

points of service



The P.E.A.C.E. Program: Building Children's Social Skills

Seven-year-old Sally felt lonely and rejected at school.

The other second-graders did not play with her at recess and sometimes they even teased her. Her self-esteem plummeted: she believed something was wrong with her because of the way the others treated her. Sally's mother arranged play dates for her, but the other children never seemed to reciprocate. How could she help Sally make friends and be happy?

Inside ...

Focus on Sally

*Social Weaknesses Impede
Children's Healthy Development*

*P.E.A.C.E.: Enhancing Children's
Social Skills and Boosting
Self-Esteem*

*Building Tools for
Life-Long Success*

SOCIAL WEAKNESSES IMPEDE CHILDREN'S HEALTHY DEVELOPMENT

George is a bright child who loves to talk to anyone who will listen. The problem is, he continues talking even after the other person has become bored or walked away.

April moved to a new school and is having a hard time making new friends. She feels lonely and unhappy and wishes she could go back to her old school, where she already has a group of friends.

Mark is an active child who has a short attention span. If things don't go his way, he gets frustrated and has a tantrum. As a result, he has alienated many classmates.

These children all have some form of social weakness which is impeding their efforts to make and keep friends. This problem can be viewed as a complex form of social learning disability. It can be debilitating to many aspects of a person's life, including family, school, and job.

Children with this problem have difficulty relating appropriately and comfortably with other people, including peers and adults. They fail to interpret non-verbal cues, such as facial expressions, gestures, and body language. In addition, they may have poor conversational skills. Resolving conflicts can also be a struggle.

Because of their social difficulties, these children may be labeled, teased, or humiliated by other classmates. Feeling stigmatized and isolated, they may lose confidence in themselves and become anxious and depressed. Meanwhile, concerned parents feel helpless to address this with their children on their own.



P.E.A.C.E.– ENHANCING CHILDREN'S SOCIAL SKILLS AND BOOSTING SELF-ESTEEM

Family Counseling Service's social skills program called P.E.A.C.E., **P**roblem-Solving and **E**motional **A**lternatives for **C**hildren's Social **E**nhancement, shows children how to interact with others and enhances their self-esteem. Through role modeling, cooperative play, and a series of games, the children learn skills such as conflict management and appropriate forms of emotional expression. Rewarded for good behavior, the children develop positive self-images which in turn lead to renewed confidence and assertiveness. This new outlook makes it easier for them to maintain and keep friends.

P.E.A.C.E. is open to all children. The children meet in small groups that are formed according to age and development level. Size is limited to seven to nine children.

The program runs for a maximum of 30 sessions as the children progress through the three phases of the program. Each phase reinforces and builds on skills already learned in previous sessions. All groups are guided by professionals in the mental health field.

P.E.A.C.E. also recognizes parents' integral role in their children's social development, offering parent orientation meetings, feedback nights, and classes to assist parents in developing the social competencies of their children at home.



BUILDING TOOLS FOR LIFE-LONG SUCCESS

Over the course of its three 10-week sessions, P.E.A.C.E. helps children develop the social skills they need to succeed throughout their lives. Topics include:



- Problem and conflict management
- Enhancing self-esteem
- Handling emotions effectively
- Open communication and honesty
- Self-protection
- Appropriate touching and personal space
- Understanding social situations
- Building friendship skills

For more information, call (201) 445-7015.

Focus on Sally



Sally's mother did not know what to do. She wanted to help her daughter, but she wasn't sure how. She couldn't be with Sally all the time to facilitate relationships with other children. Sally needed to learn to become more independent and sure of herself.

Meanwhile, Sally was becoming more and more difficult at home. When she came home from school, she began having frequent temper tantrums, yelling and screaming at her mother.

One of Sally's teachers suggested seeking help at Family Counseling Service. Sally and her mother made an appointment and met with a therapist there to discuss Sally's inability to get along with her classmates and her recent behavior toward her mother. Recognizing that Sally's social difficulties could best be addressed in a peer group setting, the therapist referred Sally to P.E.A.C.E., the agency's social skills group for children.

Through role modeling and cooperative play, Sally learned ways to positively interact with others and enhance her ability to solve small problems, express her feelings appropriately, and build friendship skills. Her improved social skills were rewarded with praise and small prizes. Just being part of a group also made Sally feel welcomed and accepted by her peers. Gradually, she began feeling better about herself.

As the sessions progressed, Sally's mother noticed the girl's temper tantrums became less frequent. Sally was now verbalizing her feelings without yelling and screaming. She also appeared more confident and began trying to make new friends.

Sally's mother also benefited from the program by sharing thoughts with other parents of children with social problems and she learned valuable tips to help her daughter through special classes set up just for parents.