Tips and Strategies: Friendships

- **Guiding Questions and Expected Responses:**
  - What do friends often have in common?
    - Friends often have similar interests in common.
  - What are some important things to do while playing with friends?
    - While playing with friends, it is important to take turns and share, and you may also compliment your friends sometimes.
  - What should you do if you haven't seen a friend in a while?
    - If you haven't seen a friend in a while, you should make plans to spend time with them.
  - What should you do if your friend is upset or struggling with something?
    - If your friend is upset, you should try to comfort and support them by listening to them explain why they are upset and trying to cheer them up.
  - What should you do when your friend does something good?
    - When your friend does something good, you should congratulate them and celebrate with them.

- **Tips and Strategies to Practice Developing and Maintaining Friendships:**
  - Practice some of the specific skills like asking a friend to spend time together or comforting a friend when they are upset
    - Role-play with parent/caregiver
    - Practice with a sibling/neighbor/friend
    - Practice in the natural environments where the skills take place (school, community, etc.)
  - Have conversations with them about what a friend is, what makes a good/bad friend, why it is important to have friendships, etc.
  - Use various cues/prompts:
    - **Verbal Cues:** Ask a question that suggests a response (e.g. "Can you help your friend clean up?") or "comment on other people's actions" (e.g. "He is holding up his hand for a high five to congratulate you for winning your game.") (Watling & Spitzer, 2018, p. 411)
    - **Visual Cues:** Picture prompts that demonstrate skills (e.g. playing or talking with friends), Gesturing towards another child (Watling & Spitzer, 2018)
  - Demonstrate how to appropriately complete skills (modeling) (Kramer & Hinojosa, 2010)
  - Ask higher order questions (e.g. "Why is it important to spend time with your friends?", "How do you think our friends feel when we ignore them?") (Kramer & Hinojosa, 2010, p. 245)
  - Give feedback (e.g. "You did a nice job listening to your friend talk about his problem.") (Kramer & Hinojosa, 2010, p. 245)
  - Teach child to verbally instruct themselves on what to do (e.g. "I will ask my friend to play soccer with me this weekend.", "I will be kind to my friend.") (Kramer & Hinojosa, 2010)

Tips and Strategies: Friendships

- **Tips and Strategies to Practice Developing and Maintaining Friendships (cont'd):**
  - Create a mnemonic for the child to use to remember qualities of a good friend (Kramer & Hinojosa, 2010)
  - Video feedback - record the child interacting with a friend 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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