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Introduction to Social Skills for Adults

Melissa James, M.H.Sc., Reg. CASLPO

Moderated by:
Amy Natho, MS, CCC-SLP, CEU Administrator, SpeechPathology.com

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How to earn CEUs

- Must be logged in for full time requirement

- Log in to your account and go to Pending Courses

- Must pass 10-question multiple-choice exam with a score of **80%** or higher
  - Within **7 days** for live webinar; within **30 days** of registration for recorded/text/podcast formats

- Two opportunities to pass the exam

continued

Introduction to Social Skills for Adults

By Melissa James, M.H.Sc., Reg. CASLPO for
SpeechPathology.com

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Disclosures

- **Financial:** I do not have relevant financial relationships to disclose regarding the current presentation.

- **Nonfinancial:** I offer social skills therapy in my Toronto-based private practice where I have been working with adults with ASD, SCD, ADHD and mental health concerns for the past 6 years. I also mentor and supervise other speech-language pathologists around their practice within this niche practice area.

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My Story

- Speech-language pathologist working in running a clinic in Toronto, Ontario, Canada

- I became interested in, and began working with adults in a private practice model in 2012. I was expecting my caseload to be stuttering, voice and lisps. However, once my practice opened clients that were approaching me were struggling with communication skills secondary to a executive functions diagnosis.

- After pouring over relevant resources and research on social skills training in adults, and practicing in this area for 6 years, I have developed a practice-based and research-based knowledge that I would like to share with you.

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Learner Outcomes

- After this course, participants will be able to describe applications of social skills training for adults in clinical practice.
- After this course, participants will be able to identify appropriate candidates for social skills training.
- After this course, participants will be able to describe the etiology and how to apply beginner-level assessment and treatment directions for working with adults with social skills concerns.
- After this course, participants will be able to identify at least one of each: a challenge, an advocacy opportunity, and a referral indicator.

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Learner Outcomes

1. Overview
2. Population
3. Goals
4. Tools
5. EBP

6. Assessment
7. Treatment
8. Challenges
9. Advocacy
10. Referrals

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Problems to Solve

1 ASD across the lifespan. Do you know where to start to work with adults with ASD? What about adults with other executive function related challenges, like ADHD and mental health related conditions, like bipolar?

3 What can we deduce from research that we have?

2 How do we assess and treat a homogeneous population within a relatively new niche practice area?

4 How do we advocate for the expertise of speech-language pathologists in this area?

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Overview

- This presentation covers a scope of practice that is often called social communication within the profession of speech-language pathology. I prefer the term "social skills" (A social skill is any competence facilitating interaction and communication with others where social rules and relations are created, communicated, and changed in verbal and nonverbal ways.) to make the service more comprehensible to the public, our administrators and non-SLPs.

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Population

- Spectrum of skill levels (there are a range of heights in the general population, there are similarly a range of social skills levels)
- Neuro-atypical populations
  - Autism (reference)
  - ADHD (reference)
  - Mental health (reference)
  - mTBI, TBI & ABI (reference)

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Population

Many people who are struggling with their social skills are undiagnosed. They report the symptom, however being high functioning it was never investigated or connected with an underlying cause. In most cases of social skills challenges in adulthood, the person is not seeking a diagnosis like ASD or ADHD. The label is not often functionally helpful. Here, adults want functional improvements and meaningful change.

Prevalence

8m

ADHD over 18

(ADDA.com)

Prevalence

3.5m

High-functioning ASD over 18

(Buescher et al., 2014)

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Population

- Often unaware of the role of an S-LP
- Other professions are often unaware (psychology, social work)
- Clients usually have histories of working with different professionals with varying degrees of success
- Find an S-LP, usually after extensive research, on the internet. Eureka!

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Some Language Characteristics**

- Not outwardly disordered, may be sophisticated in presentation (i.e., vocabulary)
- Tangential
- Difficulties with perspective taking and conflict resolution
- May come across as narcissistic, or overly self-indulgent in conversation

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**However

- This is a homogeneous group
- Can't use broad strokes
- Social Communication Profiles resource

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What they want:

- Functional strategies for making and maintaining relationships
- Social insights
- Education
- A safe place to practice and troubleshoot social problems

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Purpose

Long-term

- Interact appropriately (speaking and responding) with other people

- Make new friends and getting along with others

- Maintaining meaningful relationships and self-advocacy within unhealthy relationships

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Purpose

Medium-term goals

Quantity
- Client will improve the quantity of positive relationships as measured by X over the course of Y.

Client Implications:
- Client will maintain more positive relationships during the course of therapy and be able to reflect and experiment within these relationships. Through the experience of practicing social skills, the client will become more proficient within the social realm across domains.

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Purpose

Medium-term goals

Quality

- Client will improve the quality of meaningful relationships as measured by X over the course of Y.

Client Implications

- Clients will report more positive relationships on a self-report measure of that records support, conflict, depth of family and peer relationships.

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Purpose

Short-term goals

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Purpose

Other outcomes
- Client will have improved self esteem, self-efficacy, or self-awareness

Client Implications
- We need some clients to feel more confident and we need other clients to feel less confident and rather more self-aware. Depending on to which end of the spectrum you are working towards, this socio-emotional piece may also be considered a goal.

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LT Goals

- Improvement of social skills as a means to:
- Interact appropriately (speaking and responding) with other people
- Make new friends and getting along with others
- Maintaining meaningful relationships and self-advocacy within unhealthy relationships

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Tools

- Cognitive Behavioral Therapy
- Adapted Friendship Pyramid (Winner, 2012)
- ILAUGH Model
- SOCIAL Model
- Drama, Improv (and role-playing)
- VSM

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Evidence-based Practice

Major areas of evidence that *inform* our practice of social skills training for adults:

01 | Research on ToM in adults

02 | Research executive functioning deficits in adults with certain diagnoses

03 | Research on social communication, intrapersonal skills and social skills

04 | Research on social relationships in people with certain diagnoses

05 | Frameworks: ILaugh framework, SOCIAL Integrative Framework

06 | Social Skills Training programs (PEERS, SocialThinking, etc.)

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Evidence-based Practice

However, we need more research…

- RCTs
- Formalized treatment programs
- Research on assessment options

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Assessment

- 1. _____
- 2. _____
- 3. _____

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Treatment

- 1. _____
- 2. _____
- 3. _____

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Challenges

- From a therapist's perspective
  - Patience
  - Empathy
  - Structure
  - Less quantitative than we are used to
    - Letting go of "data-driven" sessions

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Advocacy

- We're the experts in communication
- Communication is vital in relationships
- We have the background knowledge
  - ToM
  - EF
  - Counseling
  - Social communication
  - Non-verbal communication
- Let your professional network know

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Referrals

Top 5 signs that it time to refer:

- Little to no improvement in quantity or quality of relationships after a substantial therapy block
- Disclosure of significant trauma (that has not been addressed with psychological treatments)
- Consistent displays of extreme emotion within session*

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Conclusion

- We have opportunities
  - For research
  - For interesting and different interventions
  - To help a misunderstood and often undertreated population
  - For advocacy about the role of a speech-language pathologist in what might be called traditionally mental health

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Resources

- Books
  - Social Skills for Adults and Teens with Asperger Syndrome
  - Messages
  - Navigating the Social World
  - Beyond Behavior Modification: A Cognitive-Behavior Approach to Behavior Management
  - ADHD in Adults: A Psychological Guide
  - Social Skills Training

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Questions?

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Conclusion

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Thank you

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