

Everyday Conversational Skills

Objective: To teach students everyday conversational skills

Setting and Materials:

Setting: High school classroom

Content Taught

1. During the conversational skills phase these aspects include:
 - a) Appropriate questioning in conversation
 - b) Conveying verbal and nonverbal interest and attention in to a partner
 - c) Disclosing appropriate information about one's own interests
 - d) Talking about topics likely to be of interest to peers
 - e) Pacing one's style or flow of conversation in an appropriate manner
2. During the social problem-solving phase these aspects include:
 - a) Defining why a situation is problematic
 - b) Determining what one wants to see happen in a problem situation
 - c) Brainstorming potential solutions to a problem
 - d) Evaluating those solutions
 - e) Selecting the solution as most workable after the evaluation

Teaching Procedures

3. Each group instruction session in both conversational and social problem-solving phases will make use of the same skill instruction:
 - a) Modeling
 - b) Behavior rehearsal
 - c) Feedback
 - d) Shaping procedures
4. Begin the group instruction by identifying the skill aspect that will be addressed in the session by instructing the students in it's use and rationale
5. Model the skill by role-playing a short interaction and have the students note when the targeted skill is being exhibited
6. Have the students rehearse the same behavior by verbalizing or role-playing
7. Along with the other group members, offer feedback, suggestions, and reinforcement
8. When students become proficient in correctly exhibiting the skills, prompt them to identify situations in school and the community in which he or she could converse with others
9. Reinforce successful skill use and discuss difficulties applying skills as a group
10. Encourage students to raise actual life problems they had encountered and teach them to apply their newly-acquired problem-solving skills to those difficulties

Evaluation

1. Evaluate performance of conversational skills by collecting data on the following verbal behaviors:
 - a) Conversational questions directed to the confederate
 - b) Speech acknowledgers
 - c) Speech duration of the student's contribution to the conversation
 - d) Appropriate disclosures of information about interests and activities

2. Evaluate performance of social problem-solving by using scenarios that involve conflict or decision making concerning social relationships and collecting data on the following behaviors:
 - a) Specification as to why the situation is a problem
 - b) Explicit identification of a goal
 - c) Generation of potential solutions
 - d) Evaluation of potential solutions
 - e) Selection of a solution

Lesson Plan Based on:

Plienis, A. J., Hansen, D. J., Ford, F., & Smith, S. (1987). Behavioral small group training to improve the social skills of emotionally-disordered adolescents. *Behavior Therapy, 12*, 17-32.