

## **Social Competence**

**Objective:** To improve the **social competence** of persons with disabilities.

### **Setting and materials:**

Setting: Classroom setting.

### **Content taught**

Six general categories of situations experienced by persons with disabilities were used:

1. asking for information or favors from others
2. refusing unreasonable requests
3. dealing with legitimate criticism
4. handling disagreements
5. meeting new people
6. coping with objectionable behavior from others.

### **Teaching Procedure**

Vignettes were written to represent each of these categories and formed the basis for the treatment programs and several of the assessment measures, thus ensuring that their content was reflective of the real-life problems experienced by disabled adults in the community. The social-skills training, interpersonal problem-solving training, and combination training programs were based on detailed program manuals (can be obtained through Elaine E. Castles, 6020 Osage St., College Park, MD 20740). Groups met twice a week for a total of 15, 1-hour sessions.

### **Interpersonal Problem-Solving Training**

1. This training was used to teach participants four basic steps of interpersonal problem-solving:
  - a) generation of alternative solutions,
  - b) evaluation of probable consequences,
  - c) selection of best alternative, and
  - d) enumeration of specific means to implement the solutions chosen.

2. In each session, the teacher first introduced a problem vignette, asking for information or favors from others.
3. Group members brainstormed alternative solutions to this problem, role-played to determine the probable consequences of each solution, selected what they determined to be the most effective alternative, and then enumerated the specific steps necessary to implement the chosen solution.
4. After working through the vignette presented by the teacher, the group can go through a similar process with one or two similar real-life problems suggested by the members themselves. Two sessions can be spent on each of the six categories of problem situations, and with other three sessions devoted to introductory and concluding activities.

### **Social-Skills Training**

1. The same problem vignettes used in the interpersonal problem-solving training were also used in the social skills training program; however, instead of leading the group through a problem-solving procedure, the teacher took a predetermined solution to each problem, and group members can then take turns role-playing this solution.
2. Emphasis needs to be placed on such non-verbals such as eye contact, voice tone and loudness, appropriate affect, and appropriate gestures.
3. The teacher and other group members need to provide feedback and positive reinforcement for role-play performance.

### **Method of Evaluation**

The Social Problem-Solving Test used an “open-middle” format. Participants are presented with six problem situations (one from each of the six situations described previously) and asked to describe the means by which the problem might be resolved. Solutions are scored on a 5-point scale. The Behavioral Social Skills Assessment consists of 12 interpersonal problem situations, two from each of the six categories of social problems. One situation in each category was a vignette that was used in the instructional program, whereas the other allowed for the assessment of generalization.

Participants were asked to respond as they would in real life enactments of problem situations presented on a videotape monitor. All responses were scored in two ways: a 5-point rating of the verbal content effectiveness, and a 5-point global rating of overall response effectiveness, based on non-verbal variables, such as voice loudness and tone, speech disfluencies, and response latencies, as well as actual verbal content.

**Lesson Plan Based on:**

Castles, E. E., & Glass, C. R. (1986). Training in social and interpersonal problem-solving skills for mildly and moderately mentally retarded adults. *American Journal of Mental Deficiency*, 91, 35-42.

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