

social success workbook for teens

skill-building activities for teens
with **nonverbal learning** disorder,
asperger's disorder & other
social-skill problems

BARBARA COOPER, MPS
NANCY WIDDOWS, MS

Instant Help Books
A Division of New Harbinger Publications, Inc.

contents

Introduction	1
Activity 1 Comic-Strip Stories	3
Activity 2 Things That Make Me Happy	7
Activity 3 Things That Make Me Worry	10
Activity 4 Things That Make Me Angry	13
Activity 5 Shades of Anger	16
Activity 6 Where Do I Feel These Feelings?	19
Activity 7 Paint-Chip Key Chain	22
Activity 8 Different Points of View	25
Activity 9 Something About Myself I'll Never Change and Something I'd Like to Change	28
Activity 10 What's Different About My Brain?	31
Activity 11 Feelings Checklist	34
Activity 12 Do You Lose It?	37
Activity 13 When I Am Angry	40
Activity 14 When You Pretend Things Don't Bother You	44
Activity 15 When Plans Change	47
Activity 16 Changing the Plan in Your Head	50
Activity 17 Cool-Down Tools: A Safe Place	53
Activity 18 Cool-Down Tools: Deep Breaths	56
Activity 19 Cool-Down Tools: Drawing and Writing	59
Activity 20 Cool-Down Tools: Things That Make Me Happy	62

directions

Draw something that happened to you today when you were with other kids that might have involved one of these feelings: frustration, excitement, disappointment, hope, worry, loneliness, or exclusion.



What do you think the other kids might have been feeling? Draw a picture to describe it.



take note

Write about your first drawing. Include what happened and how you felt.

Write about your second drawing. Tell how the other people might have felt.

Share these drawings and what you wrote with an adult you trust. If you are having misperceptions about experiences with other kids, people you trust may be able to help you to see things from other points of view.

activity 9 * something about myself I'll never change
and something I'd like to change

directions

Draw a picture or write about something that you really like about yourself and would never want to change.



Draw a picture or write about something about yourself that you don't like and wish you could change.



activity 9 * something about myself I'll never change
and something I'd like to change

take note

What aspect of yourself did you draw or write about that you would never want to change?

Why? _____

What aspect of yourself did you draw or write about that you would like to change?

Why? _____

What aspect of yourself do you think your parents would like you to change?

Why? _____

Share your drawings or writing with an adult you trust. This person may be able to help you find ways to work on what you'd like to change.

what's different about my brain? 10

you need to know

People who have difficulty with social skills often have parts of their brains that don't exactly do what they're supposed to do. It may be difficult for them to know what others are thinking and feeling because their brains aren't helping them know how to take in this information and use it. People who can do that easily can look at other people's facial expressions and body language and get lots of information that they use to help them get along with other people. This skill is often referred to as "reading social cues."

It is difficult to make friends and get along easily with other people when you have trouble reading social cues. Scientists have learned that other parts of the brain can do the work of the parts that don't work so well. In order to make that happen, it's necessary to practice what is difficult for you by learning how to read social cues. That can be accomplished in many ways: by having adults in your life who can help you, by being in social-skills programs in and out of school—and by using this workbook! What is most important is that you understand why it may be so hard for you to do things that come so easily to other people and, know that you can help yourself become better at social skills.

Randi and Jessica went to meet Angela during their lunch period. Angela was sitting at their usual table, looking upset. Her eyes were looking down, her mouth was frowning, and she was holding her head in her hands. Jessica knew, by noticing these cues, that Angela was upset. As they approached Angela, Randi, who didn't notice these things, started to talk about a TV show she had seen the night before. Jessica asked Randi to stop so she could check with Angela and find out what was wrong. Angela proceeded to talk only to Jessica about what was upsetting her. Randi felt ignored and didn't know why Angela would do that to her. Later, Jessica was able to tell Randi that Angela was upset and thought Randi was insensitive and uncaring because she didn't pay attention to Angela's social cues (how upset her face looked).

directions

Think about your strengths and weaknesses. What are you great at? What do you have trouble with? Below, create a list of strengths and weaknesses so that you can begin to know more about how your particular brain works.

Strengths

Weaknesses

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and extend across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

take note

One purpose of this workbook is to get better at understanding yourself so you can know what you need to learn to increase your social skills. When someone has trouble reading the social cues of others, they might also have trouble knowing their own strengths and weaknesses.

Share the list you just made with an adult you trust. That adult may be able to help you see strengths and weaknesses you may not be aware of.

How do these strengths and weaknesses affect your relationships with other people?

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

11 feelings checklist

you need to know

To continue working on your social skills, practice paying attention to your feelings. Some people have a hard time knowing what they felt during their day, which makes it difficult for them to communicate this information to other people. Others can identify what they felt when something bad happened, but they don't want to talk about difficult feelings after the fact because it just seems to bring those bad feelings back.

It's important to be able to let your parents or other important people know how you felt when they were not around. When kids don't tell parents or other important people what's happened, their feelings can build up inside until one day, without even expecting it, they explode.

This checklist can help you tell your parents and other important people what you have felt during your day. It is good practice to help you pay attention to your feelings.

directions

Circle the phrase that best describes how often you felt the following today:

Happy	not at all	a little	a lot	all the time
Surprised	not at all	a little	a lot	all the time
Sad	not at all	a little	a lot	all the time
Worried	not at all	a little	a lot	all the time
Frustrated	not at all	a little	a lot	all the time
Lonely	not at all	a little	a lot	all the time
Included	not at all	a little	a lot	all the time
Angry	not at all	a little	a lot	all the time
Left out	not at all	a little	a lot	all the time
Different	not at all	a little	a lot	all the time
Shy	not at all	a little	a lot	all the time
Hurt	not at all	a little	a lot	all the time
Hopeful	not at all	a little	a lot	all the time
Annoyed	not at all	a little	a lot	all the time
Embarrassed	not at all	a little	a lot	all the time
I asked to join with others.	not at all	a little	a lot	all the time
I listened to others.	not at all	a little	a lot	all the time
I felt like hurting myself.	not at all	a little	a lot	all the time
I felt like hurting someone else.	not at all	a little	a lot	all the time
I felt very different at home than I did out in the world because _____.	not at all	a little	a lot	all the time
I acted in ways I regretted when I _____.	not at all	a little	a lot	all the time
I felt I had to ignore my feelings when _____.	not at all	a little	a lot	all the time

take note

Did using the feelings checklist help you tell someone else about your day? Explain.

After filling out a checklist at the end of a day, did any of your answers surprise you?

☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, what surprised you?

Would you do anything differently tomorrow because of how you felt about something today?

☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, what would you do?

Are there any feelings you would add to this checklist? If so, what are they?

do you lose it? 12

you need to know

Some people lose it when they are feeling overwhelmed, frustrated, angry, or very tired. Part of learning how to keep it together and to avoid losing it is to understand what happens inside you in stressful situations. Then you can choose to either avoid those situations, if possible, or learn to cool down when the stressful feelings begin. As you get older, that becomes easier to do.

Jake was playing a board game with two other boys. At one point in the game, there was a disagreement about the rules. The rules booklet was missing from the game, but Jake was absolutely sure that he knew the correct way to play. The other boys disagreed and said, "Majority rules. We are playing our way." Jake was extremely frustrated because he knew he was right. He put his fingers under the game board and turned it over while shouting at his friends. They asked Jake to calm down, but it was too late. Jake was melting down.

If Jake knew that accurate game rules were important to him, he could have discussed the rules before the game began since there might be different rule versions of the game. When he began to feel upset, Jake could also have reminded himself that people may disagree on the rules, and when that happens the disagreement is usually resolved by "majority rules." He could have told himself that he didn't like to play this way, but since he was happy to be playing a game with other kids, it was not worth getting upset. Jake could have taken a few deep breaths to cool down and reminded himself to choose friendship in this situation over rules.

directions

Before you can learn how to keep it together, you need to be able to identify situations that push your buttons or get you so upset that you lose it. This activity is designed to help you become aware of your boiling point so that you can come up with a way to tell yourself you're about to lose it. Then you can use a coping strategy that works for you. In activities to come, you will explore different coping strategies to find those that work for you.

List three things that overwhelm you. On a scale from 1 to 10, rate how much each overwhelms you.

1. _____

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Calm			Annoyed			Angry			"Losing It"

2. _____

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Calm			Annoyed			Angry			"Losing It"

3. _____

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Calm			Annoyed			Angry			"Losing It"

Describe a time when you lost it: _____

What happened just before you lost it?* _____

Can you identify what you felt? _____

*If you have difficulty figuring out what's stressful for you, ask an adult you trust to help you. That adult may have a good idea of what causes you to lose it.

