

## Selecting an Intervention Focus

**Population choice:** Adolescent and young adults with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) and Asperger Syndrome (AS)

**Rehabilitation potential:** Developing friends and improving socialization skills is a lifetime endeavor for most of the population group.

**List 10 areas of the occupational therapy domain that your clients may want or need to work on**, using Appendix D as your guide. Use the framework **intervention approaches** to define the most appropriate focus for each domain listed below, using one or more of these five approaches: create/promote, establish/restore, maintain, modify, or prevent.

### Overview

Establish an understanding of the value and benefits of friendship and assess each client's individual outlook on the understanding of the concept, their interest in developing new friendships, and their understanding of the work necessary and maintenance required by everyone who seeks to reap the benefits of friendship. Try to obtain a baseline regarding how clients feel. Are they motivated to make changes?

1. **Communication/interaction skills – relations** (performance skills)
  - a. **Approach:** create, establish, modify, and prevent
  - b. Work to **create or establish** a number of skills related to developing friends and improving socialization skills. Specifically this could include learning to identify feelings; learning to read the expression of others; Discuss current communication skills and behaviors, and work to **modify** any that may be causing problems or interfering with the goal of acquiring and maintaining friends. Identify activities that may be stopping successful communication and work to prevent this behavior.
2. **Communication/interaction skills – information exchange** (performance skills)
  - a. **Approach:** promote and modify
  - b. Learning to initiate and carry on a conversation. Learning to look at topics from other people's point of view. Learning to ask open-ended questions and to respond appropriately.
3. **Communication/interaction skills – physicality** (performance skills)
  - a. **Approach:** establish, promote
  - b. Paying attention to body language; encouraging each client to understand how he or she presents and how others around them present.
4. **Process, or cognitive, skills – adaptation** (performance skills)
  - a. **Approach:** modify, prevent
  - b. Adolescents with ASD and 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). Work

through the mental and emotional understanding regarding their current situation and of the steps necessary to develop friends. Think through with clients what needs to be modified or changed, and what behaviors need to be prevented, in order to improve.

**5. Social Participation** (areas of occupation)

- a. **Approach:** create/promote, establish/restore, maintain, modify, and prevent
- b. Specific areas that may need addressing include socializing with peers, interaction with social groups, interaction with members of the opposite sex. The approach would focus on listing things the client likes to do, researching where these activities can be performed in a group, discussing what it means to be a member of a group, and setting up practical steps to join a relevant group. Also considering specific issues in relating to members of the opposite sex.

**6. Education – formal educational participation** (areas of occupation)

- a. **Approach:** create/promote, establish/restore
- b. Understanding what the client wants from education and working on additional skills that build bridges with other students and teachers. Considering the differences in behavior needed in a classroom setting from other social settings, such as with family. Work on modifying previous habits that caused problems.

**7. Leisure – planning** (areas of occupation)

- a. **Approach:** create/promote, establish
- b. Identifying interests and opportunities, particularly those that can be engaged in with others. Learning to use leisure time to form friendships; practicing the steps to actually take part in some activity.

**8. Personal hygiene and grooming** (areas of occupation/ADLs)

- a. **Approach:** establish/restore, maintain, modify, and prevent
- b. Review of the basics, such as why do we take showers, brush our teeth, change our shirts, comb our hair, etc. Consider the impact of these activities on friendships and prevent unwanted consequences from inattention.

**9. Motor skills** (performance skills)

- a. **Approach:** promote, maintain, modify
- b. Developing smoothness in action. Practice actions so as to make them smooth and support formation of good social relations, for example making a cup of coffee, or event elements of dance.

**10. Routines** (performance patterns)

- a. **Approach:** create/promote, establish/restore, maintain, and modify
- b. Increase the familiarity of basic social routines such as greeting someone on the street, in the hallway, being polite.

## References

- Gutstein, S. E., & Whitney, T. (2002). Asperger syndrome and the development of social competence. *Focus on Autism and Other Developmental Disabilities, 17*(3), 161-171.
- Hillier, A., Fish, T., Cloppert, P., & Beversdorf, D. Q. (2007). Outcomes of a social and vocational skills support group for adolescents and young adults on the autism spectrum. *Focus on Autism and Other Developmental Disabilities, 22*(2), 107-115.
- Laugeson, E., Frankel, F., Mogil, C., & Dillon, A. (2009). Parent-assisted social skills training to improve friendships in teens with autism spectrum disorders. *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders, 39*(4), 596-606. doi:10.1007/s10803-008-0664-5