


Assessing Friendship Skills: Using the Friendship Skills Checklist

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Destination Friendship

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**Friendship Zone:
Who are we?**

- We each are employed or recently retired from the Capital Area Intermediate Unit and have a combined 103 years of service in education.
- We saw a need for a community based program and began these groups outside of our regular employment.
- Our diverse professional backgrounds, including two Educators who are also Board Certified Behavior Analysts, an Occupational Therapist and a Speech and Language Pathologist, affords a unique multi-disciplinary approach.

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**Friendship Zone:
What is the Background?**

- Vision for Friendship Zone
- History of Friendship Zone

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Friendship Skills

- Are discrete social skills utilized in the development of interpersonal relationships
- The lack of friendship skills will be isolating thus impacting their quality of life
- Friendship skills are developed over time and have a life long benefit
- Errorless learning with support during drill and practice for skills that are missed in the sandbox

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Friendship Skills Checklist: What is it?

- Informal method to identify the strengths and challenges of the social skills associated with the disability

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Friendship Skills Checklist: Why we use it?

- To identify skill targets to build and strengthen the foundation of skills needed for the development of friendships
- It provides a framework for families to provide input around their child's needs
- It enables us to give families feedback on skills targeted during activities.

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Activity: Friendship Skills

- Dissection of the ability to have friends

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Friendship Skills: What are they?

- Cooperation
- Hidden Rules of Friendship
- Conversation Skills
- Flexibility of Thought
- Listening
- Empathy
- Perspective Taking

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Friendship Skills: What are they?

- Initiation
- Shared Interest
- Greetings
- Organizing Thoughts
- Memory
- Self Regulation

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Information on Friends

Quick snapshot on their current state of friendships

- Background information
- Sense of their social thinking
- Knowing where they are to know where we can take them during the 8 weeks
- Lets us know if the individual would benefit from the session

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Cooperation

The keystone skill for participating and maintaining friendships. This skill permeates all other skills.

Highlights of the Checklist:

- Respecting feelings of others
- Consideration of other's feelings
- Compromising

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Hidden Rules of Friendship

The lack of skills may lead to:

- unhealthy relationships
- inhibit the development of friendships
- individuals may become targets of bullies or victims of predators

Highlights of the Checklist:

- Accept that a friend may have more than one friend
- Quality of good verses bad friend

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Conversation Skills

A visible and surface sign of friendship

Highlights of the Checklist:

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- Shows interest
- Uses small talk
- Changes conversational style



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Flexibility of Thought

The lack of flexibility paralyzes them from moving forward in their relationships (i.e., stuck in the moment)

Highlights of the Checklist:

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- Accepts deviation from perceived routine
- Accepts last minute changes
- Explores new experiences/activities



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Listening

Must show interest in what others are saying and feeling to have them reciprocate

Highlights of the Checklist:

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- Uses active listening skills
- Makes relevant comments



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Empathy

No one wants a one-sided friend

Highlights of the Checklist:

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- Expresses concerns for others
- Recognizes physically/emotionally hurt of others
- Inquires about the feelings of others



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Perspective Taking

Do they recognize that other people have thoughts that are different from their own?

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Highlights of the Checklist:

- Formulates an accurate impression of another person
- Adjust their behavior to keep people thinking about them in a positive way



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Initiation

The lack of initiation creates dependent communicators and may be replaced by the use of odd behaviors.

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Highlights of the Checklist:

- Do they ask to do things with their friends
- Asks questions to gain information
- Asks questions to gain information on interests other than their own



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Shared Interests

The lack of a variety of interests restricts opportunities to make friends.

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Highlights of the Checklist:

- Explores new interests
- Has a variety of interests



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Greetings

A basic skill for meeting people and making friends

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Highlights of the Checklist:

- Changes the greeting based on communication partner
- Acknowledges when another enters a room



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Organizing Thoughts

Impacts the ability to begin and end a meaningful conversation

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Highlights of the Checklist:

- Think before they speak
- Limit monologues
- Logical and sequential

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Memory

Provides a springboard for future encounters

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Highlights of the Checklist:

- Remembers the names and interests of others

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Self-Regulation

Must be able to control emotions and body to make friends

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Highlights of the Checklist:

- Identifies early signs of potential stressors
- Adjusts own energy level
- Seeks out another to cope with good/bad stress
- Identifies the cause of his/her emotional reactions

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Suggestions for Use

- Prior to starting group – allow ample time for completion of checklist and analyze skill response patterns
- For group, select targets from the O's (Occasionally) based upon the number of individuals who share those needs
- For individual instruction – select a mixture of R's (Rarely) and O's (Occasionally)
- Assure ample opportunities to positively reinforce the use of skills

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