

Social Skills Training



Jed Baker, PhD 10/2020



- Hope is necessary to cope with anxiety and social distancing restrictions
 - What can we control: Social distancing, hand washing and PPE works.
 - Antivirals and vaccine will come
- Hope also leads to better outcomes with challenging behavior in kids!

Overview

Lots of strategies work

Video may be superior for generalizing skills

No matter what strategy you use certain key components must be addressed:

1. Assess behaviors/targeting skills
(and alter triggers/environment)
2. Motivation to learn
3. Select appropriate way to teach
4. Plan for generalization
5. Peer sensitivity training
6. Measure outcome

Key Components of Skills Training

1. What to teach? Prioritize what is relevant in desired settings
 - General: Communication system
 - Personalized: Too much or too little for expected settings
 - Interview parents, teachers, client
 - Observe behavior in environment: Get ABC's of behaviors
 - Use surveys, checklists, or standardized measures
 - Have key stake holder prioritize small set of skills based on two questions:
 - What do they do too much of to be successful
 - What do they do too little of to be successful
 - Prioritize user friendly number of daily targets (2-5)
 - For Too much behaviors, we must identify triggers/antecedents to create a good prevention plan.

Typical Triggers

- Internal issues: hunger, tiredness, illness
- Sensory issues: noise, light, touch, over-stimulation, boredom
- Lack of structure
- Challenging or new work, feared situations
- Having to wait, not get what one wants, disappointments
- Threats to self-esteem: losing, mistakes, criticism
- Unmet wishes for attention: ignored, want others to laugh

Components of a Behavior Plan

see No More Meltdowns (Baker, 2008)

1. **Change the triggers:** sensory/biological, structure/visual supports, task demands
2. **Teach skills to deal with triggers** (dealing with frustrating work, accepting no or waiting, dealing with mistakes/losing/teasing, getting attention, advocating for sensory needs)
3. **Reward new skills**
4. **Loss system** if not already frustrated

Key Components of Skills Training

2. Establish Motivation to Learn

- External motivation: traditional rewards after task completion. Use a reward menu of activities, objects
- Intrinsic motivation: Is this part of client's own goals?
Make the task itself more enjoyable

Partnering with Student

- Build positive self awareness, sense of optimistic future
 - List many strengths that will take you places in life
 - List a few challenges that do not need to be overcome, just modified enough not to interfere with strengths.
- Use parts of testing results to build positive case
- We all need someone to believe in us more than we do sometimes

Example student

Strengths	Challenges
1. Good memory for facts 2. Good reader	1. Organization 2. Focus and frustration in classes
3. Great at video games	3. Socializing comfortably
4. Expert in Japanese Anime	
5. Loves animals	
6. Good singer	
7. Kind and caring 8. Entertaining Can lead to a great academic and work career!	<u>Supports</u> : HW system, notes for missed info, possible med for focus, teach a few social/frustration related skills

Key Components of Skills Training

3. Skill acquisition matched to language/cognition
 - Level 3: Little receptive language, can't use words only to instruct. Visually based, incidental prompting
 - Level 2: Has language but needs visual support to understand.
 - Level 1: Has good receptive language that you can explain what to do and why (how people feel in response to our behavior).

Key Components of Skills Training

4. Generalization to natural setting

- Prime, Coach, Review
- Use visual cue card, verbal prompts, reminder apps

5. Peer sensitivity

- Sensitize peers to needs of those excluded or teased
- Solicit peer leaders/buddies (Heroes vs Bullies)

6. Evaluating outcome

- Observable measures (e.g., frequency of behavior)
- Subjective ratings
 - 1-never 2-rarely 3-sometimes 4-usually 5-always
- Normed scales
 - Constantino's Social Responsiveness Scale (SRS)
 - Gresham & Elliott's Social Skills Rating System (SSRS)

Autism Spectrum Disorder

1. Social Communication Difficulties

- Initiating/Reciprocating, one-sided conversation
- Non-verbal: lack of eye contact, gestures
- Deficits in developing/maintaining friends

2. Repetitive pattern of behavior (2 of 4):

- Stereotyped/repetitive movements
- Insistence on sameness: routines, rituals, transitions
- Fixated interests
- Hypo or Hypereactivity to sensory input

Specify Severity Level for each above

Specify if intellectual and language impairment

If #2 is missing: **Social Pragmatic Communication Disorder**

Level 3: Significantly Challenged

- Challenge: Cannot simply explain with words about how to do things or why.
- Interventions need to be visual, concrete, and prompted in the moment
 - Structure of Teacch, pictures, maybe video
 - PECS: Bondy and Frost. <http://www.pecsusa.com/pecs.php>
 - ABA (DTT, PRT, VBT) emphasis should not just be on external rewards, but intrinsic as well
 - Play based programs, especially those combined with ABA, like Early Start Denver Model (Rogers and Dawson, 2010)

Visually based strategies

- One can visually represent:
 - Schedules: APP – visual scheduler
 - Tasks, chores, routines
 - Building something
 - To motivate: For example “First/Then”
- The Teacch Approach to Autism Spectrum Disorders (Mesibov, Shea, Schopler, 2004)
- Visual Supports for People with Autism (Cohen and Sloan, 2007)

First/Then approach

First

Then

Find letters



iPad



Basic Hygiene (Level 2, 3)

Appendix

Encouraging Good Hygiene – Showering Schedule Visuals



All text and illustrations are copyrighted by the Vanderbilt Kennedy Center (VKC) and cannot be used in another context without written permission of VKC Communications (kc@vanderbilt.edu, 615-322-8240).

The Six Phases of PECS

- PHASE I: How to Communicate

- Students learn to exchange single pictures for items or activities they really want.



- PHASE II: Distance and Persistence

- Still using single pictures, students learn to generalize this new skill by using it in different places, with different people and across distances.



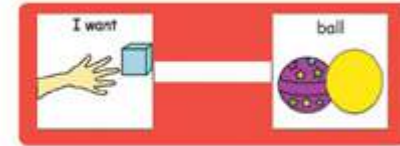
- PHASE III: Picture Discrimination

- Students learn to select from two or more pictures to ask for their favorite things. These are placed in a communication book—a ring binder with Velcro® strips where pictures are stored and easily removed for communication.

The Six Phases of PECS

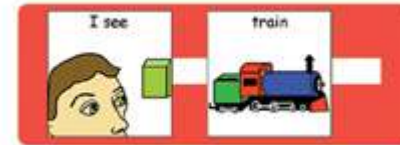
- PHASE IV: Sentence Structure

- Students learn to construct simple sentences on a detachable sentence strip using an “I want” picture followed by a picture of the item being requested.
- Students learn to expand their sentences by adding adjectives, verbs and prepositions.



- PHASE V: Answering Questions

- Students learn to use PECS to answer the question, “What do you want?”.



- PHASE VI: Commenting

- Now students are taught to comment in response to questions such as, “What do you see?”, “What do you hear?” and “What is it?”. They learn to make up sentences starting with “I see”, “I hear”, “I feel”, “It is a”, etc.

Examples of ABA

- Discrete trial (Lovaas): Externally based rewards
- Pivotal response training (Koegel and Koegel): Intrinsic rewards, start with where students attention is.
- Verbal behavior training (Sundberg and Partington): First part, mand training, uses intrinsic motivation. Create need, then reward is you get what you ask for.

Videos of DTI



Video of PRT



Video of VBT



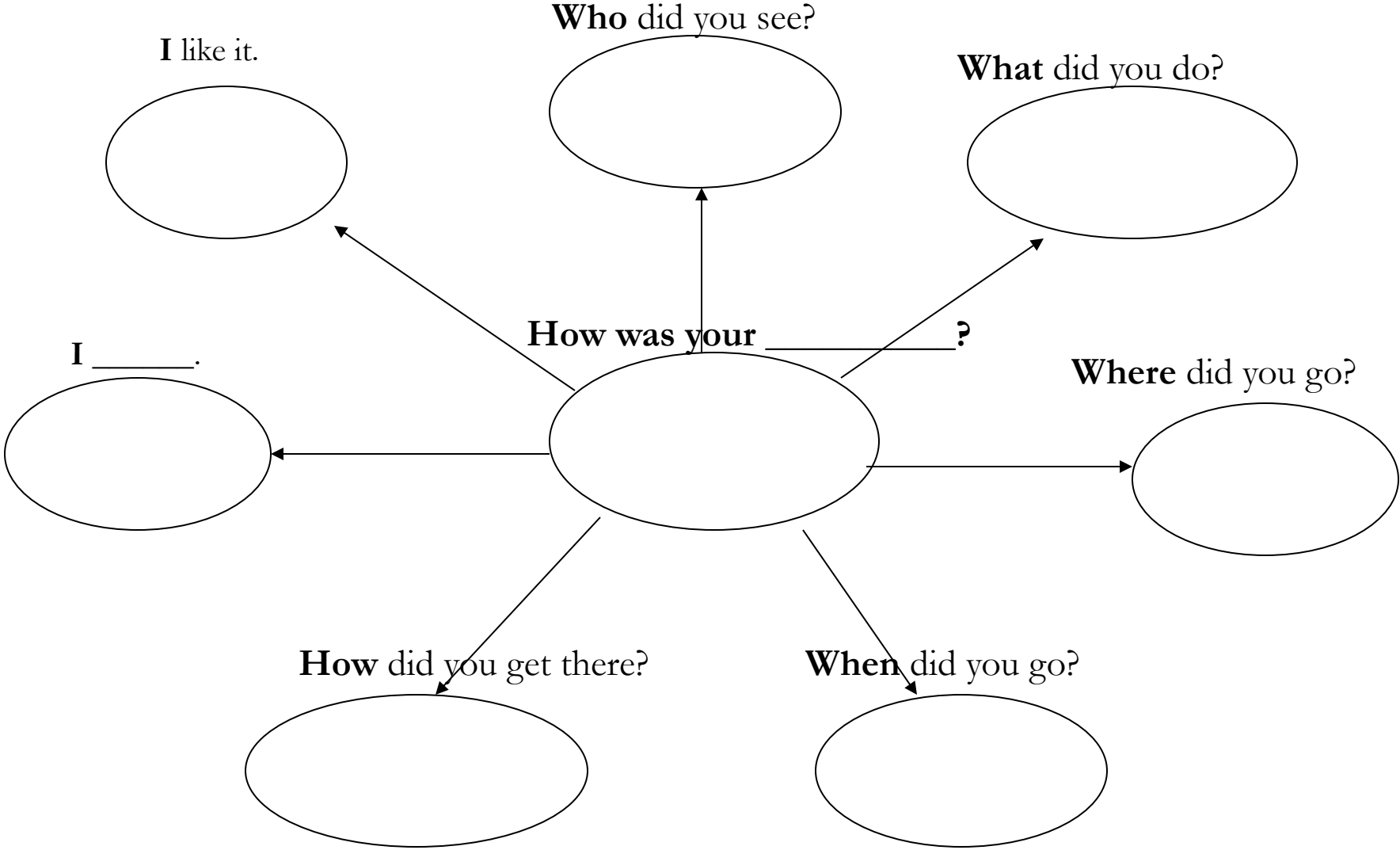
Early Start Denver Model (Rogers and Dawson, 2009)

- Get their attention
 - Clear room of other toys
 - Position yourself in their view
- Follow their lead, start with where they are attending (look for the smile)
- Consider sensory routines
- Build Joint attention: give, show, point
- Build play from turn taking, conventional object play,
- Level 2 and 1: animate doll/animals, symbolic substitution, symbolic substitutions

Level 2: Challenged

- Challenge: Understands basic directives, can request, but language is still concrete, tied to present moment. Cannot talk about situations in the abstract.
- Interventions similar to Level 1, yet . . .
 - Can add verbal directives and verbal imitation. Example, Say, “Can I play?”
 - Can begin to work on conversation prerequisites like “wh” questions
 - Social Skill Picture Books (Baker 2001, 2006)
 - Video modeling

Maintaining a Conversation (past)



Example of Picture Books

Accepting No for an Answer

1. Sometimes parents and people say “No” when you ask them for something.
2. Say, “Okay” and do not get mad.
3. If you accept no, then the other person will be happy and may let you do something you want to do later.

1. Sometimes people say “No” when you ask them for something.



When the boy asks to play the game, the teacher says no and tells him to do his work first.

2. Say, "Okay" and do not get mad.



Right Way

The boy says okay and does not get mad. He knows he will get to play the game later.



Wrong Way

The boy gets mad and does not accept no for an answer.

3. If you accept no, then the other person will be happy and may let you do something you want to do later.



Right Way

The boy now gets to play because he waited until he finished his work.



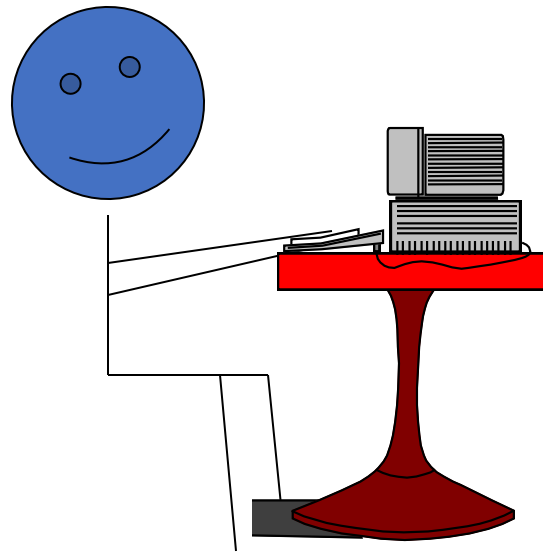
Wrong Way

The boy still can't play because he would not accept no and wait to play.

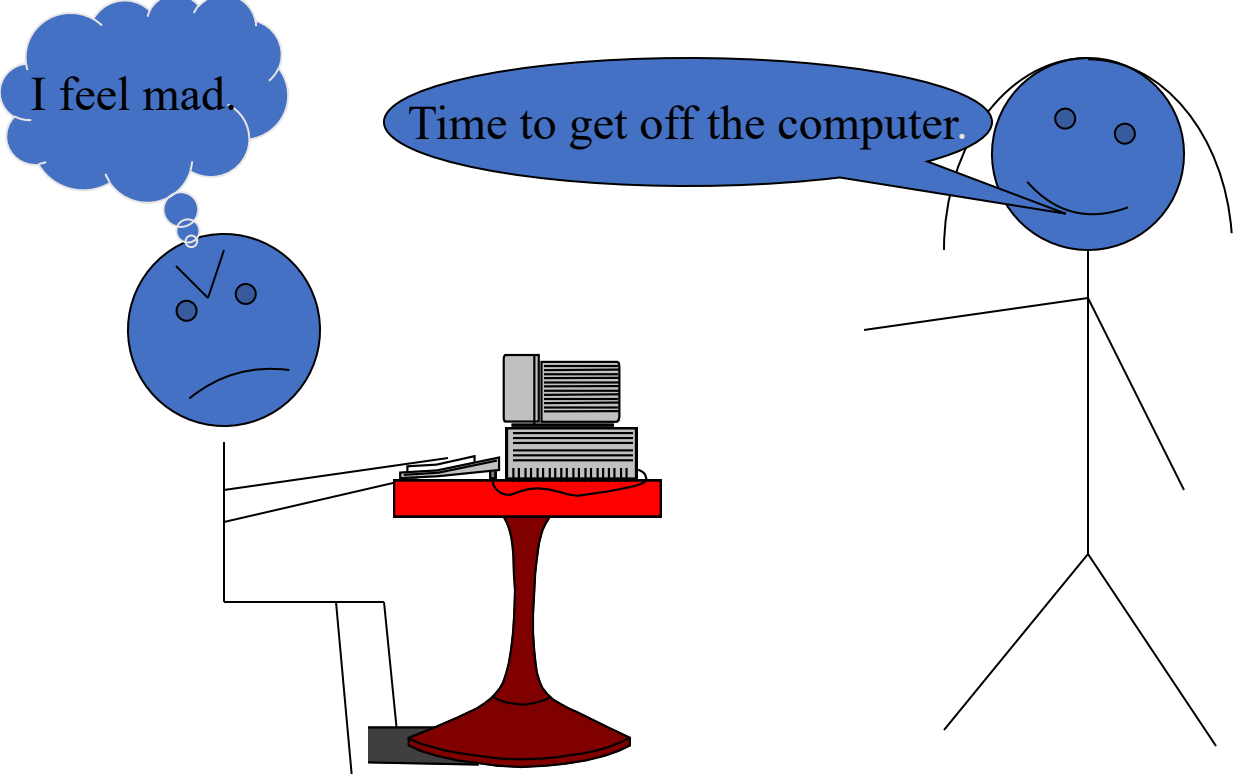
Cognitive Picture Rehearsal

- Antecedents: Triggers to problem behavior
- Behavior: Appropriate behavior or skill
- Consequence: Rewards, not punishments.

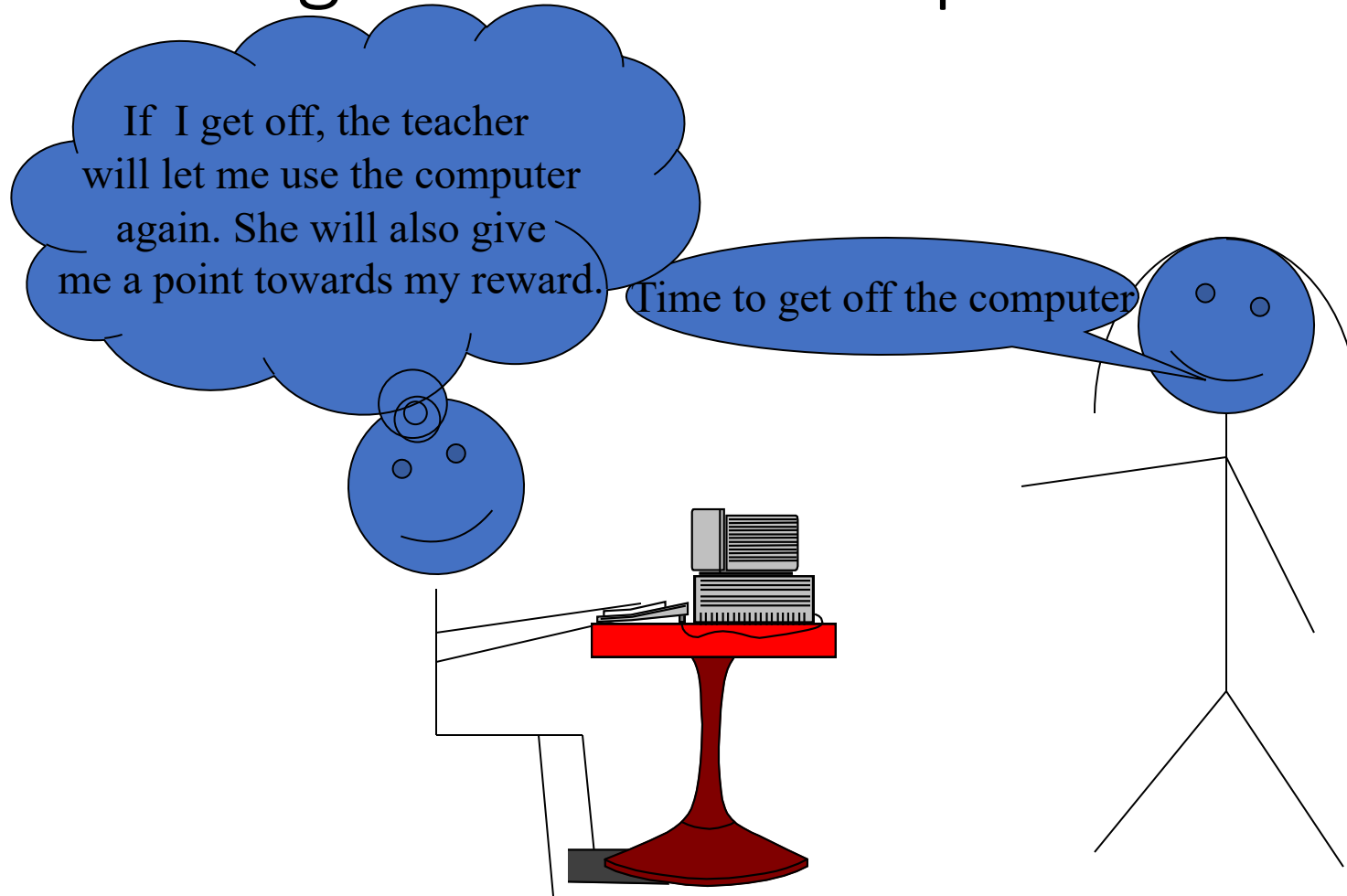
Matt is playing at the computer.



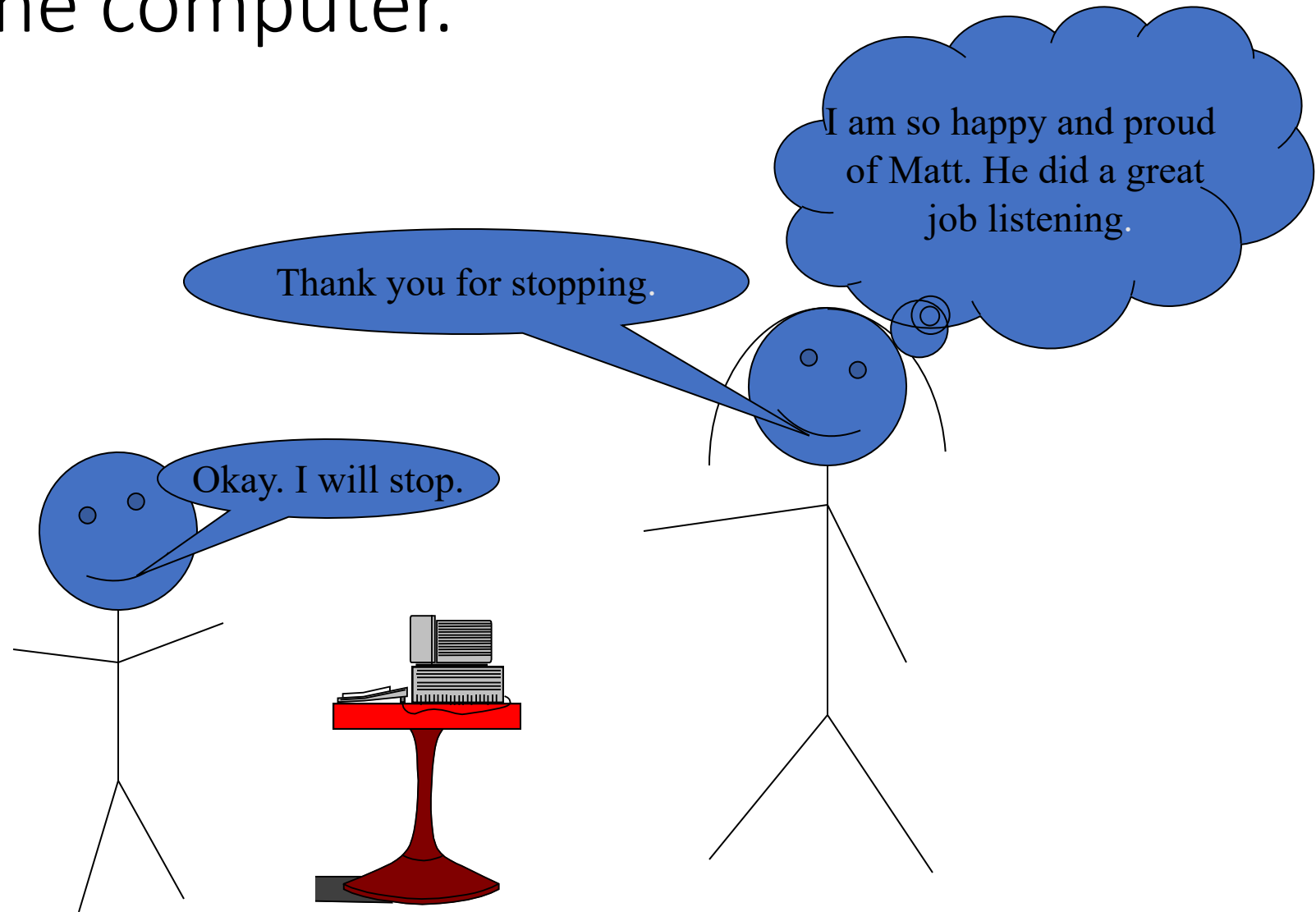
The teacher tells Matt to get off the computer.



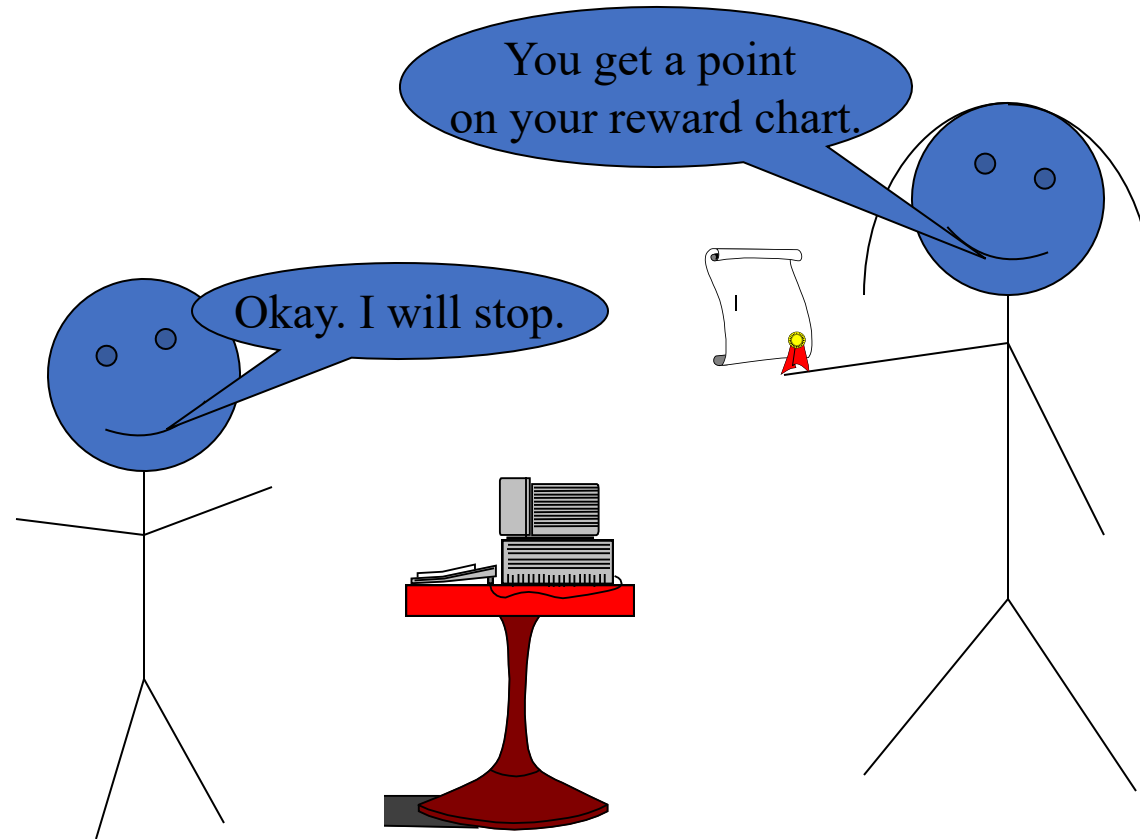
Matt remembers what will happen if he gets off the computer.



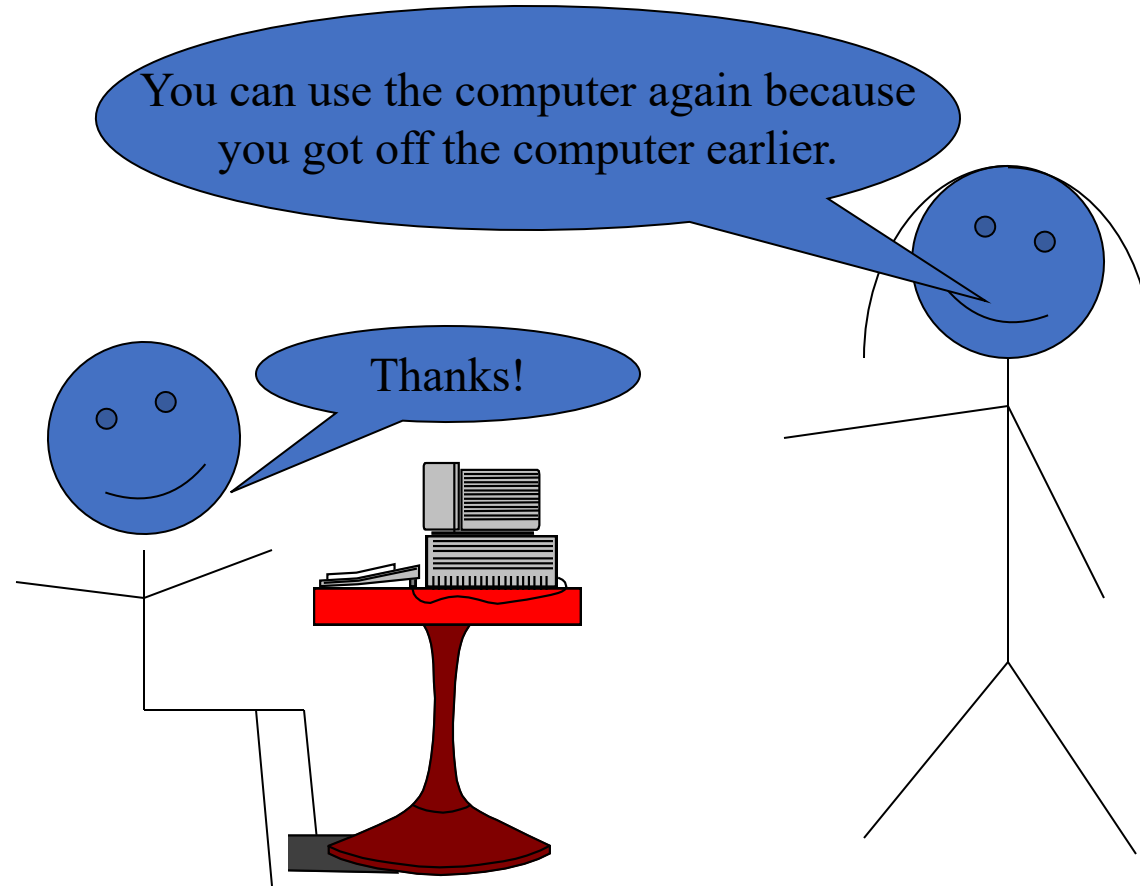
Matt decides to accept that he must get off the computer.



The teacher rewards Matt for getting off the computer.

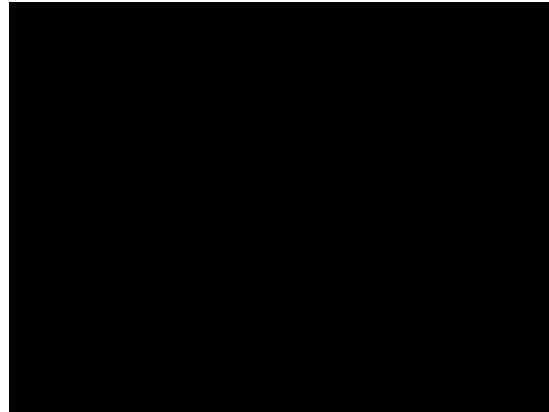


At 2 pm, the teacher lets Matt use the computer again because he did such a great job getting off the computer earlier.



Video Modeling or Self-Modeling

- Video peers and then target student. Use to prime skill before situations.
- Better generalization than other forms of learning



Level 1: Emerging

- Challenge: Has ability to talk about actual situations in the abstract. Yet still problems with abstractions like perspective taking.
- Interventions can be visually supported, yet one can now explain not just what to do, but why; how other people think and feel.
 - Social Thinking
 - Explaining, modeling and role-playing
 - Video-modeling (with highlighting others thoughts, feelings, reactions).

Social Thinking (Garcia-Winner)

- Attempts to teach fluid perspective taking. Teach them how to be a GPS versus giving maps of social situations. Baker's books provide the maps when GPS is not quite there yet.
- "Social thinking" is the process by which we interpret the thoughts, beliefs, intentions, emotions, knowledge and actions of another person along with the context of the situation to understand that person's experience" ... "we use this information to determine how to respond to affect the thoughts that person has about us to achieve our social goals."

Structured Learning

- Didactic instruction of skill steps
 - Explain not only WHAT to do but
 - WHY; how it makes others think and feel
- Model correct way, and maybe wrong way
 - Avoid wrong way for attention seeking clients who may repeat wrong way to get a laugh
- Role-play with feedback until proficient

Structured Learning

- Practice and Generalization
 - Plan when and how they will use skill
 - Skill (cue card) goes home to parents, teacher or aide who
 - Quizzes
 - Models & Role-plays
 - Prompts
 - Reinforces with praise, reward, or token economy.
- Need a gimmick for role-play or instruction!

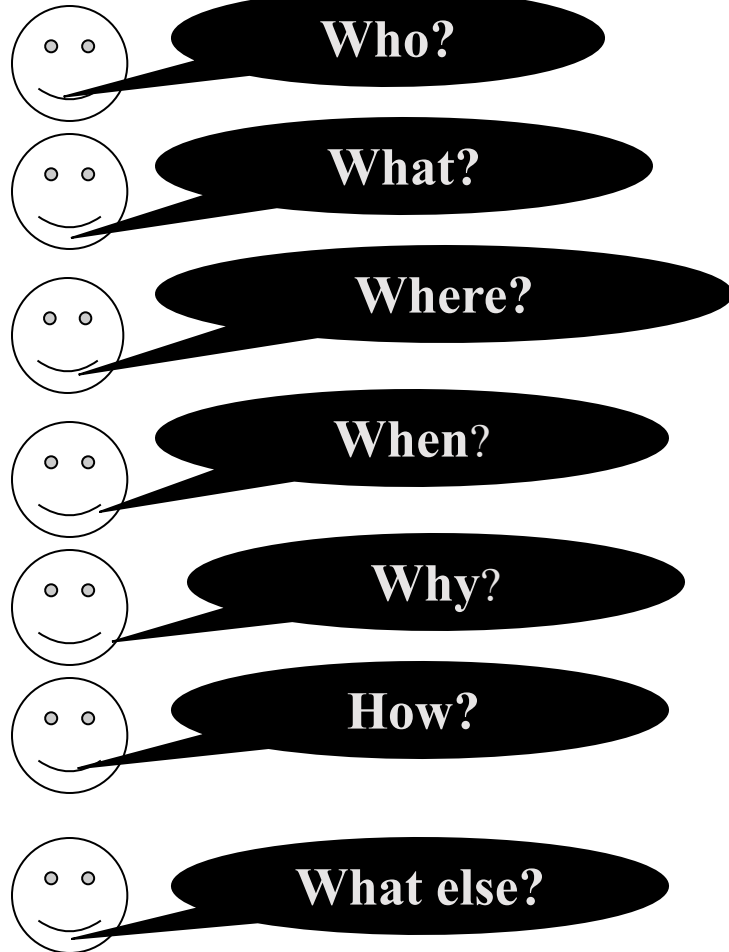
Conversational Skills

- Students who:
 - Lack initiation or responding to others or
 - Perseverate with one-sided monologues or
 - Interrupt others
- Need to learn how to:
 - Start and maintain conversations
 - Be sensitive to the listener's interests
 - Interrupt and shift topics appropriately

Maintaining a Conversation (level 1)

Ask

Tell



I like _____.

I also _____.

I am going to _____.

I went to _____.

Starting conversations with people you know

1. Greet the person.

Say “Hello” the first time you see them during the day.

2. Ask about what they are doing in the **present situation**.

“What are you [doing, playing, reading, eating?]”

3. Ask questions about the **past**.

“How was your [week, weekend, vacation, holiday]?”

Starting conversations with people you know

4. Ask questions about the **future**.

“What are you going to do for the [week, weekend, vacation, holiday, after school]?”

5. Ask questions about their **routine or interests**.

“How is [soccer practice, class, religious school, work, chess club] going?”

Getting to Know Someone New

3 minutes to find out what you have in common.

NAME	What's your name? Mine is _____.
SCHOOL	Where do you go to school? What grade are you in? What are your favorite subjects?
NEIGHBORHOOD	Where do you live? What's it like there?
INTERESTS	What do you do for fun? What games do you like? What TV shows do you watch? What kind of music do you like?
FAMILY	Do you have a big family? Do you have brothers and sisters? Do you have any pets?

Peer Sensitivity Training: ABC NEWS



In Closing

- Skills Training strategies may vary, video is often superior method for generalization.
- Despite strategy used to teach skills, certain key components must be addressed in order to be effective and address specific situation for student.
 - Assess behavior in a practical way (i.e., what is too much or too little for situation)
 - Motivation must be established
 - Select strategy suited to student's learning style
 - Consider how to generalize skill
 - Does peer group need to be targeted to offset isolation or bullying?
 - Measure outcome