

SOCIAL BEHAVIOR AND SOCIAL PLAY – LEVEL 2

SOCIAL 6-M	Initiates a physical interaction with a peer 2 times (e.g., a push in a wagon, hand holding, Ring Around the Rosy).
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A child who attends to peers, imitates peers, and wants to interact with peers, but does not have the necessary verbal skills, may engage in negative behavior as a form of social interaction. It is important at this point in social development to place a focus on teaching simple verbal interactions between the target child and peers. Successful interactions with peers can also decrease the likelihood of social anxiety and withdrawal. The most functional type of early verbal behavior between children is manding. Tacts and intraverbals are important, but are more complex and come later. The child must learn four types of mand-related behaviors, two as a speaker and two as a listener. As a speaker the child needs to learn to (1) mand to a peer to obtain a reinforcer (e.g., a second person on a teeter-totter), and (2) mand to a peer to remove an aversive (e.g., not taking turns on a swing). As a listener a child must learn to (3) respond to the mands of a peer to deliver a reinforcer (e.g., get on the teeter-totter), and (4) respond to the mand of a peer to remove an aversive (e.g., get off the swing). These are complicated behaviors because they, like all mands, are controlled by motivational variables and may be complicated to identify and control. Even more complex is teaching a child to emit the socially correct behavior when the MO is strong (e.g., not to hit to get a turn on the swing, or to passively surrender a reinforcer to a peer).

The easiest of these four different mand relations to teach a child is to mand for a desirable item from a peer. This often must be taught in a contrived situation, but can be easily accomplished using a manding to peers procedure. It is important when teaching this behavior to fade out adult prompting (e.g., “Ask Joe for the gummy bear”) and reinforcement (e.g., “Nice sharing!”), because the goal is for the social behavior to come under the antecedent and consequential control of the peer, not the adult. Spontaneous manding to peers will be difficult to achieve if adults continue to control the social contingencies. Additional activities that may further develop other aspects of social behavior can be found in the corresponding sections of VB-MAPP Social Behavior and Social Play Supporting Skills list.

SOCIAL 7-M	Spontaneously mands to peers 5 times (e.g., My turn. Push me. Look! Come on.).
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Once spontaneous manding to peers for desirable reinforcers begins to occur, the other three types of mands can be developed. Responding to a peer’s mand can be easy for some children, but quite difficult for others. The task is to teach the child to attend to the peer’s mand (e.g., “pull me”) and emit a nonverbal response to that mand (e.g., pulling the peer in a wagon) without adult prompting. This behavioral repertoire is more complicated than it might seem. The target child may not want to pull the peer, understand the peer’s mand, know how to pull the peer, be focused on getting the wagon himself, or be focused on some other activity. Training may be slower than teaching a target child to mand to the peer because the target child gets something from it, which is not always the case when he responds to the mands of others (e.g., even adults often fail to reinforce those who respond to their mands). Manding to remove aversives and responding to a peer’s mand to stop a behavior, or return an item, are also more complicated, but are essential components of effective social interaction. Much of what is identified as “turn taking” and “sharing” involve these basic elements of the mand, as well as other skills identified in the VB-MAPP Social Behavior and Social Play Supporting Skills list. Play contexts provide opportunities to teach these types of mands and promote other aspects of social behavior. Encouraging and facilitating sustained play with peers will provide opportunities for social development.