

Social Skills

Actually, all activities at CH&S are thinly veiled Social Skills Classes. In fact, we are all learning, as we go along, ways to cope harmoniously and efficiently with each other; i.e. recognizing and reacting successfully to conventional social cues such as: *when it is your turn to talk, when it is time not to talk, when to express gratitude, how to express need, etc.*

Most of our Social Skills curricula follow the format of:

- Discussion / Demonstration (i.e. Instruction)
- Exercises (i.e. Practice)
- Reinforce (i.e. positive recognition, etc.)

If you were to design a Social Skills Class, simply envision the many, many social situations that an average person encounters in the course of a day; isolate one of them; and re-create it as graphically and as dramatically as possible in terms and with examples that are accessible to the participants within your group.

To Instructors

We already know that, at first glance, you will not think that this curriculum is right for the people with whom you work.

Either you will consider it too sophisticated and “over their heads” or too simplistic and not “challenging” enough.

In fact, it is not exactly intended for the people with whom you work. It is for **you**... not to follow word for word; but to draw from... It is not particularly formatted, systematic, or comprehensive the way you would expect a curriculum to present. It is full of conversational rambles, preachy riffs, and list after list after list. We are trying to give you something readable that is right there for you to use no matter what page or paragraph you turn to. We are just trying to give you the meat so that YOU can make the dinner.

Remember:

- ✓ **Partial Participation**- Involve each person at the participation level of which they are capable.
- ✓ **Good Vibes**- The content of your class material is only one of many dimensions. What is the flavor of the experience?
- ✓ **Be Prepared**- Read the material in advance. Envision your class.
- ✓ **Don't Just Read it... Teach it!**- Relax! Really be there! Be yourself! Have fun!

- ✓ **Go with the Flow... but Come Back.** When questions lead to questions, go there. Tangents are OK as long as they are interesting and navigable. Let people in the class lead. You guide.
- ✓ **Bastardize!...** There is nothing sacred about this material. You can mix and match all you want with the examples, scenarios, and lessons, etc. After all, when it comes to Life, all these topics overlap profusely.
- ✓ **Repeat and Repeat-** Its good to repeat sessions you have already done. Not only is practice and repetition crucial to the process of skill and behavior acquisition, but the more you do it, the better you'll get and the better they'll get it..
- ✓ **Think!**- You are the one who knows your students. Pick, choose, and tweak the material according to who is in your class.

You could have easily written this curriculum yourself. But you didn't. Maybe you could take this and create more and better stuff. We hope you do. (*See Make Your Own*)

Currently Available Social Skills Topics at CH&S...

- ❖ Admiration
- ❖ Anger
- ❖ Appreciating
- ❖ Asking for Help
- ❖ Assertiveness
- ❖ Attention
- ❖ Boundaries
- ❖ Caring
- ❖ Celebrating Holidays
- ❖ Choosing
- ❖ Competition
- ❖ Complaining
- ❖ Conflict Resolution
- ❖ Consideration
- ❖ Criticism
- ❖ Diplomacy
- ❖ Elegance
- ❖ Empathy
- ❖ Feelings
- ❖ Friends
- ❖ Generosity
- ❖ Goals

- ❖ Going to a Wedding / Funeral
- ❖ Going to the Bank
- ❖ Going to the Restaurant
- ❖ Hospitality
- ❖ Humor
- ❖ Integrity
- ❖ Interrupting
- ❖ Introductions and Greetings
- ❖ Meal times
- ❖ Noises
- ❖ Open-Mindedness
- ❖ Patience
- ❖ Person-ability
- ❖ Perspective
- ❖ Problem Solving
- ❖ Public Persona
- ❖ Questions
- ❖ Respect
- ❖ Riding on the bus
- ❖ Sacrifice
- ❖ Sincerity
- ❖ Small Talk
- ❖ Taking “No” for an Answer
- ❖ Tolerance
- ❖ Using the Telephone
- ❖ Visiting Relatives & Friends
- ❖ Waiting

Here are a few samples:

Social Skills / Caring

Are you a caring person? Do people care about you? Since you have just one life to live, shouldn't you care about something?

Ask and discuss these questions:

- Who do you care about? (*family members, friends, celebrities, pets, people in need, role-models, yourself, etc.*) Ask people to name names and give examples of why.
- What do you care about? (*hobbies, upcoming events, possessions, political topics, news stories, issues, how you look, your health, etc.*) Ask people to be specific and say why.
- Discuss differences between caring about someone and caring about something.
- List people who care about you and describe how they show it.
- List examples, in general, of how people show that they care about someone or something.
- Give specific examples of caring things that you have done or typically do.
- List some things that you really don't care at all about.
- When people want to tell you all about things that are of interest to them but not to you, should you listen?
- Draw from these verbalizations and present them in different ways. Ask whether people consider them to be "caring" or not.

"Don't worry!"... "Listen to this!"... "Are you coming on Sunday?"... "How are your kids doing?"... "I'm not talking to you."... "Don't bother."... "I'll do that for you."... "That's a cute puppy!"... "Did you eat yet?"... "You have to go to work tomorrow."... "It's getting to be past your bedtime."... "Would you like to meet my friend?"... "Thanks for the help."... "I like this song!"... "What do you want to do?"... "You better get yourself a new pair of shoes."... "I really miss you."... "Where should we eat?"... "You look good."... "I'm sorry, I can't talk now."

Which of these do you care about? Why or why not?

- Pets
- Traffic Conditions
- Climate Changes
- Chess
- Flowers
- Stock Market

- Family
- Foreign Policy
- Money
- Rodents
- Television
- Music
- Poverty
- Towels
- Horse Racing
- Your Job
- Friends
- Taxes
- Health
- Safety
- Cell phones
- Parties
- Superman
- Cleanliness
- Republicans
- Lions
- Hair
- Clowns
- Popcorn
- Airplanes
- Movies
- Bees
- Manatees
- Macaroni & Cheese
- The Past
- Children
- Olives
- Jesus
- Mail
- Elvis
- Robots
- Trains
- Math
- Romance
- Teeth
- Vacuuming
- The Zoo
- Dead People

Add to list.

Like everything else, caring requires balance. It is wonderful to be able to care and to show that you care and to feel cared for.

It helps to be able, in some cases, not to care or not to care too much.. Caring too much or about the wrong things might get you into trouble or make you frustrated or depressed. There is also an important difference between caring and worrying.

Keep the things you care about in perspective.

Social Skills / Perspective

There is an infinity of ways to interpret anything. (Read the Wallace Stevens poem, 13 Ways to Look at a Blackbird).

Pick an object in the room and ask people to each say something different about it.

Ask people to interpret the following statements or situations in various different ways & discuss each:

- After the hurricane, people looted the grocery store.
- Why should I do the dishes before I cook dinner?
- Sometimes there are advantages to “staying the course.”
- If I don’t raise my voice people won’t listen to me.
- You are blind if you don’t see something.
- Poor people should get jobs.
- Caution: Objects in this mirror may appear more distant than they actually are.
- Strangers don’t care about your problems.

Perspective is another word for Point of View.

- One umpire may call a runner safe. Another may call that same runner out. Why?
- One person may consider it a tax cut. Another may call it a cut in services. Why?
- One may find winter beautiful and exhilarating. Another may find it tortuous and burdensome. Why?
- One person may love birthdays. Another may find them depressing. Why?
- Ask for more examples...

When you are dealing with other people, you should always try to see things from their perspective as well as your own. This will give you a better idea of what they mean and how they feel.

Sometimes when you are able to consider other perspectives, you behave or react differently.

List some examples of times when you did or said something that you would have done or said differently if you had another perspective. (*e.g. I attacked another country because I thought it was planning to use weapons of mass destruction..*)

Discuss the following idioms (figures of speech). What do people mean when they say:

- They are on the same page;
- They see eye to eye;
- They are miles apart;

- That's a horse of a different color?

(Give examples, illustrate on board, role-play, describe, etc.)

Perspective-related vocabulary words to look up and discuss.

- Empathy
- Negotiation
- Evidence
- Prejudice
- Influence
- Artistic
- Politics

Put the following Social Skill Scenarios in **Perspective**

- Eric is usually positive and polite. Today he is grouchy and rude.
- The woman over at the next table made eye contact with me and we smiled at each other.
- The woman does not really want me to pet her dog.
- My sister hasn't called me lately.
- Lisa decided we would go bowling tomorrow instead of today.
- That man is wearing some kind of uniform.
- The music is too loud for Henry.
- Those men are together.
- She will turn her attention to me when she is done with that customer.
- Tom wants to talk about his sickness; not about the ball game.
- More scenarios....

Social Skills / Admiration

Some dictionary definitions of **Admiration**... to regard with pleasure, wonder, approval; to have a high opinion of esteem and respect; to marvel at...

Who/What do you admire? And why? (*Give examples to prime the pump... encourage discussion.*)

- Historical Figures:
- Current & Past Celebrities:
- Politicians:
- Family Members:
- Friends or Peers:
- Causes:
- Qualities: Patience, Generosity, Courage, etc.
- Etc.

Do people admire you? Why? What things do you do that are admirable? What are things that people can do so that other people will admire them?

Do you admire

- When someone gives money or food to a needy person?
- When someone visits people in hospitals or nursing homes?
- When someone gets a huge raise?
- When a baseball player hits 2 home runs in the same game?
- When a politician says he will not raise your taxes?
- When parents spend time with their children?
- When someone works hard and enthusiastically?
- When someone says witty things to make people laugh?
- When someone is dating a super model?
- When someone tries to cheer people up... and looks at the bright side?

List other possibilities and, of course, discuss each.

Admiration-Related Vocabulary Words to Look Up & Discuss

- Idol
- Hero
- Example
- Role-model

- Arrogant
- Proud
- Amazing
- Sainly
- Impressionable
- Influence
- Inspirational
- Virtuous
- Mutual
- Respect

Sometimes people can do things that may annoy you. These same people, most likely, have qualities that are worthy of admiration. It is better to build upon what is admirable as opposed to dwelling upon what is annoying. It both keeps you cool and it brings out the best in others.

For example,

- My mother is always telling me what to do (which is annoying); But she loves and cares about me no matter what (which I admire).
- Marty talks & talks. He never stops talking (which is annoying); But he really knows what he's talking about (which I admire).
- My roommate has been sick and he coughs all night (which is annoying); but he never complains or feels sorry for himself (which I admire).
- Mary loves singing and always practices her singing (which is annoying); But she is determined to improve and she never gives up (which I admire).

Can you think of more examples?

Go around the room and ask each person to say what they admire about others in the room (i.e. "compliment circle"). Give yourselves a round of applause.