

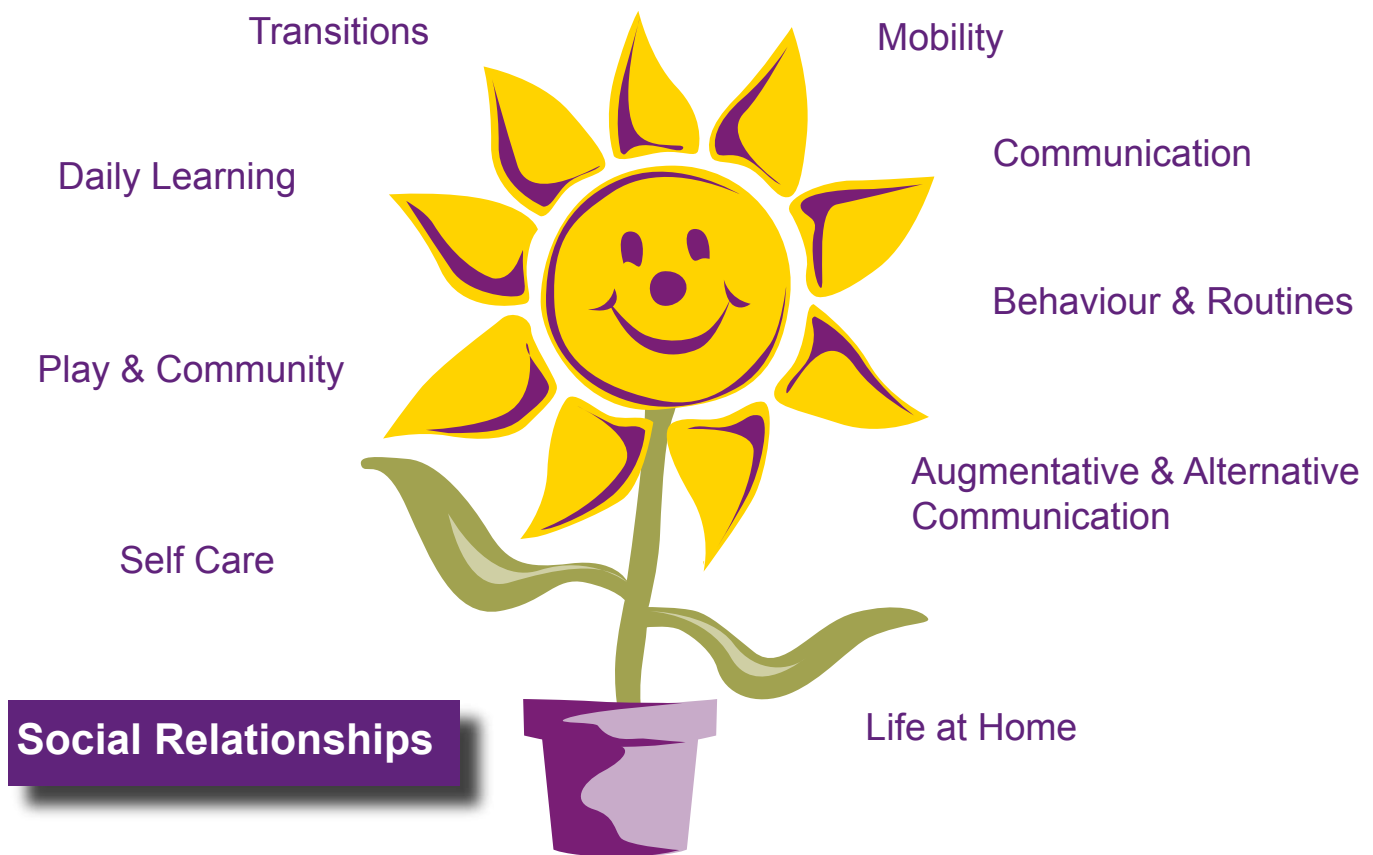
## Helping you set goals for your child

At Therapy Focus, we recognise and value your role as parents being the experts on your child and family.

Our Services are a support to help your child reach their potential and enhance their participation in the community. Educating and empowering you to help your child is

an important part of our holistic therapy services.

This brochure is a starting point for discussion about your child and your family. It offers ideas to create new activities your child is able to do with encouragement and support.



## The way we work

- We recognise that family is central to therapy. Families bring knowledge and expertise about their child to help identify the child's needs, develop goals and practice strategies.
- We use every opportunity in the family's and child's routine and environment to develop skills.
- The family, therapy team and teaching staff work together to identify problems and share ideas. Each has a role to play in developing the child's skills.
- Therapists work as a multidisciplinary collaborative team, sharing skills to meet the needs of the child.
- We recognise the child's strengths and how they can be developed to increase participation in the activities of life.

# SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS

The development and maintenance of social relationships involves using social skills to interact with people in a way that is relevant to the environment or situation.

Social skills include a range of attitudes and behaviours required to act appropriately in any given social situations.

They include:

- Conversations skills and talking with others
- Understanding, showing and controlling emotions
- Making and keeping friends
- Playing games with others
- Problem solving and resolving conflicts
- Knowing the rules of social behaviour
- Using appropriate physical closeness and contact

Social skills are used when interacting with other people and styles of interaction can change depending on the situation or person with whom a person is interacting. This may include school staff, authoritative figures, siblings, parents, school friends or strangers.



## Strategies to assist in your child's social relationships

- **Use Every Opportunity** by encouraging your child to participate whenever possible throughout their day. This provides them with the opportunity to improve their skills through participation in everyday activities.
- **Practice** doing a small piece of an activity each day. Children find it easier to learn new skills in smaller sections.
- **Be Consistent** with the words and signs used to instruct your child, and try to keep instructions short and simple.
- Ensure that there is enough **Time** available for your child to participate in social environments without feeling rushed.
- **Be Patient and Calm** when teaching your child new skills. Ensure that you have plenty of time and minimal distractions when introducing a new skill to your child.
- Let your child **Observe** other family members displaying social relationships and skills. Modelling is a fantastic way for your child to develop their skills.
- **Use Encouragement** to let your child know they are doing a great job. This will help them to keep motivated, know they are on the right track and boost their self-esteem.
- **Use Small Steps** by breaking the activity down into manageable steps, which can be learnt one at a time.

### Example

Eight year-old Dean is able to approach another person positively and use appropriate greetings. His conversation skills are good on a one-to-one basis, however Dean has difficulty joining in conversations or games with more than one person. He tends to direct the conversation to topics that he is interested in and when playing games, he finds it difficult to stick to the rules or let others choose.

**Goal:** For Dean to remain on topic within a conversation with others and take turns being both the talker and listener.

**Strategies:** Dean's mother Grace uses everyday opportunities to help improve Dean's social interaction with others. Grace and Dean will discuss what he should say and do prior to Dean joining a larger group conversation. They will then discuss his efforts after the interaction.

Dean's therapists have developed a picture based Rubric which illustrates what Dean should do when having conversations with others. Dean's teacher has put charts around the classroom reminding Dean and his classmates how to talk and play well together, and uses reward charts to reinforce good behaviour.

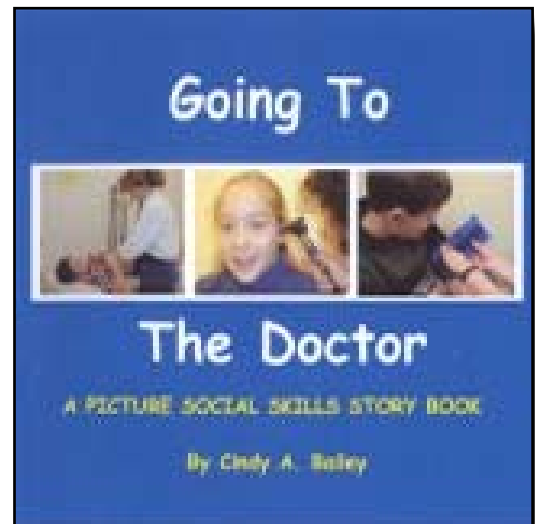
**Outcome:** Dean is now able to join a game and remain on topic within a conversation. As Dean is focusing more on listening to others rather than controlling the conversation, his peers are enjoying playing and interacting with Dean.

### Resources to help your child's social relationships

#### Social Stories

Social Stories are short stories individualised to your child to describe the best way to behave in a specific situation. These stories help to reduce anxiety which your child may

feel in certain situations. The stories are written to consider the situation from your child's view point and highlight positive behaviour, for example "I will try and keep my hands in my lap when sitting in a group". It is best to use only one social story at a time and include photos or pictures that illustrate the situation.



#### Rubrics

A rubric is a rating tool used to teach your child a new skill and encourage your child to self-evaluate their own skills.

The rubric clearly shows what the child should do compared to what they should not do.

To make a Rubric, divide the page into two columns 'Correct/Great' and 'Try Again'. Draw pictures or use short phrases to illustrate what to do at each step in the 'Correct/Great' column. Write the opposite of what is expected in the 'Try Again' column.

Provide opportunities for your child to practice the skill and then ask your child to evaluate his/her behaviour using the Rubric. You may like to offer a reward if your child gets all or some of the steps correct. Having a picture of the reward may motivate your child to complete the skill.

### Helpful/Useful Resources

#### ***Building Buddies (Therapy Focus resource)***

This resource, available in 4 volumes, assists in developing socialisation, social skills and play skills in young children and children with severe and profound disabilities. The volumes include developing Early Interactions, Social Skills for Children who use Other Ways to Communicate, developing Play Skills, developing Friendship Skills.

#### ***Joining In (Therapy Focus resource)***

This resource fosters confidence in children to participate more fully in community life by developing essential life skills such as conversational skills, emotional, social and problem solving skills and management of behaviour in public.

#### ***Caring for Carers: Helping Your Child Develop Social Skills (Therapy Focus resource)***

This resource is a toolbox of tips for those who care for a child with a disability. For teachers, educational support staff, families, carers and therapists.

#### ***Polyxo.com***

This comprehensive website provides information on teaching new skills to children with disabilities, including the use of Social Stories.

[www.polyxo.com](http://www.polyxo.com)

#### ***Do2Learn.com***

In interactive website comprising games which can assist children in understanding and reading emotions better.

[www.dotolearn.com/games/facialexpressions/face.htm](http://www.dotolearn.com/games/facialexpressions/face.htm)



### Useful Services

#### ***People 1st***

PIP is an organisation dedicated to supporting people with an intellectual disability by providing services and information regarding human relationships, protective education and sexuality. Services are available in the Perth metropolitan area and regional WA.

[www.people1stprogramme.com.au](http://www.people1stprogramme.com.au)

#### ***Siblings Australia***

SiblingsAustralia is a national organisation committed to enhancing the wellbeing of siblings of children with disabilities and chronic illnesses.

[www.siblingsaustralia.org.au/siblingsNEW/index/html](http://www.siblingsaustralia.org.au/siblingsNEW/index/html)