

PRAGMATIC LANGUAGE

Pragmatics refers to the social language skills we use in our daily interactions with others. Pragmatic language includes the appropriate content of our words, how we say them, and our use of body language. Pragmatic skills are vital for communicating our personal thoughts, ideas and feelings. Children, adolescents and adults with poor pragmatic skills often misinterpret another person's communicative intent and have difficulty responding appropriately either verbally or non-verbally.

Examples of pragmatic language skills:

Verbal communication:

- Asking for, giving and responding to information
- Turn taking
- Eye contact
- Introducing and maintaining topics
- Making relevant and appropriate contributions to a topic
- Asking questions
- Avoiding repetitious/redundant information
- Asking for clarification
- Adjusting language based on situation or communication partners
- Using language of a given peer group
- Using humor
- Using appropriate strategies for gaining attention and interrupting
- Asking for help or offering help appropriately
- Offering/responding to expressions of affection appropriately

Non-Verbal Communication:

- Facial expression
- Body language
- Intonation of voice
- Body distance and personal space

Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder may have particular difficulty with many of these skills due to their deficits with social interactions. Children with language disorders may also have difficulty exhibiting appropriate pragmatic skills. Use of visual supports such as pictures/symbols is one strategy used in supporting students who have difficulties with social skills. These skills often need to be explicitly taught via social stories. Providing good role models and role-playing situations may assist children with poor pragmatic skills and enable them to practice appropriate behaviors.