Spotlight On: Social Skills
Addressing Conversation Skills

One of the first social skills to teach is conversation skills. Mastering conversation skills can be difficult, but beginning with basic skills and then adapting them for a variety of contexts can help expand abilities and teach individuals how to navigate social relationships. When tailoring these concepts to individuals, consider the person's current abilities, circumstances, and social goals to make the skills person-centered.

Back-and-Forth Conversation: Teach the general rule of conversation partners sharing 50/50 of the conversation. Use the idea of a game of catch. Topics and ideas are "tossed" back and forth between two or a group of people several times until the topic is changed to a new subject.

Stay on Topic: Learning how to stay on topic can be difficult. People may not know what to say or run out of ideas. But staying on topic makes others feel comfortable in interactions. Teaching a skill such as asking, showing interested body language, can improve conversation skills.

Asking Relevant Questions: Asking questions related to the conversation is a good way to keep a conversation going and show interest in what the other person is saying. Teach the concept of high-yield, open-ended questions to build conversation skills.

Commenting: Commenting shows you are paying attention to the conversation. Commenting demonstrates a level of perspective-taking, being able to make empathetic statements, and sharing the person's thoughts and feelings on the subject. Remember to balance asking questions and commenting.

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