
Self-Directed Skill Lessons

Skills for Socializing

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Skill Bundle: *Skills for Socializing*

- Skills:**
- *Introducing Yourself*
 - *Introducing Others*
 - *Greeting Acquaintances*
 - *Initiating Conversations*
 - *Conversing about Social Topics*
 - *Decoding Body Language*
 - *Selecting Jokes*

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Cohen, M., Farkas, M., & Cohen, B. (1986, 2007). *Psychiatric rehabilitation training technology: Functional assessment*. Boston, MA: Boston University Center for Psychiatric Rehabilitation.

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--Sue McNamara

Introduction

The *Self-Directed Skill Lessons* were inspired by the *Self-Directed Psychiatric Rehabilitation Activities*, which were published in 2011. Similar in style to that related product, the *Self-Directed Skill Lessons* are designed to be used by you, with or without the support of another person. The skill lessons are designed to help you to learn the skills you want and need, and they will help you to develop the skills to be satisfied and successful at home, school, work, or places where you socialize. This objective follows the main principle guiding the psychiatric rehabilitation process, which is:

Skills + Supports = Success + Satisfaction

Format for the Self-Directed Skill Lessons

Each skill lesson is organized with:

- An Outline of the Skill Information
- An Example of the Skill
- Practice Exercises for Completing the Skill
- A Skill Use Worksheet

The *Outline* of the skill information includes what the skill means, why it's important, when to use the skill, and how to do the skill. The "how-to's" provide you with the steps you need to follow in order to perform the skill.

The *Example* of the skill shows you how the skill is performed using a scenario with a character in the scenario acting out the skill. Sometimes you will see the character thinking through some of the steps as well as engaging with another character for the other steps.

There are two Practice opportunities for each skill. *Practice 1* includes a scenario that continues from the one described in the Example. In this practice, you will perform the skill as if you were the main character from the scenario. This will give you a chance to walk through the steps of the skill in a fictional situation.

Practice 2 requires you to think about a situation in your own life when you needed to perform the skill. In Practice 2, you will describe the situation and then perform each step of the skill as you've been taught in the lesson. This will give you another chance to gain some experience performing the skill. For most skills, you will need another person to role-play with you in this practice. The other person also may be able to give you some feedback about how you performed the skill. You may repeat Practice 2, if you'd like to try out your skill abilities with different situations. You may need extra copies or additional paper for Practice 2.

The *Skill Use Worksheet* gives you a way to monitor your use of the skill in real-life situations. The worksheet is a chart that includes noting the dates of situations where you thought you needed to use the skill, a column to check whether you used the skill or not, and space to write the reasons that you did or did not perform the skill. This worksheet allows you to see your progress with the new skill. You may choose to make extra copies of the Skill Use Worksheet so that you can track your use of the skills for as long as you'd like.

This format of an Outline—Example—Practice is designed to help you walk through the parts of how to perform the skill one step at a time. Some people learn best by reading or hearing about how to perform a skill, while others learn best by seeing examples of how a skill is performed. We all learn by performing a skill repeatedly, and practice with feedback can make perfect! The outlines, examples, practices, and skill use worksheets are written in a self-directed perspective. This allows you to guide yourself in learning how to perform the skills so that you may be satisfied and successful wherever you live, learn, work, or socialize.

How to Use Self-Directed Skill Lessons

You may choose to use these skill lessons by yourself, with others who might share similar goals and skill needs, or with the assistance of a support person. You may want to share your completed practices with a service provider or other person supporting you in order to show the progress you have made with your skill development.

If you decide to use these self-directed skill lessons with a small group of peers, then having only a few people in the group works best. It also works best when group members need to learn the same skills for similar residential, educational, vocational, or social goals so that you and your peers can share ideas and experiences with each other. Within your small group, you may practice the skills with each other and give feedback to each other. This will allow you and the other group members to see how well you have performed the skill or how you might improve your skill performance.

After you have learned a new skill and monitored your use of the skill, you will be able to see whether your skill has improved in real-life situations. You may choose to share this completed worksheet with others to show and discuss your progress with your new skill use.



Skill Bundles

This bundle of skills is called *Skills for Being a Friend*. There are 7 skill lessons included in this skill bundle:

- Introducing Yourself
- Introducing Others
- Greeting Acquaintances
- Initiating Conversations
- Conversing about Social Topics
- Decoding Body Language
- Selecting Jokes

Additional skill bundles in this series of *Self-Directed Skill Lessons* will be published in the future and will be made available separately.

Skill Bundles for Skills for Getting-Along with Others

Skills for Participating in Groups/Classes/Activities	Skills for Working Together	Skills for Working with Supervisors/Teachers
Asking Questions Responding to Questions Clarifying Information Expressing Feelings Expressing Opinions Available Now!	Scheduling Activities Coordinating Schedules Dividing Work Responsibilities Requesting Assistance Offering Assistance Volunteering for Tasks Giving Feedback Respecting Others' Space Available Now!	Assessing Task Performance Reporting Progress Sharing Self-Evaluations Requesting Feedback Responding to Feedback Recognizing Support Needs Disclosing Disability Evaluating Accommodations Available Now!
Skills for Socializing	Skills for Being a Friend	Skills for Difficult Situations
Introducing Yourself Introducing Others Greeting Acquaintances Initiating Conversations Conversing about Social Topics Decoding Body Language Selecting Jokes Available Now!	Acknowledging Praise Expressing Appreciation Giving Compliments Expressing Interest Responding to Feelings Extending Invitations Responding to Invitations Choosing Gifts Available Now!	Paraphrasing Expressing Disagreements Discussing Differences Compromising Resolving Conflicts Refusing Requests Apologizing Forgiving

This chart includes many skills for “getting along with others,” but certainly it is not an exhaustive list. In addition, clearly some of the skills could cross over into other bundles, but this chart shows a way to categorize the skills and to break them apart into thematic, manageable skill bundles.

Summary

In summary, the *Self-Directed Skills Lessons* are a new resource for you to use to develop your skills in your own living, learning, working, and/or social settings. We hope that you enjoy learning new skills in this way and can share your experiences with others.

Best wishes as you learn or improve some new skills and reach new heights to become satisfied and successful at home, work, school, and wherever you socialize!



Self-Directed Skill Lessons

Skill Bundle: *Skills for Socializing*

Skill: *Conversing about Social Topics*

Skill Lesson: Conversing about Social Topics

Skill Information

What it means: Conversing about Social Topics means you talk with another person about general subjects that are not particularly personal.

Social topics are general subjects, such as:

- current events
- things happening in your neighborhood or town
- things happening at your school or work
- movies, books, gardening tips

Social topics usually are not too personal about yourself or about the other person. Sometimes people can feel annoyed when a person talks only about himself or herself, or they might feel embarrassed or invaded when a person talks about subjects that are personal to them. General social topics tend to be safe for most conversations.

Why it's important: Conversing about Social Topics shows others that you are interested in a wide range of subjects happening in the world. Conversing about a wide range of subjects allows you to have a variety of conversations with other people.

When to do it: Converse about Social Topics when you are in a social situation with someone. Social situations can happen anywhere and with anybody, such as at a party, during a break at work, at lunch with classmates, with neighbors outside, at the grocery store, etc.



Skill Information (continued)

How to do it:

1. Identify Topics

Identifying topics means that you think of something to talk about with the other person that are of interest to both of you but are not personal in nature to either one of you. Topics might include:

- Weather
- Sports
- Current Events
- Books
- Movies
- Music
- Famous People
- Travel
- Cars
- Nature

If you are speaking with someone you know, think about what the other person likes to talk about. Reflect back on past conversations with this person and recall the subjects that he or she has discussed. The more you can remember about the person, the more individualized the topic of conversation.

If the person is an acquaintance or a stranger, pick one of the general topics that seems to match the situation. For example, if you are standing in a long line to buy movie tickets, then you might ask which movie the person is going to see.

Identify common interests by matching subjects that you and the other person like or know something about. Matched subjects are those that you both might enjoy discussing. If you choose a topic you know about, then you will have plenty to say. If you don't know a lot about a topic, but the other person does, you can learn more by asking questions.



Skill Information (continued)

How to do it:

2. Introduce the Topic

Introduce the topic by stating an opening remark. You could start when you are already involved in a group conversation with the person, or you may need to approach the person. In either situation, you will need to make sure that the other person is available to talk. You do not want to interrupt the person or prolong an existing conversation if the person is busy. Observe the person carefully to make this decision. If the person makes eye contact with you, then it might be a signal that he or she is available to talk. However, if the person looks away quickly, then it might not be the best time to introduce the topic.

State a comment or a question that relates to the subject. Before speaking you should have formulated a comment or a question about the topic that you have identified. This will be your opening line to get the conversation going on the identified topic.

Listen to the reply that the other person has to say in reaction to your comment or question about the topic. The other person might make a comment to you or ask you a question about the topic. Listen carefully to what he or she says and how he or she says it because this will help you to determine whether to continue this conversation with this person.

Does the other person sound really interested in talking with you at this time about this subject? Or is he or she just being polite in giving you a short reply? And does he or she turn away from you afterwards or look away in disinterest? These are clues to you about whether to continue the conversation.



Skill Information (continued)

How to do it:

3. Continue the Conversation

Continuing the conversation means that you say something more about the topic you have introduced. What you choose to say hinges directly on what the other person said in response to the topic you introduced and will depend on how carefully you listened to the other person's reply.

You may continue the conversation as long as both wish to talk to each other. Good conversations have a give-and-take quality about them because they go back and forth between the two people. If you dominate the conversation, then the other person may get bored and disinterested in talking with you or about that topic.

Decide what to say to keep the conversation going about the topic. Determining follow-up remarks based on what you heard the other person say in reaction to your opening comment or question about the topic. Based on the other person's reply, determine whether you will ask a question or state a comment. You may want to paraphrase what the other person to show that you have listened and understood before proceeding with another comment or question.

The process of continuing the conversation is recycled as long as you and the other person choose to talk. That's what makes a conversation flow, it goes back and forth between the individual's comments, paraphrases, and additional questions. If the conversation on one topic seems to run out, try introducing another topic that might be related or that is of interest to both of you.



Example of the Skill

Scenario: Jack and Connie were hosting a party in their home. They love to entertain because Connie is a good cook and loves to decorate her home for the holidays and special occasions. Jack is very friendly and loves to carry on social conversations.

This particular party was for Connie's co-workers. Jack had met some of them before and had a good memory for people's names and their interests. Jack spotted Lauri and Joe and remembered them from another party. Jack thought about what topics to talk about with them. He remembered some things about them and thought they might want to discuss:

- Two new granddaughters
- Upcoming wedding for one of their daughters
- Their kitchen renovation
- Their jobs



Jack decided to start with their granddaughters since Connie had told him that they had just come back for a trip visiting them.

Jack said, "Hi Lauri and Joe, how are your two new granddaughters doing??"

Lauri said, "Oh, they're great! They're growing fast and developing their own personalities!"

Joe whipped out his phone and said, "Would you like to see pictures?"

Jack said, "Sure! Oh, they're adorable! I can't remember, are they sisters?"

Lauri said, "No, they're cousins."

Jack said, "How often are you able to see them?"

Joe said, "Not often enough, since one lives in Texas and the other lives in New York!"

Lauri chimed in, "But we're making the best of it and seeing them every other month."

Jack thought, *Oh, I picked a winner of a topic! They're very proud grandparents and happy to talk about their granddaughters! I think I can continue with this topic easily!*

Skill Practice 1



Directions: Read the following scenario, and go through the steps below as if you were Jack. You will need another person to role play with you as Chris. Then follow the steps of the skill of Conversing about Social Topics.

Scenario: At the party, Jack sat a table with Chris. He had just been introduced to Chris and found out a few things about him:

- Chris had transferred from another office and was new to this group of co-workers
- He had a long commute to the new office
- He had recently purchased a new truck
- He loved to go fishing



1. Identify Topics

2. Introduce the Topic

3. Continue the Conversation

Skill Practice 2



Directions: Write down a situation that happened recently when you were in a social situation with someone and might have had a conversation. You will need another person to role play with you. Then follow the steps of the skill of Conversing about Social Topics.

Situation:
1. Identify Topics
2. Introduce the Topic
3. Continue the Conversation

