Social Skills & Confidence

Counseling Services
Green River Community College
Objectives

- Gain an understanding of the social skills that you need to work on.
- Understand the difference between social rules and social nuances.
- Learn the Spirals of Social Failure and Social Success.
- Learn strategies to help build your Social Confidence.
- Learn tips for better social interactions.
Social skills are skills that you need when interacting with others.

There are certain ways we all must behave if we want to have fun and to have others like being around us.

Social skills are the ability to adapt your behavior based on the situation and what you know about the people in the situation.
Social skills matter because they affect how people think and feel about us, which affects how we feel about ourselves.

Social skills help us to connect to others, which in turn gives us a feeling of:
- Belonging
- Acceptance
- Confidence
Signs of the Socially Awkward

- Nervous in social situations
- Avoided by others
- Actions come across differently than intended
- Conversations do not flow naturally
- A lack of connection to others
- Does not understand social nuances
Rules vs. Nuances

Social Rules:
- Applied at all times in relevant situations
- Can be easily observed
- Can be easily practiced
- Can be easily memorized
- Examples: say “hi”, take turns, be patient

Social Nuances:
- Apply the basic principles that guide the social rules, but subtly adapted based on the context and people in the situation.
- How others interpret your behaviors is the measure of success, rather than the behavior alone.

Unsure? Observe others around you. Notice what they are doing, and how others react to them.
Social confidence refers to a belief in one’s abilities
As your competence increases, your confidence increases
Our life experiences influence our social confidence, and our social confidence influences our life experiences.
Social confidence is correlated with your self-esteem
So how do your social skills (or lack of) impact your confidence in social situations? Or vice versa?
Social Spiral

Everyone has an “inner voice”

Supportive Inner Voice:
- Encourages us
- Tells us we can do things that make us uncomfortable

Self-Defeating Inner Voice:
- Tells us “you suck at this” or “nobody likes talking to you”
- Defaults to avoid uncomfortable situations

Defaulting to what is comfortable teaches our brain we can only do what we are used to doing.
Spiral of Social Failure

Social Expectation → I Doubt my Ability → So I Make Excuses
I give myself more proof that I CAN’T do it!
I Avoid Trying
I Have Negative Emotions about my Ability
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Spiral of Social Success

Social Expectation → I can try it!

I rely on my Inner Coach
I remind myself of strategies
I keep my emotions calm
I attempt the task
I teach my brain that I CAN do it!

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Confidence Killers

- Comparing yourself to others (those around you, media)
- Being preoccupied with what others think
- Connecting and defining your worth as a person with external things (number of friends, car you drive, how much money you have)
- Being overly critical and having unrealistic expectations
Confidence Builders

- Positive affirmations - start off the day right
- Deny the Inner Critic:
  - Recognize and replace self-defeating, automatic thoughts
  - Replace the thoughts by challenging them “Is this actually true?” “What evidence do I have?”
- Practice Self-Compassion
  - Forgive yourself
  - Recognize your humanness
- Get Help From Others
  - Surround yourself with positive influences, and limit your exposure to negative, self-defeating influences
Social Killers

- Rigidity in thinking - stuck on your ideas and no compromising
- Invading personal space
- Only talking about yourself
- Difficulty staying focused on topic
- Not showing an interest in others
- Pessimism, negativity
- Putting others down, making fun of others
- Avoiding socializing because it feels uncomfortable
Communication is Key!!

- Both Verbal and Nonverbal

- Communicate More With Your Words: Don’t be afraid to speak up about your thoughts/feelings. People will respect you for it. But…

- Don’t Babble On and On: Reciprocal conversations are important to keeping others engaged.

- Show Interest in the Other Person: Ask them about their lives, interests, hobbies, etc. Even if you are not interested in the same things, find a connection.
Social Skills Tips Cont.

- **Listen**: Show the person you are listening by asking questions about what they are saying, give eye contact, no distractions.

- **Keep a Positive Attitude**: People like to be around others who laugh and can ‘roll with the punches’. Pessimistic people tend to turn others away.

- **Be Authentic**: What’s the secret to most socially savvy people? They really do care about the other person and it appears real and authentic.
Practice and Observe!

The best way to improve your skills is to practice!! If you continue to make an effort to converse with others, it will become easier to engage in conversations.

Throughout your day, practice starting conversations, saying hi, or smiling at anyone you see (people on the bus, at the mall, in line at the store, etc.).
As you practice, acknowledge unpleasant experiences without condemning your core self.

Avoid “Because of (some external situation), therefore I am no good as a person” statements.

Instead try “Even though (some external situation), nevertheless I’m still a worthwhile person”.

Practice with a partner: respond to negative criticisms with “Even though... nevertheless”.

Even Though... Nevertheless
“A portrayal of the debilitating effects of not acquiring social / conversational skills early on in life. How it leads to a vicious cycle of further isolation, and a further dead-end as far as those skills are concerned. How the continuation of it leads to a lack of self-esteem, self-image, and self-confidence.”

http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_detailpage&v=kVesXYhem5k
Resources

- Green River Community College Counseling Services- LSC 231
  - 253-833-9111 extension 2460; chs@greenriver.edu

- Books:
  - *Socially Curious and Curiously Social: A Social Thinking Guidebook for Bright Teens & Young Adults*
    By Michelle Garcia Winner and Pamela Crooke
  - *Social Thinking at Work*
    By Michelle Garcia Winner and Pamela Crooke