Social – Commination Growth via Peer Interaction
Cognitive – Behavioral- Ecological Model – CBT-E
Bauminger-Zviely Nirit

Socio-cognitive and Socio-interactive capabilities for School-age ASD

Cognitive-Behavioral-Ecological (CBE) Intervention: multifaceted school-based CBE social intervention to enhance children's and adolescents' socio-cognitive and socio-interactive capabilities in ASD (Bauminger, 2002, 2007a,b; Bauminger-Zviely, 2013)

From theory to practice
CBE: Cognitive-Behavioral Ecological Treatment
LESSON EXAMPLE-SOCIAL CONVERSATION


Excerpts from a sample CBE curriculum unit for combining both learning and experiencing of social conversation (Bauminger 2002, 2007a, 2007b). Various aspects are applicable to adult-child, peer-dyadic, and peer-group settings.

Introduction to mediator for the social conversation unit

When we teach social conversation to children with HFASD, we will use cognitive reconstruction through concept clarification and through problem solving in the learning stage, and we will use role play, behavioral rehearsals, feedback, and reinforcement in the experiencing stage; in addition, we will use different games and activities to practice the learned concepts.

Learning and experiencing will be interlinked throughout the whole teaching process, following the CBE manual.

A. Introductory lessons: Understanding what social conversation is and why it is important

Concept clarification: Define social conversation:

- Provide written, visually presented, pragmatic rules for social conversation.
  - Example: "Social conversation aims to help me become friends with a peer, to get to know him/her better, and it is based on mutual sharing of my own and his/her experiences, thoughts, and feelings."

Cognitive reconstruction of social conversation:

- Teach how social conversation differs from other forms of conversation like functional/informational conversation (i.e., aims to provide and obtain information), interview (i.e., a series of questions and replies), and lecture (i.e., a monologue, not dialogue, on a specific topic).
  - Example: Give children pre-prepared recorded and written examples of different short conversational types and ask them to identify the differences between these types. Next, ask children to role-play types of conversation (with teacher, one peer, or group). Audio-record the role playing and then listen together to the conversations and identify their types (using feedback, self-evaluation process). Combine other activities such as a memory game or bingo that includes examples of conversation types that children need to identify.

- Discuss social importance and significance of social conversation (i.e., to eliminate loneliness, be part of the peer group).
• Discuss differences between dyadic conversation and group conversation (i.e., more complex listening skills in groups versus more responsibility for promoting dyadic interaction).

• Recognize topics for conversation with friends (i.e., experiences, preferred activities, games, hobbies, TV programs and computer games, pets, suggesting and planning a shared activity, school, movies, sports, music, family, siblings, etc.).

• Discuss ways to recognize if the topic is of interest to my friends (i.e., they are listening to me; they answer my questions; they ask me about the topic; they share about the topic).

**Affective education:**

• Discuss the feelings accompanying social conversation (i.e., anxiety).

**Problem solving and affective education:**

• Use problem-solving technique to discuss ways to cope with feelings related to social conversation.
  
  o **Example:** Give short vignette about X who feels anxious about starting a conversation and follow the problem-solving process's different stages until finding the most appropriate solution to help the child cope with anxiety during social conversation. Practice it through role play.

**B. Learning and experiencing conversation stages**

• Explore the three stages:
  
  1. **How do I start a conversation?** Provide children with written pragmatic rules for conversation initiation (i.e., ask my friend something about himself/herself or tell him/her something interesting about myself). Provide written examples of initiating sentences for different topics.
  2. **How do I proceed and develop a conversation?** Discuss ways to maintain a conversation (i.e., remember what my friend just said and try to learn more about his/her experience—expansion; tell my friend about something similar that happened to me—sharing).
    
    o **How do I switch between topics?** Teach why switching topics is important; discuss how to recognize junctions for topic exchanges as a way to expand the conversation length. Provide sentences to be used to change topic (e.g., the new topic should be related somehow to the previous one).
  3. **How do I end a conversation?** Provide the children with ending sentences (e.g., “I have to go to class now, talk to you later”).

• Provide children with the RELIEVE(F) summary rule for social conversation: **RE**-Reciprocity; **LI**-Listening; **EV**-Expansion and Variation; **E**-Eliminate interview or lecture; **F**-Focus on what was said.

**C. Practicing social conversation (executed simultaneously with Section B, while learning the conversational stages)**

• Practice each of the conversational stages in the dyad/group or with the teacher. Record children’s conversation at each stage. Collect feedback from teacher/peers/the child himself/herself about whether or not a social conversation developed, and what made the conversation social.

• Incorporate different games into the learning and experiencing processes, to make the intervention more entertaining and enjoyable and to enhance variety and interest.
(especially important due to this topic's difficulty for most children).
  o *Examples*: Create competitions such as who can make a longer conversation. Give points to the first child who suggests initiating sentences. Provide children with a basket of topics that they need to “fish out” and use to start the talking process.

D. Teaching group conversation entry
- Devote a unique lesson to rules for making entry into a group conversation:
  o Stand in close proximity to the group/dyad
  o Look and listen to their conversation/activity
  o Find out the conversation topic
  o Wait your turn
  o Make an initiating sentence
  o Refer it to a specific child
  o Look into his/her eyes
  o Say something relevant to the conversation topic/activity
  o Talk loud enough
  o Don’t give up after the first try.
Then practice children’s entry into an ongoing conversation in the group. Collect feedback about performance from teacher/peers/self, using the written pragmatic rules.

E. Homework
- Assign several homework tasks. Discuss homework performance in the dyad/group and collect feedback from teacher/peers/self.
  o *Examples*: Make social conversation with parents and siblings at home; make a phone call to the assigned peer in the dyadic training or to one of the children in the small group; listen to social peer conversations during school recess and at home.
**Publication**