

**Social Skills Training Group Program**  
SUNY – Upstate Medical University

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Child Group Leader

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Parent Group Leader

Child Group

The **first session** focuses on establishing group rules for treating each other with respect, and on developing better emotional awareness of one's self and others. Activities stress understanding gradations of simple emotions including happy, sad, angry, and afraid as well as more complex emotions including pride, guilt, and embarrassment.

**Sessions 2 – 5** focus on receptive and expressive body language (facial expressions, body postures, and tone of voice) accompanying these emotions taught through modeling and role playing. Children learn how to use awareness of their own emotions as the basis for making choices about appropriate behavior during sad and/or stressful times. Children are provided with instruction about conversation skills. In this part of the training, there is an emphasis on “sharing the air,” “staying on the same page” with respect to context and topic, and “being honest.” The more subtle aspects of conversations, like taking turns in conversation, joining a conversation already underway, making comments, asking questions of others, using nonverbal indicators to express interest, and choosing appropriate topics, are included.

**Sessions 6 – 10** include lessons about friendship, teasing, and bullying. Group and individual problem solving skills are taught. Some of the skills involved in problem solving are problem identification and prioritization, generation of feasible alternative strategies, and the evaluation of individual strategies. The focus is on the development of practical solutions, coping mechanisms, and self-control for these difficult interpersonal situations. These skills are taught, practiced, and reinforced through the use of a visual template, games, and role-playing activities. Perspective taking and empathy training are included, requiring the children to act out situations in which different people think different things or have different underlying motives.

Parent Group

Parent groups are jointly educational and supportive, with the goals of enlisting parents as co-teachers of the curriculum. Parent sessions started with a discussion of the elements of each lesson plan, and an explanation of the rationale behind the lesson.