

Spectrum SKILLZ

Social Development for Children on the Spectrum

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is largely characterized by social dysfunction. The social problems that are related to this are often assumed to be a choice by the individual, however, this is not the case. Children with ASD want to interact with others but they do not possess the skills to do this. The development of an appropriate social skill set is essential to their success in human connection.

Children with ASD are often overwhelmed in social situations and may not know how to engage with others appropriately. The behaviors that are associated with this can range anywhere from complete avoidance of conversations to dominating a conversation. They often seem lost in their own thoughts and have difficulty taking turns in conversations with others. This disconnection to the give-and-take of conversations can be difficult for others to know how to respond to.

A lot of these social deficits are due to the fact that children with ASD have trouble reading social cues such as tone of voice and facial expressions. This means that they have difficulty with understanding the meaning of what someone may say and then responding appropriately. They also struggle with "joint attention" so the opportunities for connection to others through this is often missed. This lack of "social sense" contributes to the awkwardness that is observed in most children with ASD.

The best way to help children with ASD develop their social skill set is to have them practice these in various situations. Programs that are geared towards addressing these deficits will boost their confidence in social situations and give them tools that will help them connect with others. Practicing this in a group setting would be the most beneficial.

The Spectrum SKILLZ program was specifically designed to build these fundamental skills in children with ASD. Since these children do not generally have the necessary skills to participate in a traditional martial arts class, this program is a great course to help them build their social skills, while introducing them to the world of martial arts. And even better, the Spectrum SKILLZ program focuses on all developmental areas in each class.

For example, in the Spectrum SKILLZ drill "Which One" the students practice observing faces by demonstrating their ability to be able to see and understand the different emotions that the dodgeballs with faces are showing. This will challenge them by requiring them to be able to identify different emotions shown by the balls so they can make the connections in day to day life. Activities such as this will build on each other in each class, giving the children a set of skills to use in different social situations.

When addressing social deficits in children with ASD, it is important to find programs geared towards developing these skills. The correct skill set will provide them with the tools to engage in social interactions more appropriately, read social cues with more confidence, and interact with others in group settings and activities.