

## Why is this program important?

These deficits don't go away over time and are easily overlooked in children with high functioning autism and Aspergers. Social skills will not improve unless social cognition is improved. Children with autism will not learn social cognition by just being around peers. We believe this is as important as any other academic subject.

## How long does this program last?

This program runs year round and teaches all the areas mentioned in this brochure, depending upon the class level. We also can offer intercessions and Summer programs that target these skills.

## How many days a week should I enroll my child?

It is like any skill, the more you practice, the more proficient you become. Each week we teach new concepts and then build upon them. We practice and focus on the new skill as well as incorporating the already learned skills, finding opportunities to generalize in different situations. It can take children a while to be able to learn to recognize situations and have the ability to regulate their responses to apply them appropriately.

## How appropriate is my child for this program?

This program is intended for high-functioning autistic and Aspergers students. Some moderate functioning are welcome but need to have some pre-requisites in language and cognitive abilities. The ratio is 1:4 -1:6 in our program. A child needs to be able to safely function in this ratio to be in the program. We can provide 1:1 ABA services to children who don't yet qualify to help them gain the pre-requisites. On a case by case basis, we can allow ST from other agencies into the program depending upon their training and skill.

Pacific Autism Center, Inc.



# Social Skills After-school Program

Helping Children reach their potential...

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## What's the Problem?

The lack of social skills and pragmatic language are core deficits in Aspergers and High Functioning Autistic individuals. Teaching these skills doesn't happen overnight. They take a while to develop as do any skill that someone has difficulty mastering. These deficits contribute to lack of appropriate conversation skills, lack of maintaining meaningful friendships, inability to fully understand jokes and sarcasm, difficulty in reading comprehension, difficulty in understanding others perspectives, desires, beliefs, preferences, etc. These areas of difficulty are present throughout every waking moment for the child or adolescent with Aspergers/HFASD and are known to cause low self esteem, difficulties in school and increase in mal-adaptive or socially inappropriate behaviors. By targeting these deficits, we can help.



## Theory of Mind

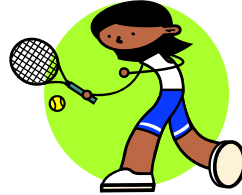
Baron-Cohen (2000) describes theory of mind as being able to infer the full range of mental states (such as desires, intentions, imagination, emotions, etc.) that cause action. Once an individual is able to reflect on the contents of one's own mind and the minds of others, that individual has developed a theory of mind.

An explicit theory of mind involves perspective taking and is indicated when an individual passes a false-belief task. Understanding the mental states of others allows individuals to make sense of past behavior, allows influence on present behavior and permits prediction of future behavior. This ability to predict the behavior of others is a crucial component of social skill development (Baron-Cohen, Leslie, & Frith, 1985) A normally developing four-year-old is capable of having an explicit theory of mind (Baron-Cohen, et al., 1985).

Researchers believe that individuals with autism have not developed a theory of mind; they are unable to infer mental states of others. By not understanding that other people think differently than themselves, many individuals with autism have problems with social relationships and communicating with other people. They may not be able to anticipate what others will say or do in various situations. In addition, they may have difficulty understanding that their peers or classmates have thoughts and emotions, different from their own and may thus appear to be self-centered, egocentric, or uncaring (Edelson,

# Our After-School Program

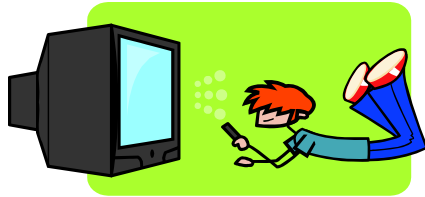
The after school program that we offer at PAC is designed to target the social skills that are so difficult to target sufficiently within the regular school day.



This program runs from 2:30 to 5:00 Monday-Friday. The cost is \$50 per day, \$250 a week. Though the children enjoy themselves, this is therapy. We target specific deficits and maintain general data on how each child is doing with the skills that are taught. Skills are not considered mastered till the child is generalizing the skills over time, across people and environments.

The children are split into small groups based on age and functioning level. They stay together each week developing friendships and working on skills together. The time is broken up into:

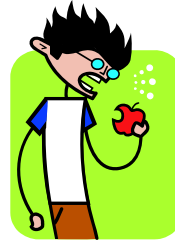
- 30 Minutes - Classroom instruction
- 30 Minutes - Role Play & Dramatic Play
- 30 Minutes - Games & Activities (Generalization and In-Vivo situations)
- 30 Minutes - Movie Review, Picture Review, Verbalizing and Visualizing Activities.
- 10 Minute Breaks 3x = 30 minutes.



## Targeted Skills

### Pragmatic Language

All children with autism or Aspergers have difficulty with pragmatic language. We target these areas in multiple ways. We use role modeling, dramatic play, comic strips, contrived situations, in-vivo situations, video reviews, pictures, etc. to teach these skills. Our program targets the following areas:



- Topic - The introduction, selection, content, maintenance, change of topics as well as the breakdown & repair of a conversation.
- Purpose - Monitors the general goals and objectives of a conversation.
- Physical Setting - Using the physical setting, the event, activity or scene to determine appropriate conversation elements.
- Audience - Learning to notice the relationship between speaker vs. listener, the mood of the conversation, the age of the listener, the relationship of those in a conversation, the knowledge & experience base of listener, etc.
- Non-Verbal Communication - This includes body language, facial expressions, gestures and eye contact.
- Prosody - Changing inflection and intonation which produces various meanings.
- Abstractions - Sarcasm and figures of speech are under this area.

### Emotions

We will be working on the recognition and response to basic and complex emotions. When working with emotions we will also target why the emotions are expressed and the thought process that leads to that emotion. As we target emotions, we will also work on emotional regulation. Again, we will use role modeling, dramatic play, comic strips, contrived situations, in-vivo situations, video reviews, pictures, etc. to teach these skills.

### Theory of Mind

Our program aims at working with children and adolescents on Theory of Mind (TOM). Our program focuses on the following core areas:

- Knowing - 1st & 3rd person perspectives of senses, having been told, personal experience, & common knowledge.
- Preferences - 1st & 3rd person preferences, learning to infer others preferences and how this helps predict other's behaviors.
- Thinking - Learning how to first think and then respond appropriately in situations and in conversations, learning about judgments, facts vs. opinions and increasing flexibility of thought.
- Beliefs - Understand that different people have different beliefs based on their experiences and they are either true or false.
- Intentions - Learning about the intentions of various actions and then to infer and respond to intentions appropriately.
- Deception - Understanding tricks, intentions of others, lies & cheating.



More information on TOM can be found on the back of this brochure.

### Individualized Programs

On our registration forms, there is a location for parents to write down the biggest concerns they have and goals they have for their child within this program. IEP goals and objectives can be targeted just like these areas can. Depending upon a child's level, we either target the specific goals or the prerequisites skills. Data is kept on how the children are progressing through these goals.

## Does this sound familiar?



*John was playing soccer when he was hit by a ball in the face. He yelled at Ray who kicked the ball and blamed him for doing it on purpose.*

*Alley started talking to another child she didn't know at the zoo and kept talking to her even though she didn't really look at her.*

*Mac talks to everyone about dinosaurs and even when you try to change the subject he will just keep talking to you, regardless if you are actively listening.*

*Silvia got mad at her sister for eating all the ice cream and told her how mean she is even though her mom gave it to her sister for good behavior.*

## How To Sign-up

1. Call and get a Registration Form sent to you or pick one up at our office.
2. Fill out Form and send in for an Intake. This is an informal assessment and helps determine appropriateness for our program. The cost is \$150.00.
3. We then determine if your child is an appropriate fit for our program, sign paperwork and decide days and length of time in the program.
4. Make payment for first month and you will be invoiced for each month thereafter.