



Social Anxiety

Some autistic children and young people experience social anxiety. This may make it challenging for them to engage with peers or supporting adults. A useful strategy can be to reduce the amount of verbal language used while encouraging engagement. Involving the young person in a game which does not require speaking, can reduce anxiety as the pressure to talk is removed. Over time, language can be added in as the young person becomes more familiar and comfortable with the game and the interactions.

Top Tips

- When introducing a new game, provide written instructions or other visual structure to clarify how the game is played.
- Model the new game/activity for the young person by playing it with another peer or sibling.
- Adopt commentary style talking, such as 'Good move'; 'Your turn'. This models language without placing a demand on the young person to speak. In this style of talking:
 - Adults do all the talking
 - No direct questions are asked
 - Pauses are ok
 - Rhetorical questions are also ok, which don't require an answer
 - Say "show me...." Rather than "tell me"
 - Provide items to choose from and ask, "which one?"
- Occasionally ask 'yes/no' questions which the young person can respond to by either nodding or shaking his head.
- Respond to any interactions that they do make without insisting on speaking. The young person might:
 - Smile responsively and appropriately
 - Use gesture (mime, nod, shake head or point) to communicate, e.g. Indicate a choice; agree or disagree; put hand on head to indicate 'hat'
 - Use pictures or text to answer a question, e.g. point to, write, tick or circle the answer

Games that can be played without speaking

Board Games

- Buckaroo
- Chess
- Connect 4
- Dominos
- Draughts
- Frustration
- Hungry Hippos
- Jenga
- Kerplunk
- Noughts and crosses
- Operation
- Pop-up Pirate
- Snakes and ladders
- Snap

Interactive activities

- Arts and crafts
- Cooperative Jigsaw construction
- Building Lego together
- Kahoot is an app which can be used in the classroom for all peers. Quizzes are set up online, all children have access to a tablet and complete the quiz individually.
- Messy play while taking turns
- Science experiments www.sciencebob.com

Outdoor or Physical Games

- Hopscotch
- Ring toss
- Ten-pin bowling