

Facilitating Children's Academic Learning: Therapists as "Academic Coaches"



"Descriptive commenting" is a powerful way to strengthen children's social skills, emotional literacy, and academic skills. The following is a list of academic concepts and behaviors that can be commented upon when playing with a child. Use this checklist to practice describing academic concepts.

Academic Skills	Examples
_____ colors _____ number counting _____ shapes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● "You have the red car and the yellow truck." ● "There are one, two, three dinosaurs in a row." ● "Now the square Lego is stuck to the round Lego."
_____ sizes (long, short, tall, smaller than, bigger than, etc.) _____ positions (up, down, beside, next to, on top, behind, etc.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● "That train is longer than the track." ● "You are putting the tiny bolt in the right circle." ● "The blue block is next to the yellow square, and the purple triangle is on top of the long red rectangle."
_____ working hard _____ concentrating, focusing _____ persistence, patience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● "You are working so hard on that puzzle and thinking about where that piece will go." ● "You are so patient and just keep trying all different ways to make that piece fit together."
_____ following parent's directions _____ problem solving _____ trying again _____ reading _____ thinking skills _____ listening _____ working hard/ best work _____ independence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● "You followed directions exactly like I asked you. You really listened." ● "You are thinking hard about how to solve the problem and coming up with a great solution to make a ship." ● "You have figured that out all by yourself."

Facilitating Children's Emotion Learning: Therapists as "Emotion Coaches"



Describing children's feelings is a powerful way to strengthen a child's emotional literacy. Once children have emotion language, they will be able to better regulate their own emotions because they can tell you how they feel. The following is a list of emotions that can be commented upon when playing with a child. Use this checklist to practice describing a child's emotions.

Feelings/Emotional Literacy	Examples
<input type="checkbox"/> happy <input type="checkbox"/> frustrated <input type="checkbox"/> calm <input type="checkbox"/> proud <input type="checkbox"/> excited <input type="checkbox"/> pleased <input type="checkbox"/> sad <input type="checkbox"/> helpful <input type="checkbox"/> worried <input type="checkbox"/> confident <input type="checkbox"/> patient <input type="checkbox"/> having fun <input type="checkbox"/> jealous <input type="checkbox"/> forgiving <input type="checkbox"/> caring <input type="checkbox"/> curious <input type="checkbox"/> angry <input type="checkbox"/> mad <input type="checkbox"/> interested <input type="checkbox"/> embarrassed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● "That is frustrating, and you are staying calm and trying to do that again." ● "You look proud of that drawing." ● "You seem confident when reading that story." ● "You are so patient. Even though it fell down twice, you just keep trying to see how you can make it taller. You must feel pleased with yourself for being so patient." ● "You look like you are having fun playing with your friend, and he looks like he enjoys doing this with you." ● "You are so curious. You are trying out every way you think that can go together." ● "You are forgiving of your friend because you know it was a mistake."

Modeling Feeling Talk and Sharing Feelings

- "I am proud of you for solving that problem."
- "I am really having fun playing with you."
- "I was nervous it would fall down, but you were careful and patient, and your plan worked."

Facilitating Children's Social Learning: Therapists as "Social Skills Coaches"



Describing and prompting children's friendly behaviors is a powerful way to strengthen children's social skills. Social skills are the first steps to making lasting friendships. The following is a list of social skills that you can comment on when playing with a child or when a child is playing with a friend. Use this checklist to practice your social skills coaching.

Social/Friendship Skills	Examples
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> _____ helping _____ sharing _____ teamwork _____ using a friendly voice (quiet, polite) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● "That's so friendly. You are sharing your blocks with your friend and waiting your turn." ● "You are both working together and helping each other like a team."
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> _____ listening to what a friend says _____ taking turns _____ asking _____ trading _____ waiting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● "You listened to your friend's request and followed his suggestion. That is very friendly." ● "You waited and asked first if you could use that. Your friend listened to you and shared." ● "You are taking turns. That's what good friends do for each other."
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> _____ agreeing with a friend's suggestion _____ making a suggestion _____ giving a compliment _____ using soft, gentle touch _____ asking permission to use something a friend has _____ problem solving _____ cooperating _____ being generous _____ including others _____ apologizing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● "You made a friendly suggestion and your friend is doing what you suggested. That is so friendly." ● "You are helping your friend build his tower." ● "You are being cooperative by sharing." ● "You both solved the problem of how to put those blocks together. That was a great solution."

Prompting

- "Look at what your friend has made. Do you think you can give him a compliment?" (praise child if s/he tries to give a compliment)
- "You did that by accident. Do you think you can say you are sorry to your friend?"

Modeling Friendly Behavior

- Teachers can model waiting, taking turns, helping, and complimenting, which also teach children these social skills.