

About Social Skills

Often when children are having problematic peer relationships, there is a recommendation that they be provided "social skills" training. The complexity of the task is rarely recognized either by parents or by therapists. When social skills are not acquired developmentally, they must be taught. An analogy can be made to the dyslexic who, due to a phonological processing deficit, does not readily acquire the ability to decode written language, unlike the other 60-80% of the population. Therefore, the dyslexic requires explicit and direct teaching in order to learn such skills. Similarly, the child who does not readily acquire social skills must be introduced to them by direct teaching methods. However, compounding the situation is the fact that knowledge of social skills does not mean that the person is capable of applying such knowledge. The difficulty in generalizing social skills knowledge supports the need for mentoring programs (those programs that teach social skills in the environments where they are to be applied), and parent training in order to promote active listening and appropriate modeling.

G. Emerson Dickman, J.D. 1996
Right vs. Reality: Knowing The Child Is More Important Than Knowing The Law,