

TALK ABOUT *for* TEENAGERS

DEVELOPING SOCIAL & EMOTIONAL COMMUNICATION SKILLS

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Introduction

This section includes a brief description of the theory behind the hierarchical approach and key points behind setting up and running groups.

Initial Assessment

This section includes:

1. A student interview
2. A student self assessment
3. A social skills rating assessment

Following this assessment, it is decided which level needs to be taught

Level 1 Talkabout Me

This level aims to increase self awareness and to improve self esteem. Topics covered are:

1. This is me
2. My qualities and strengths
3. The way I look
4. Things that make me feel good
5. Things that bring me down
6. The way I feel
7. Moving forward

Level 2 Talkabout Body Language

This level aims to increase skills in body language.

Topics covered are:

1. Talking without words
2. Our faces
3. Our bodies
4. Our hands
5. Distance and Touch
6. Moving forward

Level 3 Talkabout Talking

This level aims to improve paralinguistic skills and conversational skills. Topics covered are:

1. Talkabout talking
2. Listening
3. Our voices
4. Conversation starters



TALKABOUT

5. Taking turns
6. Questions
7. Ending a conversation
8. Moving forward

Level 4 Talkabout Friends

This level aims to improve friendship skills. Topics covered are:

1. Introducing friends
2. Trust and responsibility
3. Valuing others
4. Being nice
5. When friendships go wrong
6. Arguments
7. Peer pressure
8. Jealousy
9. Moving forward

Level 5 Talkabout Assertiveness

This level aims to improve assertiveness skills.

Topics covered are:

1. Understanding assertiveness
2. Expressing feelings
3. Making suggestions
4. Disagreeing
5. Refusing
6. Apologising
7. Being assertive

Group Cohesion Activities

This section provides a number of suggestions for group cohesion activities

Forms

This section includes some forms that can be used for session planning and evaluation

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Index of topics



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About the authors

Alex Kelly is a Speech and Language Therapist with 24 years experience of working with both children and adults with a learning disability, and specialising in working with children with social and relationship skills difficulties. She runs her own business (Alex Kelly Ltd) providing training and consultancy work in social skills around the UK and abroad. She is the author of the best selling 'Talkabout' resources and 'Working with Adults with a Learning Disability'.

Brian Sains has 15 years experience in working with adults and children with social and relationship skills difficulties. He spent 10 years working as a community learning disability nurse where he specialised in working with men with relationship skills difficulties. During this time he contributed to the development of 'Talkabout Relationships' and the 'Talkabout' DVD. He left nursing to pursue a career in teaching, and currently works at Bishop Wordsworth's School in Salisbury.



Introduction

The aim of this book

A significant part of a child's life is spent interacting with other children: laughing in the playground; discussing plans for a sleepover; working with class mates on a school project; and arguing over friendship. These are commonplace for most children and we don't often stop to think how these social interactions in school lead on to children becoming socially competent as adults. However not all children develop social competence naturally. Some children will require your support to help them to develop into socially skilled adults. But where do you start and what can you do?

TALKABOUT for Teenagers is a complete package to help you

- assess a child's social skills,
- identify where to start work, and
- work through the appropriate levels using a mixture of activities, group discussions, worksheets and handouts.

This resource uses the TALKABOUT hierarchical approach to teaching these skills. This means that basic skills are taught first and more complex skills last. Using a hierarchical approach, children are able to start at a level that is appropriate to their needs and then progress through the levels until they reach their full potential.

The TALKABOUT hierarchy has been adapted in this book to include self esteem and friendship skills.

The TALKABOUT hierarchy

1. Self awareness and self esteem
2. Non verbal behaviour
3. Verbal behaviour
4. Friendship skills
5. Assertiveness skills

TALKABOUT for Teenagers

- TALKABOUT Me
- TALKABOUT Body Language
- TALKABOUT Talking
- TALKABOUT Friends
- TALKABOUT Assertiveness

Identifying potential children

This resource is aimed primarily at children who have difficulties with one or more of the following:

- Self esteem
- Social skills



- Friendships
- Assertiveness

When considering if a child is suitable for this programme, it may also help to ask the following questions:

- Do they have many friends?
- Do they struggle with peer relationships?
- Are they isolated within their group?
- Are they getting into trouble more than usual?
- Are they bullying others?
- Are they difficult to interact with generally?
- Do they seem ill at ease in social situations?
- Are they passive when it comes to group work?
- Are they aggressive when talking to others?

You may find it helpful to use the form on page 232 so that year tutors can identify children within their class.

Getting started – assessment

Having identified potential children, the first stage is assessment.

The social skills assessment is completed by someone who knows the child well using a 3 point scale:

- Ⓡ **RED** Needs work, very few skills in this area
- ⓐ **AMBER** Skill emerging
- ⓐ **GREEN** No concerns

This will help you to identify the areas in which the child needs work. If the child has needs within more than one level, then the lower level should be worked through prior to addressing needs within a higher level. For example, if a child has needs in self esteem and friendship skills only, then level 1 is completed first, followed by level 4.

The assessment section also includes a student self assessment and an interview that is completed on a 1:1 basis.



Setting up a group

1. Group membership

It is important to match the students in terms of their needs and also how well they are going to get on. A group is far more likely to gel and work well if they have similar needs, are a similar age and like each other. Group membership should also be closed, i.e. you should not allow new members to join half way through as this will alter the group dynamics.

2. The size of the group

Groups work best if they are not too small or too big, preferably between 4 and 8. You need them to be small enough to make sure that everyone contributes and feels part of the group and large enough to make role plays and group discussions feasible and interesting. Even numbers are helpful if you are going to ask them to sometimes work in pairs.

3. Length of the group

Timings are given at the beginning of each level but it is important to remember that change will not happen quickly. You should allow at least one whole term (12 weeks) for each level and be prepared for this to continue into a second term.

4. Group leaders

Social skills groups run better with two leaders, especially as there is often a need to model behaviours, work video cameras and facilitate group discussions.

5. Accommodation

You will need a room that is comfortable for the students to learn in where you are not going to be interrupted.

6. Parental permission

Remember to get parental permission for the students to join the group and also to be recorded if video cameras are going to be used within the sessions.

7. Support from management

It is always helpful to have support from management. You may need to outline the objectives, benefits and requirements of the group before you start so that you can refer back to it if necessary.



Running the group

1. Cohesiveness

A group that does not gel will not learn or have fun. It is therefore important to take time to ensure that group gelling occurs. Things that help are: interpersonal attraction – people who like one another are more likely to gel; similar needs; and activities that mean that everyone takes part and has fun. It may help to arrange the chairs into a circle prior to the group; ensure that everyone feels valued in the group; ensure that everyone feels part of the group and has an equal 'say'; ask the group to set some rules; start each session with a relatively simple activity that is fun and stress-free; and finish each session with another activity that is fun and stress-free. See the group cohesion section for our favourite 10 group cohesion activities.

2. The format of the session

The format of the session will vary from time to time but there are general guidelines which should be followed:

Group cohesion activity: this brings the group together and helps them to focus on the other group members and the purpose of the group. The activity should be simple, stress-free and involve all.

Revision of previous session: to ensure cohesion between sessions. Homework can be discussed.

Introduction to the session theme: through discussion, brainstorming, playing a game, watching a video etc.

Main activity: This may include modelling a new skill followed by role play and feedback, and then replay where necessary. It is during this part of the session that it is most important not to lose students' attention by allowing an activity to go on for too long, or one person to dominate the conversation.

Summing up: This may include setting home assignments.

Finishing activity: a group activity to reduce any anxiety. It should therefore be fun, simple and stress free.



3. Confidentiality

It is important to remind the students not to talk about the group outside of the session.

4. Have fun!

Students learn much more readily if they are having fun. It is important to work hard to make sure your students want to come to the sessions and a large part of this motivation will come from whether they enjoy the sessions.





Transference of skills

It is essential that any work that is being done within the group is backed up outside of the group. This can be done in several ways:

1. Creating opportunities

Get staff on board so that they can be aware of a student's targets. Look for social routines and opportunities for practising skills within their everyday environment and identify any parts of their day that are not conducive and deal with them. Try to involve families so that skills are reinforced at home.

2. Using peers

It may be helpful to set up a circle of friends approach within the school around a specific individual. In this approach, a group of 6-8 peer volunteers is formed to support the individual in a proactive manner. Volunteers meet weekly and have 3 main tasks: to identify difficulties; to set goals and devise strategies for reaching them and to offer encouragement and recognition for success and progress. Volunteers are encouraged to talk openly about the difficulties they encounter with the child's behaviour.

3. Use other direct instructional approaches

Running a social skills group is only one approach to teaching social skills, self esteem and relationship skills. Other approaches include: 1:1 work; social stories and comic strip conversations. All of these approaches may help transference of skills being taught within the group.



Evaluation

Evaluation is obviously an essential aspect of any group. Questions that need to be asked are: were the aims of the group met? How did the activities go and were they at an appropriate level? Did everyone take part? Did the students enjoy the session and are they improving and learning new skills? What needs to be addressed in the next session that has not been planned for?

Well structured session notes can help (see pages 234-236) in order to evaluate the sessions and then at the end of the group, it is important to re-assess the students' skills using the same assessment(s).

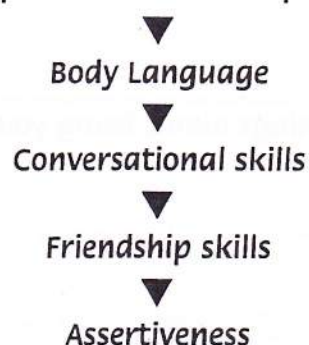


Initial Assessment

Introduction

Aim of the assessment	The aim of this section is to assess the student's social skills
Methods of assessment	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Student interview is completed on a 1:1 basis 2. The student completes the self assessment 3. The social skills assessment is then completed by someone who knows the student well within their everyday environment
Social skills assessment rating scale	<p>Each behaviour in the social skills assessment is rated on a 3 point scale:</p> <p>Ⓡ RED Needs work, very few skills in this area</p> <p>ⓐ AMBER Skill emerging</p> <p>ⓐ GREEN No concerns</p> <p>At the end of each section, an overall rating is given, for example, if a student has mostly scored red (or 1) then the overall rating for that section would be 'red' and the traffic light can be coloured in red.</p>
Planning intervention	Following assessment, it is possible to decide which module is most appropriate for the student. For example, a rating of red or amber will indicate that the student needs work on developing those skills. Where more than one module has been identified, it is important to follow the hierarchy below.
Hierarchy of intervention	Individuals should work through the following modules in the correct order:

Self awareness and self esteem





Student Interview

Name DOB

Address

Class Date



Instructions

Sit somewhere nice and relaxing. Explain that you would like to ask them a few questions so that you can get to know them a little better before you start to work together. Explain that you are going to write down what they say (and video them for future reference).

Student interview questions

1. Tell me a bit about yourself. How would you describe yourself to someone who did not know you?
What do you look like? What sort of person are you?

2. Tell me about school. What do you like about it? What do you not like about it?

3. Tell me about your best friend. What are they like? Why do you like them?

4. What do you think other people think of you? Do they like you? How would they describe you?

5. Tell me about some of the good things about being you. What are you good at?
What do you like about yourself?



Student Interview Page 2

Name DOB

Student interview questions continued

6. Tell me about some of the things that are not so good about being you.
What would you like to change?

7. Tell me about some of the things you find difficult when talking to people.

8. Tell me about some of the things you find difficult when making friends or keeping friends.

9. Do you like talking to people? *Do you find it easy to start up conversations or join in with discussions?*

10. Can you think of anything you would like help with?
Making friends? Feeling good about your self? Understanding people? Being able to stand up for your self?

Summary

Completed by Date






Student Self Assessment

Name Date

Instructions

The student is asked to consider the following and rate themselves.

My Social Skill		 Mostly No	 Sometimes	 Mostly yes
1	I am happy with the way I look			
2	I have lots of good qualities			
3	I am good at handling my feelings e.g. controlling my temper			
4	I am good at looking at people when I talk to them			
5	I am good at not fidgeting and sitting or standing appropriately			
6	I am good at speaking clearly so that people understand me			
7	I am good at joining in conversations			
8	I am good at asking and answering questions			
9	I am good at listening to people			
10	I find it easy to make friends			
11	I have a number of friends and lots of people I can talk to			
12	I am good at handling conflict or disagreements with my friends			
13	I feel confident making contributions in class or in groups			
14	I am good at asking for help if I am finding something difficult			
15	I am good at telling people how I am feeling			

Any other comments

Rating Scale: (Mostly no = 0 Sometimes = 1 Mostly yes = 2)

Total Score: / 30



Social Skills Assessment

Name Date

Instructions

Consider the student and rate them using the following rating scale:

- (R) RED** Needs work, very few skills in this area
- (A) AMBER** Skill emerging
- (G) GREEN** No concerns

Self Awareness and Self Esteem		R	A	G	Summary
1	Able to adapt personal appearance appropriately				<input type="radio"/>
2	Aware of impact personal appearance has on others				<input type="radio"/>
3	Has good awareness of their personal qualities and strengths				<input type="radio"/>
4	Able to handle different feelings in self				<input type="radio"/>
5	Able to recognise and respond to feelings in others				<input type="radio"/>
6	Able to handle difficult situations appropriately				<input type="radio"/>
7	Appears to feel good about themselves				<input type="radio"/>
Body Language		R	A	G	Summary
8	Uses appropriate eye contact				<input type="radio"/>
9	Uses appropriate facial expression				<input type="radio"/>
10	Uses gesture and body movements appropriately				<input type="radio"/>
11	Adapts use of distance appropriately				<input type="radio"/>
12	Adapts use of touch appropriately				<input type="radio"/>
13	Able to refrain from fidgeting at appropriate times				<input type="radio"/>
14	Has appropriate posture and gait				<input type="radio"/>
Conversational Skills		R	A	G	Summary
15	Able to listen to others appropriately				<input type="radio"/>
16	Adapts use of intonation, volume & rate appropriately				<input type="radio"/>
17	Able to start a conversation appropriately to the situation				<input type="radio"/>
18	Able to take turns in a conversation				<input type="radio"/>
19	Asks questions appropriately in conversations and in class				<input type="radio"/>
20	Answers questions appropriately to the situation				<input type="radio"/>
21	Able to end a conversation appropriately to the situation				<input type="radio"/>
Friendship Skills		R	A	G	Summary
22	Appears confident in forming new friendships				<input type="radio"/>
23	Has a number of different friendships				<input type="radio"/>
24	Able to give compliments appropriately				<input type="radio"/>
25	Able to deal with conflict within a friendship				<input type="radio"/>
26	Able to negotiate with friends and arrive at a decision				<input type="radio"/>
27	Copes with peer pressure appropriately				<input type="radio"/>
28	Appears to value friendships through their behaviour				<input type="radio"/>
Assertiveness		R	A	G	Summary
29	Able to express feelings or needs effectively				<input type="radio"/>
30	Able to stand up for self and rights effectively				<input type="radio"/>
31	Able to make suggestions and persuade others				<input type="radio"/>
32	Able to refuse or disagree with something effectively				<input type="radio"/>
33	Able to complain appropriately to the situation				<input type="radio"/>
34	Able to apologise effectively without prompt				<input type="radio"/>
35	Able to request an explanation appropriately				<input type="radio"/>



Social Skills Assessment Summary

Name Date

Summary of Strengths

Summary of Needs

Plan of Action

- | | Yes | No |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Self awareness: Level 1 Talkabout Me | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. Body Language: Level 2 Talkabout Body Language | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. Conversational Skills: Level 3 Talkabout Talking | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4. Friendship skills: Level 4 Talkabout Friends | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5. Assertiveness: Level 5 Talkabout Assertiveness | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Review

Completed by

