disliking the same things as you.

1.

2.

3.

Group Session Outline (2 of 6)

Group title: How to make friends

Session title: Identifying feelings

Format:

1. Introduction, warm-up, homework review—20 minutes
2. Activity—30 minutes
3. Sharing—15 minutes
4. Processing—10 minutes
5. Generalizing—5 minutes
6. Application—5 minutes
7. Summary—5 minutes

Supplies:

- Pencils and blank paper for each member
- Draw-string bag (or a zip-lock or paper bag)
- Small pieces of paper (approximately 2.5 x 2.5 inches, which can be folded)
- Homework worksheet: *Feelings*

Description: (This session has a lot of sub-sections. It can be tailored to the aptitude/work speed of the individual group.)

1. Introduction:

“Hi, today we are going to talk about feelings. I thought we would begin with a very short, overview about feelings, then do a short warm up activity, then we can talk over the homework assignment which was about recognizing the likes and dislikes of those around us. Then we can go on to relate that to the topic of this session, which is feelings.

“Feelings can be physical, mental, or emotional. A physical feeling can be something like having a pain somewhere or feeling out of breath from having just run up the stairs. A mental feeling can be something like feeling tired, or feeling calm, or feeling content. An emotional feeling is often described as one that we feel in our gut, or stomachs. There are lots of different emotional feelings such as being happy, sad, angry, or pleased.

“We can use words to describe our feelings, and sometimes we can use different words to mean the same or similar emotion. Sometimes the words express a different level, degree, or strength of a feeling. For example we might say we are *annoyed* when we are just a little bit *angry*.

Warm up: “So today let us start the session by going around the group and saying our name and how we are feeling.” (While in the previous session the facilitator started with an example, it would be good to see whether a group member would volunteer to begin this session.)

If there is little response from the group the therapist can either provide an example or suggest they try an alternative, for instance “Can you imagine how you might feel if...?” and suggest

something that would likely be either pleasing or displeasing to the group. For example, "...we all had an ice-cream" or "...we all had to stay indoors on a sunny day."

Homework review: Now that we know a bit about how we are feeling, I like us to talk about how we felt about the homework assignment and what we discovered. Talk about the examples the members wrote down. Ask whether they found themselves paying more attention to the people around them. Draw out any commonalities of experience. Tell the group that you appreciate their taking the time to do the homework and provide positive feedback on appropriate areas.

2. Activity:

Hand out blank pieces of paper and pencils. "Today we are going to make a list of all the feeling words we can think of. First, I would like us all to work individually and take a few minutes and write down as many feeling words as you can. If you find yourself getting stuck, try to imagine yourself in different situations or, perhaps, try to recall how people you know or the characters in your favorite television show or book have felt." (Time allowed depends on how the group is able to come up with feeling words. Facilitator should walk around and work individually with members who seem stuck. If the entire group is having a problem, when it comes to listing the feelings on the whiteboard, the facilitator can add words. See list at end of session.)

Facilitator goes to the whiteboard and asks people to provide feeling words from their lists and writes them down. Then the facilitator and group go through each feeling word on the whiteboard and either define or describe each of them. (Depending on the group, it may be useful to use each word in a sentence, for instance *I am feeling* _____ *because* _____.)

"Now that we've gone over these feeling words, I am going to hand you each two pieces of paper and I want you to pick out two feeling words from the list, write one feeling word each on a piece of paper, fold them, and put them in this bag."

Take the bag around, collect the papers, and put in some extras as your contribution. Now, one by one, have each member take a paper out of the bag. Each person then reads out the feeling they have chosen, and takes a turn to describe when a person might experience the feeling, or to act out the feeling by a mime, or to provide an example of when they or someone, real or fictional, expressed that feeling. The facilitator should begin and then go around the circle.

3. Sharing:

Since this was an intense activity, including personal declarations during warm-up, review of homework, and a two-pronged activity, it is anticipated that the sharing at this session will either be full of energy or very low key. Adjust to the members' level of energy.

- Were you surprised by how many different feelings we came up with?
- Were any of the feelings on the list new to you?
- What do you think are some of the most commonly experienced feelings?
- Can you give an example of a time when you experienced one of these feeling?
- How did it feel to act out or pretend to have a feeling?
- Are some feelings similar to others?

4. Processing:

- There are lots of different feelings.
- Each of them can be experienced to a lesser or greater degree. For instance, a person can be happy or a person can be *very* happy.
- People can share an experience and have similar feelings, or they can share an experience and have different feelings. Remember last week when we found some activities that some people really liked doing and others did not?
Can you imagine how you would feel if (For this exercise, try to solicit a response; but if none arise, suggest a feeling):
 - You were about to be blasted into orbit on a rocket?
 - You were on a beach in the sunshine on a tropical island?
 - You were looking over the edge of a cliff and could see a long way?
 - You were on your own in the woods?
 - You were in a crowd at a concert of your favorite band?
- Mostly feelings fall into two kinds: those we want and those we would rather not have.
 - Positive and Negative

5. Generalizing:

- People experience a wide range of feelings.
- When you can imagine what someone else is feeling, this is called empathy.
- Knowing about feelings, and knowing the words for them and when people might be feeling a certain way, helps us respond and interact with a person appropriately.
- Would anyone like to tell the group how they are feeling now? (This would be a good time to see how the group is doing. Address any concerns or frustrations.)

6. Application:

- “This week, for homework, I want you to make a note of some of the different feelings you experience during the week and, if possible, write down what the main reason for the feeling was. For example, if you felt tired because you stayed up late, staying up late would be the reason. Hand out homework assignment sheet:

Please pay attention to how you are feeling this week and write down at least three examples of how you were feeling and, if possible, why you were feeling this way. For example, if you were happy because you were did not have math homework one night.
1.
2.
3.

7. Summary:

- Feelings can be positive or negative
- We tend to like positive feelings and not like negative ones.
- It can be difficult to recognize feelings. There are a lot of feelings, and sometimes we are too busy to consider how we are feeling or how someone else might be feeling. Being aware of feelings and how others are feeling is a good tool to have when one wants to socialize with others.

Pleasant Feelings

OPEN

understanding
confident
reliable
easy
amazed
free
sympathetic
interested
satisfied
receptive
accepting
kind

HAPPY

great
gay
joyous
lucky
fortunate
delighted
overjoyed
gleeful
thankful
important
festive
ecstatic
satisfied
glad
cheerful
sunny
merry
elated
jubilant

ALIVE

playful
courageous
energetic
liberated
optimistic
provocative
impulsive
free
frisky
animated
spirited
thrilled
wonderful

GOOD

calm
peaceful
at ease
comfortable
pleased
encouraged
clever
surprised
content
quiet
certain
relaxed
serene
free and easy
bright
blessed
reassured

LOVE

loving
considerate
affectionate
sensitive
tender
devoted
attracted
passionate
admiration
warm
touched
sympathy
close
loved
comforted
drawn toward

INTERESTED

concerned
affected
fascinated
intrigued
absorbed
inquisitive
nosy
snoopy
engrossed
curious

POSITIVE

eager
keen
earnest
intent
anxious
inspired
determined
excited
enthusiastic
bold
brave
daring
challenged
optimistic
re-enforced
confident
hopeful

STRONG

impulsive
free
sure
certain
rebellious
unique
dynamic
tenacious
hardy
secure

Difficult/Unpleasant Feelings

ANGRY

irritated
enraged
hostile
insulting
sore
annoyed
upset
hateful
unpleasant
offensive
bitter
aggressive
resentful
inflamed
provoked
incensed
infuriated
cross
worked up
boiling
fuming
indignant

DEPRESSED

lousy
disappointed
discouraged
ashamed
powerless
diminished
guilty
dissatisfied
miserable
detestable
repugnant
despicable
disgusting
abominable
terrible
in despair
sulky
bad
a sense of loss

CONFUSED

upset
doubtful
uncertain
indecisive
perplexed
embarrassed
hesitant
shy
stupefied
disillusioned
unbelieving
skeptical
distrustful
misgiving
lost
unsure
uneasy
pessimistic
tense

HELPLESS

incapable
alone
paralyzed
fatigued
useless
inferior
vulnerable
empty
forced
hesitant
despair
frustrated
distressed
woeful
pathetic
tragic
in a stew
dominated

INDIFFERENT

insensitive
dull
nonchalant
neutral
reserved
weary
bored
preoccupied
cold
disinterested
lifeless

AFRAID

fearful
terrified
suspicious
anxious
alarmed
panic
nervous
scared
worried
frightened
timid
shaky
restless
doubtful
threatened
cowardly
quaking
menaced
wary

HURT

crushed
tormented
deprived
pained
tortured
dejected
rejected
injured
offended
afflicted
aching
victimized
heartbroken
agonized
appalled
humiliated
wronged
alienated

SAD

tearful
sorrowful
pained
grief
anguish
desolate
desperate
pessimistic
unhappy
lonely
grieved
mournful
dismayed

Homework Sheet for Session 2
Identifying Feelings

Please pay attention to how you are feeling this week and write down at least three examples of how you were feeling and, if possible, why you were feeling this way. For example, if you were happy because you were did not have math homework one night.

1.

2.

3.

Group Session Outline (3 of 6)

Group title: How to make friends

Session title: Expressing feelings

Format:

1. Introduction—20 minutes
2. Activity—20 minutes
3. Sharing—15 minutes
4. Processing—10 minutes
5. Generalizing—5 minutes
6. Application—10 minutes
7. Summary—10 minutes

Supplies:

- Pencils and blank paper for each member
- Homework worksheet: The *Feelings* Game website

Description:

1. Introduction:

“In the first session we looked at the things people like and dislike. In the second session, last week, we looked at feelings, how many there are, how people experience different feelings, and we touched very briefly on the idea of empathy. Does anyone remember what empathy is? (If someone in the group volunteers take the discussion to the group. If not, continue.) Empathy is understanding or imagining what others might feel in a situation. In this session, we are going to look at the different ways we express feelings.

“First, we will do a warm up, then we will review your homework, and then we will do an activity to see if we can identify how people are feeling.”

Warm-up:

During the first week, we took turns describing our favorite television show, movie, or book character. Today, please tell us your name and then describe a character from your favorite TV show. What is that person like? How do they get on with the other characters, or people, in the show? How can you tell? May I have a volunteer to begin? (If not, start by giving an example.)

Homework review:

For homework last week, you were going make a note of some of the different feelings you experienced during the week and write down if you could the main reason for the feeling.” (Ask a member of the group to share one of the items they have written down.) Discuss. Keep with this review as long as it is comfortable and productive. Ideally, have at least one example from each group member.

2. Activity:

Hand out a package of pictures of people's faces. Have each member individually look at the pictures and write down the expression, feeling, or emotion they see. (A sample package of facial pictures follows, and another format style is attached in Appendix A. While this package was designed for people with ASD and AS, it is not easy. This activity can also be done with pictures or movie clips, depending on availability of other technology, such as computers and projectors. In the case of video, dialogue and voice tone can also be used to support gaining an understanding of the feeling being expressed. Additionally, while the current handout provides a choice of emotion for members to choose, the exercise can be made more difficult by not providing choices, or by providing more examples.) When the group has finished, discuss each picture individually.

3. Sharing:

- How did you feel about this activity? Did you find it easy or difficult, and why?
- If a person does not speak, how can you tell what they are feeling?
- When you see someone else showing an emotion, how does it make you feel?
- Do you empathize a little, a lot, or not at all?

4. Processing:

- We show emotions in several ways
 - By what we say
 - By the way we say things
 - By not saying anything at all
 - Or just in the way we hold our bodies and the faces we make
- Holding a negative, or bad, emotion inside is sometimes difficult.
- Has anyone here ever been upset?
- What can happen when we are upset?
- What can happen when we are happy?
- Discuss coping strategies; saying things gently but assertively; waiting to say something

5. Generalizing:

- We all have emotions and we express them all the time.
- Sometimes we do this without noticing.
- Sometimes we do it deliberately.
- Friends take other people's emotions or possible emotions into account when they speak or act.

6. Application:

- This week your homework assignment is to continue working on facial expressions. There is no need to write anything down this week. Provide a homework handout with the instructions: "Go to this website: <http://www.do2learn.com/games/feelingsgame/index.htm> and play the *Feelings* game."

7. Summary:

- Feelings can be expressed in direct ways or by subtle indications.
- Being able to recognize and control our own expressions helps others understand us.

- Being able to recognize the expressions of others helps us understand and interact with them appropriately.
- Being sensitive to what others are expressing helps us adjust our words and actions so as to create more positive feelings.
- Creating positive feelings with others is a good way of building a friendship.



AFRAID

ANGRY



HAPPY

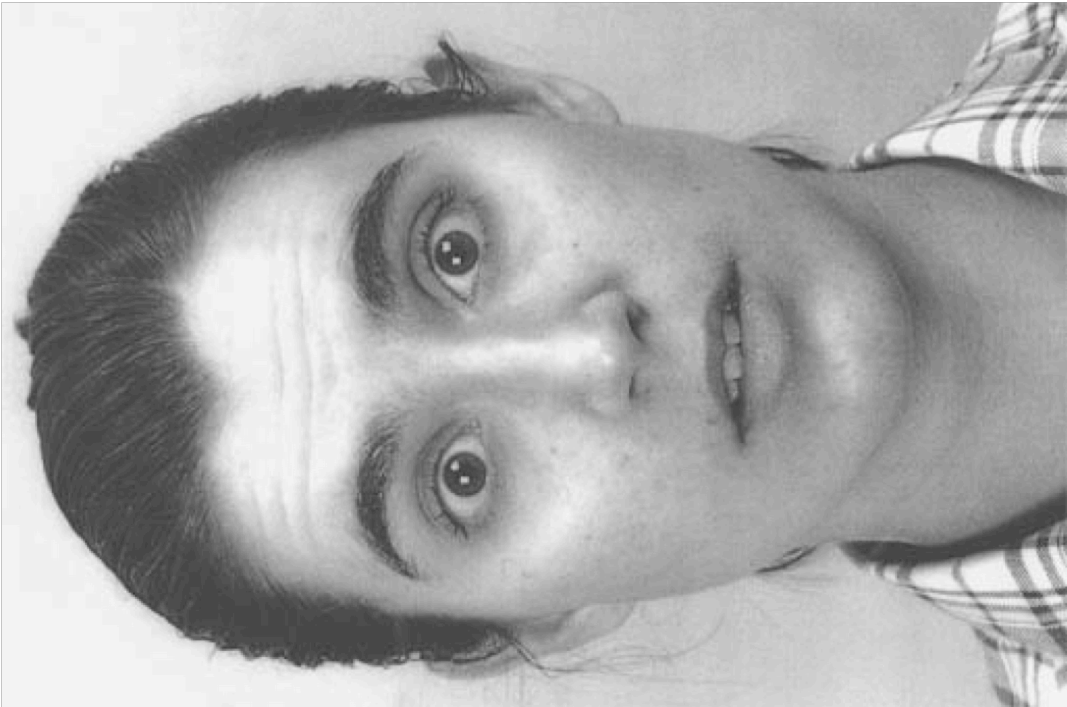
SURPRISE

Source for handout: http://www.autismresearchcentre.com/tests/faces_test.asp



SAD

DISGUST



SURPRISE

HAPPY



AFRAID

ANGRY



SAD

DISGUST



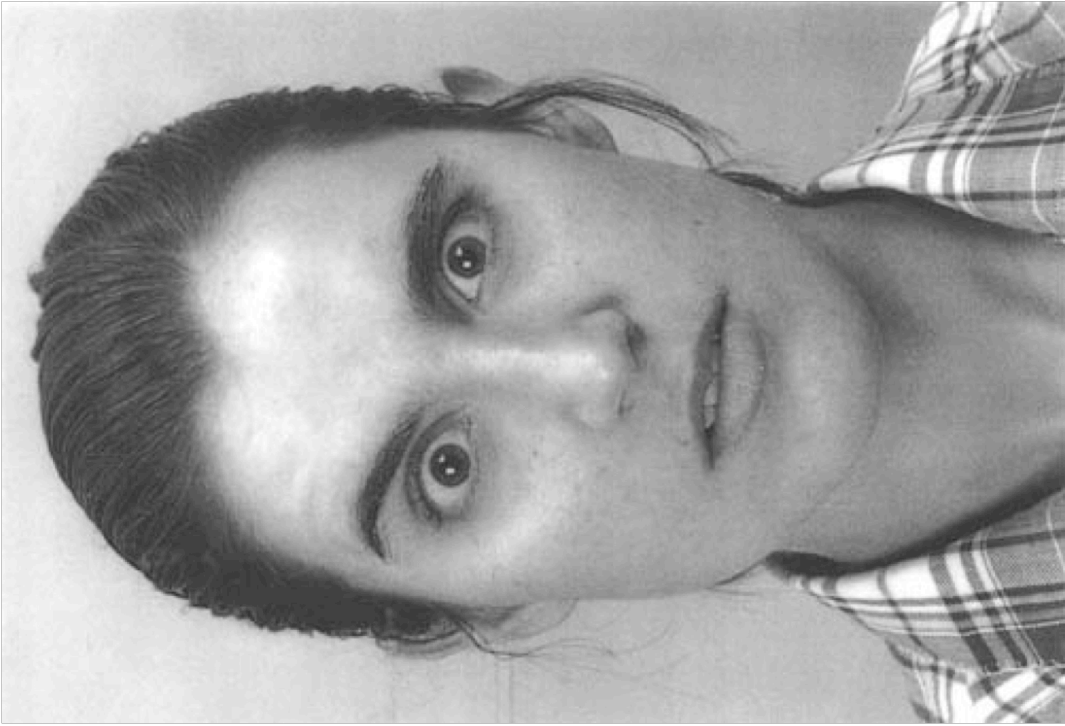
SAD

DISTRESS



SURPRISE

HAPPY



AFRAID

ANGRY



HAPPY

SURPRISE

GUILT

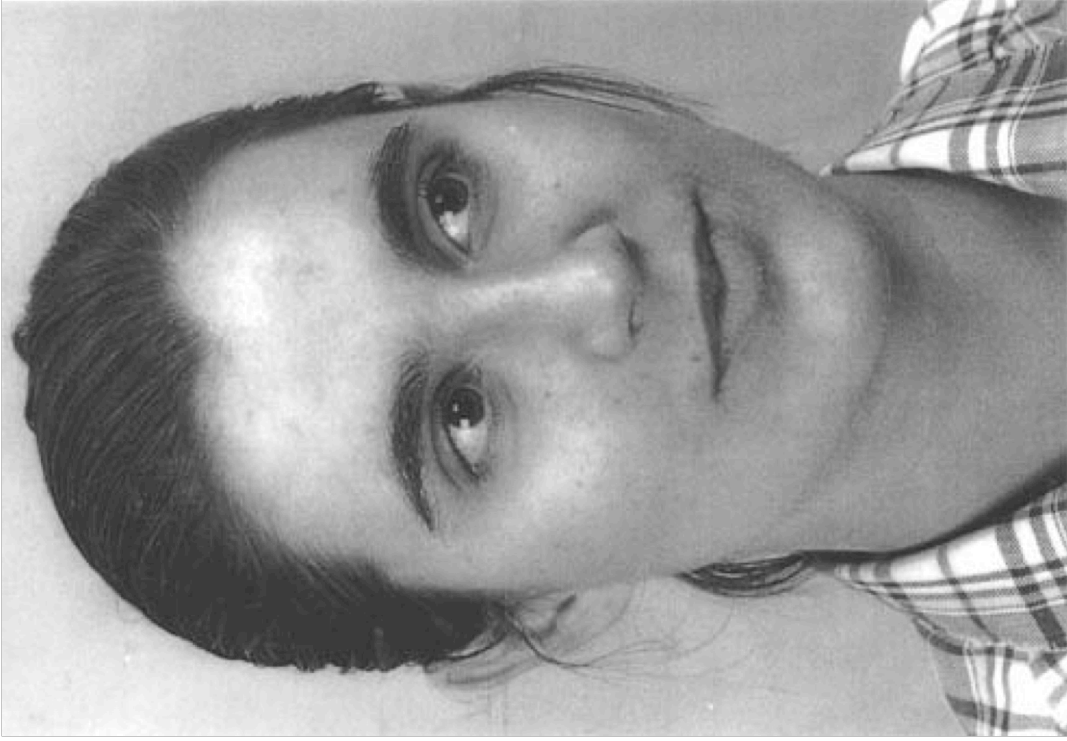


ARROGANT



ARROGANT

SCHEMING



ADMIRING

SURPRISE



ARROGANT

THOUGHTFUL



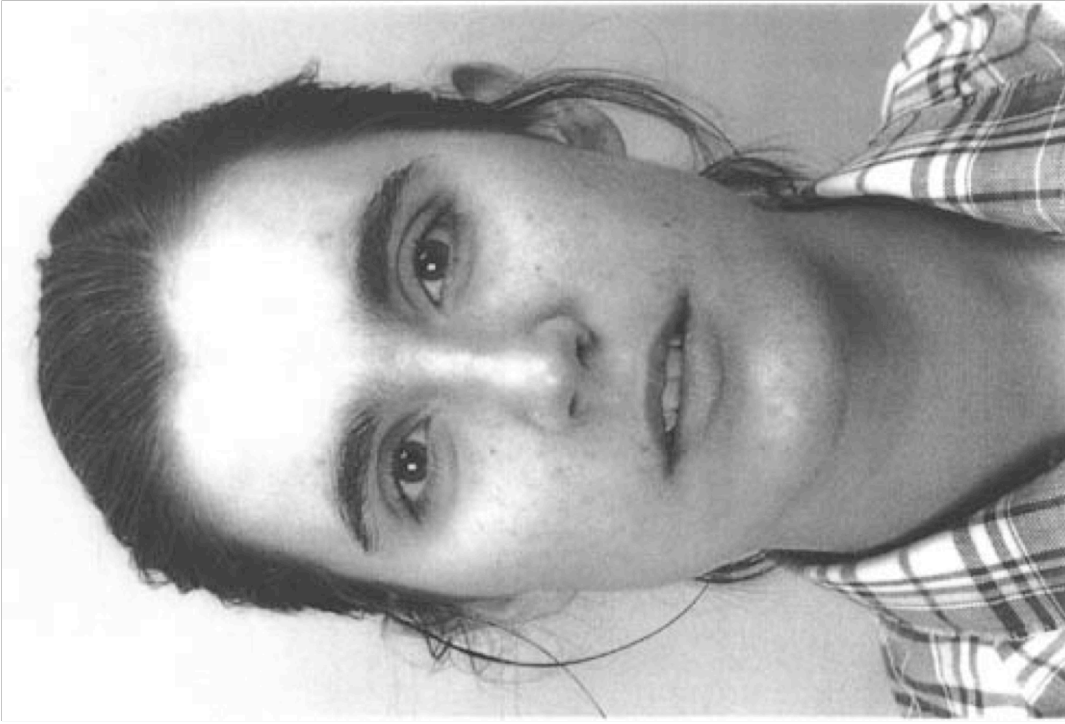
FLIRTING

HAPPY



GUILTY

QUIZZICAL



INTERESTED

DISINTERESTED



SLEEPY

BORED



ARROGANT

GUILTY



DISINTERESTED

INTERESTED

Key for facial recognition exercise (Term in upper case is target term.)

Basic emotions

- Picture 1: HAPPY vs Surprise
- Picture 2: AFRAID vs Angry
- Picture 3: SURPRISE vs Happy
- Picture 4: DISGUST vs Sad
- Picture 5: SAD vs Disgust
- Picture 6: ANGRY vs Afraid
- Picture 7: SURPRISE vs Happy
- Picture 8: DISTRESS vs Sad
- Picture 9: HAPPY vs Surprise
- Picture 10: ANGRY vs Afraid

Complex mental states

- Picture 1: SCHEMING vs Arrogant
- Picture 2: GUILT vs Arrogant
- Picture 3: THOUGHTFUL vs Arrogant
- Picture 4: ADMIRING vs Surprise
- Picture 5: QUIZZICAL vs guilt
- Picture 6: FLIRTING vs Happy
- Picture 7: BORED vs Sleepy
- Picture 8: INTERESTED vs Disint
- Picture 9: INTERESTED vs Disint
- Picture 10: ARROGANT vs Guilt

Homework Sheet for Session 3
Expressing Feelings

Go to this website: <http://www.do2learn.com/games/feelingsgame/index.htm> and play the *Feelings* game.

Group Session Outline (4 of 6)

Group title: How to make friends

Session title: Beginning a conversation

Format:

1. Introduction—15 minutes
2. Activity—25 minutes
3. Sharing—15 minutes
4. Processing—10 minutes
5. Generalizing—5 minutes
6. Application—10 minutes
7. Summary—10 minutes

Supplies:

- Pencils and blank paper for each member
- Homework worksheet

Description:

1. Introduction:

“Hello. Today we are going to talk about how we go about beginning conversations, but before we do that I’d like to do a short warm up activity and then I’d like to get your thoughts about the homework assignment, the *Feelings* game.”

Warm up: “Today I would like us to get warmed up by doing a little physical exercise. Let us all stand up. I would like each of us to say our name and then do some exercise or make some motion with your body that we can all copy. It can be anything. It can be simple. You can move your arms, your hands, your legs, anything. Then all the rest of us will try and copy it as accurately as possible. Is there someone who would like to start us off?” (If no one volunteers, the facilitator should begin and then work around the circle.) Comment on how fun that was, or how challenging. Provide positive feedback on good moves and/or participation.

Homework review: “Now let us sit down and briefly discuss the *Feelings* game. How did that work for you? What did you think about the game, was it helpful?” Try to get input from all members and discuss any similarities or differences of opinion about the game.

“In the previous lesson we looked at several ways that people express their feelings and how we can often tell how someone feels by observing their face, how they hold their body and, even, by how they say or use words. In a society, one of the most common ways of expressing ourselves is in words. So today we are going to look at how to begin a conversation. Even our warm up was a kind of communication. We were speaking using our bodies and other people were learning to speak our language.”

2. Activity:

Hand out pencils and blank paper. “I want you to think of a situation where you would need to talk to someone else. It should be a situation where you have a need or desire to do something, but you need to have someone else help you accomplish it. For example, you could be in a shop wanting to buy something and you do not see the item you want so you have to ask for it. Or, you could be walking in town and ask for directions to a place? Or, maybe you are planning to take a bus and you need to ask which bus goes to your destination.

“Take a few minutes to think of a situation. It might be easier if you imagine it and write it down. Write down the question you would ask. Also write down what you think you will say after the other person gives you a reply? In a few minutes, each of you will take a turn at beginning a conversation with me. You will talk to me as if I am the other person that you need help from in your scenario.

“There is one more part of this exercise. When you talk to me to ask me something for your situation, I want you to have something else to say to me. It can be anything. Another question might be a good idea. The idea is that you have to achieve two things: 1) a step toward your goal and 2) to engage or interact with another person for just another moment. As I said, you do not have to write it down, but it may help you to think it out in advance and so have it ready when we practice saying it.”

When each person has a goal and situation ready, either having written it down or verified they are ready, practice having each person gain appropriate attention by either saying hello, asking for an item from their list, and asking a follow-on question. Continue the exercise until each member has had a turn. (Have some scenarios in mind in case members have difficulty coming up with their own.)

3. Sharing:

- How did you feel about the activity we just completed? (Was it hard? Was it easy?)
- Did you succeed in moving forward toward your goal?
- What did you find out that was interesting?
- Did you enjoy the interaction?

4. Processing:

- The usual first step towards being friends with someone is to gain their attention and to talk to them.
- Sometimes it can be difficult to know what to say.
 - So what can we do to prepare ourselves to talk to someone?
 - Would you sit down in front of someone and write down the conversation as we did in the activity?
 - What kinds of things would you feel comfortable saying to someone?
 - Are there things you could say to them that would tell them about you in a way that you get to learn about them?
- Not everyone you meet is going to become your best friend, but social life is generally easier if we are friendly.
 - It is easier to be friends with someone who is being friendly.

5. Generalizing:

- We all need to interact with others to at least some degree.
 - Sometimes we need to start a conversation to get some information or because we are interested in something.
 - Sometimes we need to work with someone else to achieve something.
 - Sometimes we need to talk just to express how we are feeling.

6. Application:

- “Small conversations make up a good part of everyday life. The exercise we just completed ties right into the homework assignment for this week. This week the assignment is for you to talk to someone you do not usually talk to. It can be anyone, such as a teacher in your school with whom you do not have a class or, perhaps, a person working here in the school. Find someone in your usual environment to talk to. It is okay to do this assignment having your parent with you.”
- Write on the homework assignment sheet about what happens, and even more about how it made you feel. Were you nervous? Were you excited? Was it a simple conversation, or did it lead to further discussion?

Homework sheet:

Who did you talk to? What did you talk about? How did it made you feel? Were you nervous? Were you excited? Was it a simple conversation, or did it lead to further discussion?

7. Summary:

- Each of us is an individual but we live a better life if we live in a society.
- Conversations are how we interact with other people.
- By talking and spending time with people we become friendly.
- Friendship is the glue of society.

Homework Sheet for Session 4
Beginning a Conversation

Who did you talk to? What did you talk about? How did it made you feel? Were you nervous? Were you excited? Was it a simple conversation, or did it lead to further discussion?

Group Session Outline (5 of 6)

Group title: How to make friends

Session title: Keep talking

Format:

1. Introduction—20 minutes
2. Activity—20 minutes
3. Sharing—20 minutes
4. Processing—5 minutes
5. Generalizing—10 minutes
6. Application—10 minutes
7. Summary—5 minutes

Supplies:

- Pencils and blank paper for each member
- Homework worksheet

Description:

1. Introduction:

“I am really looking forward to discussing the conversations you held with people last week. Before we review the homework, though, I would like us to do a warm up game. Today, we will continue talking about holding a conversation and work on keeping a conversation going.”

Warm up: “Today, I would like us to stand up and form a small circle. We are going to play a word game. We will take turns going around the circle clock-wise saying a word that begins with the *next* letter of the alphabet from the word the person to our right just said. On your first turn, please say your name first. So if I start and say *apple*, then the next person might say *beautiful*, because it is the first thing that came to mind with the letter *b*. Does everyone get the idea? As we do this, I would like us to try to do this as quickly as we can. This should be fun. It does not matter if you make a mistake. It does not matter what word you say other than it needs to start with the next letter of the alphabet than the one that came before.”

Homework review:

“In the previous session we explored how to start a conversation. Typically, we have some goal in mind when we start a conversation, something we need or want to talk about. In your homework assignment many of you practiced this by talking to someone you do not usually talk to. I am sure some of you found that this exercise made you feel a little nervous. Am I right? Let us look at the different people you were able to speak with last week.” (Go through a discussion of the different conversations, find out how the members felt, what they thought went well, what they did not think went well.)

“Last week we focused on how to start a conversation. This is sometimes called *breaking the ice* and is often the hard part of a conversation. However, sometimes people find starting a

conversation easier than continuing a conversation. It depends on the person. Remember how in the first week we found out some people like doing the same thing and other people had opposite feelings about it? Well the same can be said about conversations. Some people find starting a conversation difficult. Others find continuing the conversation difficult. So in this session we will focus on how to maintain a conversation. Sometimes we get a response that seems to finish a particular line of conversation, and we might change to subject and move on to another topic. Today, however, in this exercise we are going to probe deeper and deeper into just one topic and we are only going to stop when the time is up.

2. Activity:

Hand out blank paper and pencils. “First we need to choose a topic. Does anyone have an idea?” If no topics are forthcoming then select something. (Examples include: specific hobbies or activities, travel, professional sports, and family.) The topic selected should be relevant to the group, for example, the location where they are right now. Write the topic up in a place the group can see it.

[The following discussion about *open* and *closed* questions may be included or omitted depending on whether it feels appropriate for the group. “Before I ask you to make a list of questions and comments you might say about the selected subject, I would first like to ask whether anyone knows about open and closed questions. Basically, a closed question can be answered with a single word or phrase, and an open question often receives a longer answer. We often try to use open questions because they more often enable people to give a longer response.”]

Have group members work alone to make a list of things to say when talking with someone about the selected topic, for example, *Could you tell me more about that?* Once there has been some time to think up questions and comments related to the subject, the facilitator will begin a conversation on the selected topic. Group members will take turns asking their questions or making comments to demonstrate an ongoing conversation.

If the conversation starts to flag, the leader can introduce changes to the conversation. The goal is to keep the conversation going as long as possible. Depending on time, the activity can be repeated with another topic. For second- or third-round topics, depending on how the group is doing, the activity of pre-preparing questions and comments can be dropped.

3. Sharing:

- Was it easy or hard to think of more things to talk about?
- What were some of the topics that came out of the conversation? (Facilitator can draw a *mind map* of the topics that were talked about on the whiteboard.)

4. Processing:

- Now that the exercise is over, can you think of any more things to talk about related to this topic?
- Do you see how one topic can lead to another related idea?
- What might other people think if you jump from one topic to another completely separate topic?

- Sometimes in a conversation we need to make transitions between subjects clear. Sometimes a change in subject is natural and understood.
- Can we think of any things we might say to change or make a transition to another subject?

5. Generalizing:

- Ideas connect together like a web, so there is always something related to talk about.
- Jumping from topic to topic randomly does not make a good conversation because it does not allow other people to feel involved in the flow.
- Sometimes jumps in conversation are necessary. This is when we use transitions to alert those we are conversing with about changes in subject or topic.

6. Application:

- In an earlier session, we learned how to read the expressions of others and see how they feel. Then we learned how to start a conversation. Today, we learned how to continue the conversation. While these steps can be learned and studied individually, they are not always used individually. As our activity today shows, sometimes we need to recognize when to switch to another subject. Sometimes we need to notice when others have not understood what we mean, and then we go back and try to make it clear.
- “The homework assignment for this week is to practice continuing a conversation with someone. This week, you may talk with anyone you choose. It can be a member of your family. It can be your adult contact in the other group. What I want you to do is to listen to what they say, think for a moment about the topic, and then talk to them about something you find interesting in the same or a related topic.”

Homework sheet:

Who did you talk to? What did you talk about? How long did you keep the conversation going for? How did it make you feel? Were you nervous? Were you excited?

7. Summary:

- The world of ideas is like an onion. Ideas have layers and layers within them.
- Conversation can help unfold deeper ideas and in so doing bring different people with different ideas closer together.
- When people become closer they suddenly find they are friends.

Homework Sheet for Session 5
Conversational Skills—Keep Talking

Who did you talk to? What did you talk about? How long did you keep the conversation going for? How did it made you feel? Were you nervous? Were you excited?

Group Session Outline (6 of 6)

Group title: How to make friends

Session title: Talking with peers

Format:

1. Introduction—15 minutes
2. Activity—25 minutes
3. Sharing—15 minutes
4. Processing—10 minutes
5. Generalizing—5 minutes
6. Application—10 minutes
7. Summary—10 minutes

Supplies:

- Lightweight plastic ball (about 5 inches in diameter)
- Grab bag, and paired tickets to form teams
- Scenarios (at least one per team)
- Pencils and blank paper for each member

Description:

1. Introduction:

“Hello. It is good to see you all today, on our sixth session. In the past sessions, we have looked at our individual likes and dislikes and how feelings of like, dislike, and many others play into our everyday lives. We have looked at how peoples’ feelings can sometimes be seen in their facial expressions and body postures. We have learned to initiate and carry on conversations. All these skills play a part in our individual lives and in making friends. Today, we will discuss how successful you were in holding individual conversations in you homework assignment, and we will talk about what friendship is and what it means to us.”

Warm up:

The warm up activity today is throwing a ball from one group member to another. “Today we are starting with a simple game. We will be throwing a ball gently from one to another. You can throw it to anyone you like, but it is important that they are able to catch it. So do not throw it hard. If someone is not very good at catching then you must try to make it easier for him or her. We also want to make sure that everyone gets to catch and throw about as often as everyone else, so do not always throw it to the same person. The first time you catch the ball, call out your name to introduce yourself.” (Do this exercise for a few minutes.)

Homework review:

“Now I’d like to hear about your conversations over the week.” Discuss what went well, what did not, how long each person was able to hold a conversation. Draw comparisons. Accentuate the positive results.

2. Activity:

“The activity today is to hold a conversation with someone else in the group. To make this easier, the rest of the group is going to listen to the conversation and help you if you run out of things to say. If you cannot think of something, and you come to a stop, then we, the listeners, will suggest something to say to keep the conversation going. The goal is to keep the conversation going as long as possible up to five minutes per pair. To make sure we all have the same starting point, we will draw numbers from this bag to create the conversational pairs. (If the group contains an odd number of members the therapist will also select and become part of a pair.)

The facilitator will have the pair pick a scenario from a group of folded scenarios that includes the beginning of a dialogue. Have the pair read the scenario out loud – switching from one to the other for each sentence. (This begins the idea of a dialogue). Have them continue. Ask the rest of the group to quietly pay attention and always be thinking of what they might say next and so be prepared to help them if needed.

Charlop-Christy and Kelso (2003) found relevant subject matter improved conversational practice.

Conversation 1

1st person: Do you like to watch TV?
2nd person: Yes. Do you like to watch TV?
1st person: Yes. What is your favorite show?
2nd person responds: ...

Conversation 2

1st person: What did you do at school today?
2nd person: I had a math test.
1st person: Do you like math?
2nd person responds: ...

Conversation 3

1st person: Have you ever been on an airplane?
2nd person: No.
1st person: Oh, I have.
2nd person responds: What was it like?

3. Sharing:

We have just completed several role-playing scenarios.

- Did you find it easy?
- Did you get stuck?
- Did the ideas given from the others help?
- Did the conversation seem natural and flow or was it a struggle?
- Using one of the scenarios, what was motivating the conversation?
- Did you use any of the conversation opening questions that we discussed in previous sessions?

4. Processing:

- What makes some conversations a struggle and what makes them easier?
- Did everyone have the same thoughts? Would the conversation have been different if you were doing it instead of the people you were listening to?
- Did some people seem to find it easier than others?
 - What do you think made it easier?
 - What do you think made it harder?
- What did you find useful about working with a partner?

5. Generalizing:

- Often becoming friends takes time. It doesn't happen immediately.
- It takes listening as well as talking.
- It takes looking at the world from their perspective as well as yours.
- It is based on being able to trust one another.
- Do you notice any increase in friendliness with other members of this group? Has it changed since the beginning of the sessions?

6. Application:

- Today we all were involved in a number of conversations, and we worked to keep our attention on the other person and on the conversation.
- What are the skills we have improved during this session and this course?
- What have we learned from this course as a whole?
- How will you use what you have learned tomorrow?

7. Summary:

- Wherever possible, points to remember are taken from comments from members of the group.
- In the past six weeks, we have learned to name and express our feelings. We have learned to pay attention not only to what people say but how they look and how they act.
- We have learned how to begin a conversation, and how to keep a conversation going.
- All these skills are useful and necessary to interact with other people.

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