



What is Social Communication?

What is it?

- Social Communication is the key to connecting with peers. It is the broad term related to one's ability to interact in society. There are different layers that build on one another to create *social communication*:
 - Interactions
 - Understanding
 - Executive Functioning
 - Pragmatics
 - Verbal communication
 - Nonverbal communication
 - Language Processing, or understanding and interpreting the information that is heard, seen, or read¹
- It is important to consider the varying aspects of different societies, communities, and cultures, as each society has its own sets of “rules.” This may vary depending on cultural background, gender, or roles in society (i.e., teacher vs. student).
- Necessary skills needed for effective social communication² include, but are not limited to:
 - Understanding emotions
 - Telling effective, goal-based stories
 - Maintaining topics
 - Reciprocating conversation
 - Understanding verbal communication (i.e., style of communication *classroom* versus *hanging out with friends*, asking questions, tone of voice)
 - Understanding nonverbal body language clues (i.e., posture, facial expressions)
 - Adjusting communication style based on contextual clues
 - Playing with others in a reciprocated manner
 - Resolving conflicts effectively
 - Executive functioning (organization, attention, problem solving, planning for future)
 - Maintaining emotional flexibility
 - Inference-making
 - Interpreting body language clues to support social situations and participate in conversations

¹ American Speech-Language-Hearing Association. (n.d.). *Components of Social Communication* [Practice portal]. <https://www.asha.org/practice-portal/clinical-topics/social-communication-disorder/components-of-social-communication/?srsltid=AfmBOorSSGC5pITiAcDuZ2g8ISkyECqpU33FxBZaC7SFjR4Uh9QNpU5D>

² American Speech-Language-Hearing Association. (n.d.). *Components of Social Communication* [Practice portal]. <https://www.asha.org/practice-portal/clinical-topics/social-communication-disorder/components-of-social-communication/?srsltid=AfmBOorSSGC5pITiAcDuZ2g8ISkyECqpU33FxBZaC7SFjR4Uh9QNpU5D>

- If your child has been referred to a speech-language therapist for concerns related to *Social Communication*, they may have displayed the following³, but not limited to:
 - Difficulty maintaining topics of conversation
 - Difficulty communicating or engaging with others in a societally appropriate manner
 - Difficulty adjusting communication style based on the context
 - Limited understanding of body language clues
 - Difficulty identifying and understanding figures of speech or sarcasm
 - Challenges making and maintaining close relationships

The Role of the Speech-Language Therapist and Social Communication

- According to the *American Speech-Language and Hearing Association* (ASHA), the speech-language therapist plays a central role in identifying, evaluating, and treating social communication disorders.
- The speech-language therapist's role consists of carrying out screenings where social communication disorder is suspected, conducting necessary evaluations and observations, creating intervention plan(s) that are specific to the child, and educating the interprofessional team and parents.

Intervention and Support in the Classroom

- Social communication skills can be targeted in speech and language therapy and applied in the classroom setting. In order for a child to build meaningful connections with peers, participate fully in the classroom, communicate their needs in effective ways, and understand societal situations, a child with social communication needs may benefit from explicit instruction.
- The speech-language therapist may teach:
 - Strategies for communication breakdowns
 - Body language clues and what they mean
 - Identification of sarcasm
 - Use videos and role playing to model social interactions
 - Problem-solving strategies
 - Social inference strategies, or "reading between the lines"
 - Interpretation of verbal and nonverbal communication
 - Flexible thinking, or *Zones of Regulation* (Kuypers, 2011).
 - Facilitated conversations with teachers to carryover strategies
- Embracing and celebrating the individuality of a child and their communication is always a priority. Intervention for social communication needs and/or disorders will continue to reinforce these unique profiles, while teaching new skills to enhance the meaningfulness of interactions and participation.
- If you're interested in Speech-Language services at AIM for your child, please contact supportservices@aimpa.org

³ American Speech-Language-Hearing Association. (n.d.). *Social communication disorder* [Practice portal]. www.asha.org/Practice-Portal/Clinical-Topics/Social-Communication-Disorder/

Kuypers, Leah. *The Zones of Regulation* (2011). Think Social Publishing, Inc.