Tips and Strategies: Conversational Skills

- **Guiding Questions and Expected Responses:**
  - How should you start a conversation?
    - You can start a conversation by greeting someone and asking them how they are doing. Then, you can choose a topic to talk about and ask the person a question about the topic.
  - What can you do to keep a conversation going?
    - You can comment on what the other person is saying and ask questions.
  - What should you do when someone else is talking?
    - When someone else is talking, you should look at them and listen to what they have to say without interrupting.
  - How can you end a conversation?
    - You can end a conversation by saying something like "It was nice talking to you." or "See you later!" and saying goodbye.

- **Tips and Strategies to Practice Conversational Skills:**
  - Role-play with parent/caregiver
  - Practice with a sibling/neighbor/friend
  - Practice in the natural environments where the skills take place (school, community, etc.)
  - Use the skills during play or leisure activities either at home or in the community
    - Comment on the activity you are doing and ask the other person questions to have a conversation based on the activity
  - Use various cues/prompts:
    - **Verbal Cues:** Ask a question that suggests a response (e.g. "Can you ask him a question?") or "comment on other people's actions" (e.g. "He listens quietly as you talk.") (Watling & Spitzer, 2018, p. 411)
    - **Visual Cues:** Picture prompts that demonstrate skills (e.g. listening to someone else talk), Gesturing towards another child for the child to talk to (Watling & Spitzer, 2018)
  - Demonstrate how to appropriately complete skills (modeling) (Kramer & Hinojosa, 2010)
  - Ask higher order questions (e.g. "Why is it important to listen to what the other person has to say?", "How do you think people feel when they are interrupted?") (Kramer & Hinojosa, 2010, p. 245)
  - Give feedback (e.g. "You did a great job commenting on what they said!") (Kramer & Hinojosa, 2010, p. 245)
  - Teach child to rehearse the skill before performing it (e.g. practice asking questions about a topic) (Kramer & Hinojosa, 2010)
  - Teach child to verbally instruct themselves on what to do (e.g. "I will pay attention to what the other person is saying and look at them as they talk.") (Kramer & Hinojosa, 2010)
  - Create a mnemonic for the child to use to remember skills (Kramer & Hinojosa, 2010)

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- **Tips and Strategies to Practice Conversational Skills (cont'd):**
  - Video feedback - record the child demonstrating the skill and allow them to watch the footage to analyze their performance
  - Social Autopsies/Social Dissection (OCALI, n.d.):
    - Analyze social situations from the child's life to determine social errors and how to correct them
    - Analyze social situations in cartoons/movies
  - Continue to use other evidence-based interventions that are effective for your child (Social Stories™, scripts, etc.)

References

Kramer, P. & Hinojosa, J. (2010). *Frames of reference for pediatric occupational therapy* (3rd ed.). Lippincott Williams & Wilkins.

OCALI. (n.d.). Social autopsy. https://www.ocali.org/project/resource_gallery_of_interventions/page/social_autopsy

Watling, R. & Spitzer, S. L. (Eds.). (2018). *Autism across the lifespan: A comprehensive occupational therapy approach* (4th ed.). American Occupational Therapy Association, Inc.

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