

Strategies for Teaching the Hidden Curriculum/Social Skills

BEFORE TEACHING BEGINS:

Assess the environment: What is it about the environment that the student may have to be taught directly? Is the environment predictable? Does the teacher always follow the same routine or does it vary daily?

List the expectations: What are the expectations of the teacher? Students may need to be taught that a certain teacher has specific rules that other teachers may not have

Decide what information the student needs to learn: What does the student need to learn? For example, how the student will know if the teacher is angry or pleased; how to ask for help; whether you can joke with a teacher or not; a certain teacher's pet peeves

Identify situations that may alter the environment: What might alter the environment? A shortened schedule might shorten the length of a class. A substitute teacher might change the order of the class activities, the rules in class may change on certain day (free time Friday, etc.)

Devise a method for teaching the skill: How will we teach the skills needed to operate in this environment? We might use direct instruction, video modeling, or a visual strategy as a reminder.

There is no one comprehensive list of all hidden curriculum items. The following is a brief listing (Myles et al., 2004) that may be applicable to children and youth with AS in school and community settings.

- Treat all authority figures with respect (i.e., police, firefighters). You would not address a police officer like you would your brother.
- Not all people you are unfamiliar with are strangers you can't trust. You may not know your bus driver or your police officer, but these are people who help you.
- What may be acceptable at your house may not be acceptable at a friend's house. For example, although it is acceptable to put your feet up on the table at your home, your friend's mom may be upset if you do that in their home.
- People do not always want to know the honest truth when they ask you a question. Your best friend does not want to hear that she looks fat in a new dress she just bought for the high school dance.
- Teachers do not all have the same rules. One teacher may allow gum in the classroom, while the other gives out fines for chewing gum.
- Teachers have assumed expectations for their students. They are expected to greet the teachers, sit down when the bell rings and listen quietly to announcements.
- When a teacher gives you a warning, it means that she wants the behavior to stop and that most likely there will be a consequence if the behavior occurs again.

- ↪ It is absolutely impolite to interrupt someone when he or she is talking, unless it is an emergency.
- ↪ Acceptable slang that may be used with your peers may not be acceptable when interacting with adults.
- ↪ When the teacher is redirecting another student, it is not the best time to ask the teacher a question.
- ↪ When a teacher tells another student to stop talking, it is not an appropriate time for you to start talking to your neighbor.
- ↪ People are not always supposed to say what they are thinking.
- ↪ If one small thing occurs and a teacher corrects you, it does not mean that your entire day is bad.
- ↪ During a fire drill go with your class to the nearest exit. This is not the time to go to the bathroom or to ask to go to the bathroom.
- ↪ If one of your classmates tells you to do something you think might get you in trouble, you should always stop and think before acting.
- ↪ Friends do not ask other friends to do things that will get them in trouble. Doing it will not make them think you are cool. Instead, they may think you are gullible and laugh behind your back. Tell them to do it themselves and see what they do.
- ↪ Not all teachers have the same rules for their class. Some teachers do not allow any talking unless you raise your hand. Others may allow talking if you are not disruptive and annoying other students. It is important to know the rules different teachers have for their class. The rules will always change from teacher to teacher and it will not do any good to focus on the fact that it is not fair.
- ↪ When a teacher tells another student to stop talking, it is not a good idea to start talking to your neighbor since the teacher has already expressed disapproval of that action.
- ↪ When hearing someone speak using incorrect grammar, do not correct him every time, especially in a critical manner. The person you correct will think it is rude will be viewed as curt and as if you are trying to point out his faults.
- ↪ When you see someone in the hall at school that you are attracted to, find a way to let them know without going directly up to them and saying loudly, "YOU'RE CUTE!!!" That will make the recipient of the comment uncomfortable.

STRATEGIES

SAFE PERSON (Brenda Smith Myles, 2004): A safe person can be anyone in the student's environment who can explain the meanings of words, phrases, or situations in a way the student can understand without being judgmental or offended by the nature of the question (regular education teacher, special education teacher, school counselor, school nurse, principal, etc).

➤ **The Safe Person Must:**

- ✓ *Understand the student's characteristics, perspectives, and needs*
- ✓ *Respect the student and listen without interrupting and judging before offering advice*
- ✓ *Be able to use problem solving techniques*
- ✓ *Understand triggers that can lead to a meltdown*
- ✓ *Set Boundaries when necessary*

THE ONE A DAY METHOD: The classroom teacher writes one hidden curriculum item on the whiteboard each morning and introduces this item to students as a first activity. Once students understand the hidden curriculum item, they are asked to indicate how it will impact them at school or at home (Myles et al., 2004).

SOCIAL NARRATIVES (Social Stories): Social narratives describe social cues and appropriate responses to social behavior and are useful in teaching a new social skill in advance of the situation. Social narratives often use pictures or cartoons to promote self-awareness and self-management.

- ✓ A social story should have 3 to 5 descriptive and perspective sentences for each directive sentence. Avoid using too many directive sentences. They will be lost without adequate context. Write in first person and on the child's developmental skill level. Also remember to use pictures that fit within the child's developmental skill level and interests to supplement text.
- ✓ Many examples available online (PBISworld.com)






SOLVE STRATEGY (Brenda Smith Myles, 2004):

S	Seek	<p>Seek to understand all aspects of the Hidden Curriculum</p> <p>Since the hidden curriculum is always changing, this step reminds us to be on the lookout for social situations in which the student will need explicit instruction.</p>
O	Observe	<p>Observe what people are doing and NOT doing</p> <p>Observation is one way we can learn about the Hidden Curriculum. Take time to evaluate the social situation before interacting. Teach students to watch how people act with each other; watch their movements; watch to see if others join a group or stand alone.</p>
L	Listen	<p>Listen to what people are saying and NOT saying</p> <p>Pay attention to what others are talking about...movie, concert, book, music? Listen so you can join the conversation by talking about what they are talking about.</p>
V	Vocalization	<p>Vocalize...ask questions, check for understanding</p> <p>If you are unsure of an idiom, slang term or gesture, quietly ask for someone to explain it to you. If you don't know what to wear to an event, ask a safe person. (If you've taught the sentences for safe person, the student will have the words he or she needs to ask.)</p>
E	Educate	<p>Educate...teach and learn. Knowledge is power!</p> <p>If you see someone struggling to understand a situation, you may want to help by explaining it. Remember that sometimes others don't like to take advice. If you are a safe person, the student will probably want help. If you're not sure, ask if you can help.</p>

THE INCREDIBLE 5 POINT SCALE (Buron, K.D. & Curtus, M. 2004): The Incredible 5-Point Scale (Buron & Curtis, 2003) is a simple strategy that involves breaking down behaviors into concrete parts in order to help a child more easily understand their own responses and feelings. By rating their behavior on a visual scale, children can learn to identify and label their own feelings and ultimately learn to manage their behavior. This technique can be very effective with a wide range of children and can be used to target any behavior. Additionally, 5-point scales create a non judgmental language that can be shared by parents, students and caregivers to help regulate behavior and minimize power struggles.

The following steps may be used when implementing a 5-point scale with a child:

1. *Choose the target behavior you wish to address.* Any behavior or issue can be a target behavior as long as it can be broken into concrete levels. Anxiety or other feelings that usually result in problematic behaviors may also be targeted for rating.
2. *Decide on the content for each point on the scale.* Each of the five stages on the scale represents the level or magnitude of the target behavior. Work together with the child to identify each level and its corresponding behaviors. *Personalize this for the child who is using it!*
3. *Develop a story or visual cue for the story.* The story or visual cue should be developed carefully, based on the student's interest or level of understanding. It should also explain how the scale is to be used.
4. *Introduce the scale to the child.* Meet with the child one on one to introduce the concept via social story, memo or use another creative visual strategy that appeals to the child.
5. *Practice the scale with the child, revising as necessary.* Support the child as they practice the appropriate behavior or interaction by using the scale. In order to learn the scale successfully, the child must learn how to discriminate between each stage. Adults can help by identifying the number ratings associated with behaviors the child exhibits.

5	<p><u>I can't stand this and ready to explode.</u></p> <p>I want to hit someone, something, or throw something. I need an adult to help me go to a safe place so I can calm down.</p> 
4	<p><u>I am getting too angry.</u></p> <p>My brain isn't working clearly. I might say or do something I will be sorry for later. I need to go to my safe place to calm down.</p> 
3	<p><u>I am getting really irritated.</u></p> <p>I need to walk away from a bad situation. I will tell my teacher that I need a break.</p> 
2	<p><u>I am doing OK.</u></p> <p>I'm not pleased, but I'm not upset. I can stay where I am and keep working. I can control my anger by myself.</p> 
1	<p><u>I am doing great.</u></p> <p>I feel good about myself and about what is going on around me.</p> 

#	How does this feel?	What makes me feel this way?	How can I tell?
5	I could lose control!	When loud talking and laughing keep going. Loud yelling and cafeteria smells.	Too late!! I am screaming! <i>Emergency!! Stop talking. Close eyes. Deep breaths.</i>
4	This can really upset me	When the kids all laugh at one time. When I can't do my work. When I make a mistake.	I start swearing out loud. I say mean things to other people. I tear up my work. <i>Take a walk out of the room!</i>
3	This can make me nervous	When I hear the kids talking louder. When the chairs or desks scrape on the floor. When someone laughs out loud.	I say shut up real quietly. I start staring at the kids. My brain starts thinking about the other kids too much and I think they are talking about me! <i>Take break card to teacher</i>
2	This sometimes bothers me	The sound of rain on the roof. When I can't have my turn right away. Walking on the power walk.	My stomach kind of hurts. I think things aren't fair. I start repeating the TV Guide schedule.
1	This never bothers me	Doing my in a quiet place work. Reading a book. Watching TV.	My brain is relaxed. I am smiling. My mouth is relaxed. I am happy.

POWER CARD STRATEGY

Script: Visual aid that uses a child's special interest to help understand social situations, language, hidden curriculum. The script discusses the child's hero who experiences a problem similar to the one experienced by the child. A statement that tells why the positive behavior is needed for the hero is included. A 3-5 step strategy is then presented in the script outlining the problem-solving method used by the hero, including a description of how the hero experiences success with this strategy. The solution to the problem behavior is generalized back to the child and a note encouraging the child to try the new behavior is written into the script.

- Brief scenario written at the child's comprehension level using a favorite hero or special interest

Power Card: A business or trading card containing a picture of the special interest and solution to the problem. This card is designed to be portable to promote use across the many environments and eventually generalized. It can be velcroed to a notebook, locker, or corner of a desk. The script is reviewed many times during the day, particularly before an activity that may be frustrating for the student. The student doesn't carry this long script, he carries the Power Card as a reminder of how to calm down.

Ex: (favorite character) wants you to choose one of the following ways to help calm yourself:

1. Take 5 deep breaths, exhaling slowly after each breath.
2. Close your eyes and slowly count from 1-20.
3. Listen to your favorite music with your headphones on.
4. Go to a quiet place and look at books.
- 5.

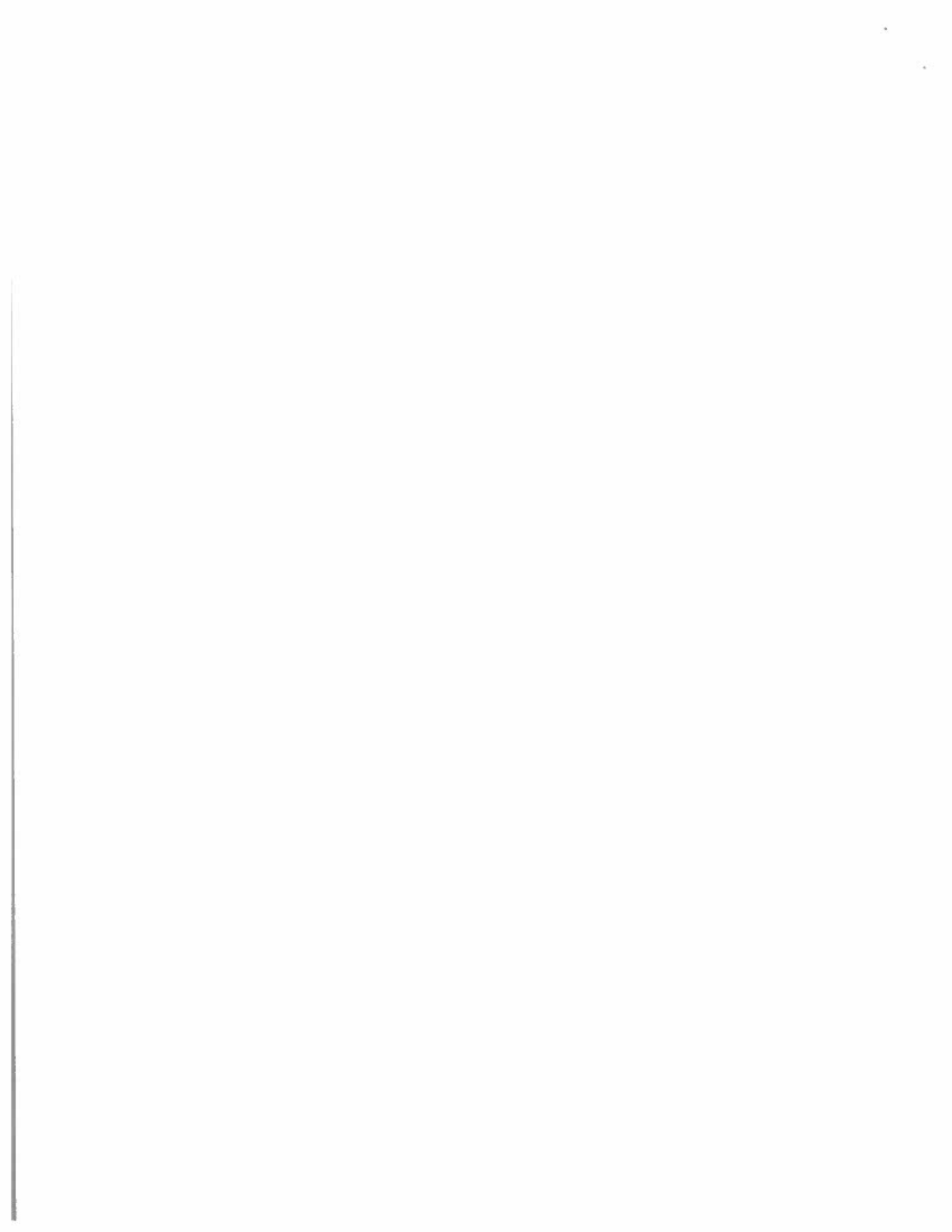
SOCIAL AUTOPSY (See handout): The Social autopsy approach is a problem-solving intervention aimed at the examination and inspection of a social error. The purpose is to aid children who have difficulty understanding social cues and social interactions, thereby turning these interactions into opportunities to learn.

Remember the Autopsy is:

- a supportive, structured, constructive strategy to foster social competence
- a problem-solving technique
- an opportunity for the child to participate actively in the process
- conducted by any significant adult in the child's environment (teacher, parent)
- conducted in a familiar, realistic, and natural setting
- most effective when conducted immediately after the social error

It is not:

- a punishment or scolding
- an investigation to assign blame
- controlled/conducted exclusively by an adult
- a one-time "cure" for teaching the targeted social skill



The Social Autopsy Approach

Category: Social/Emotional/Behavioral

Grade Level: All levels

1. What is the purpose of the Social Autopsy approach?

The Social autopsy approach is a problem-solving intervention aimed at the examination and inspection of a social error. The purpose is to aid children who have difficulty understanding social cues and social interactions, thereby turning these interactions into opportunities to learn.

2. With whom can it be used?

Lavoie (1994) developed this approach specifically for children with learning disabilities; these children, particularly those with non-verbal learning disabilities, often have deficits in social cognition. They appear to have difficulty accessing and decoding social cues, and often lack the understanding of the social demands of a particular social situation. However, this technique can also be used with all children who may be having difficulties with social skills.

3. What teaching procedures should be used with Social Autopsy approach?

A social autopsy is the examination of a social error in order to determine why it has occurred and how to prevent it from occurring in the future. The process involves asking the student what they think they did wrong and what their mistakes were. The active discussion and involvement of the student in the analysis will enable them to see the cause-and-effect relationship between the behavior and the consequences. This approach is thoroughly explained in Lavoie (1994) video, *Learning Disabilities and Social Skills: Last one picked... first one picked on*.

A social autopsy involves discussing the following:

- What the child did
- What happened when the child did it
- The direction of the outcome, (i.e. was it positive, negative, or neutral)
- What the child will do next time

Underlying the social autopsy approach are the following principles:

- All adults who come in contact with the student should be taught how to perform social autopsies (e.g., parents, teachers, bus drivers, peers, etc.).
- Social Autopsies should be conducted immediately following a social error.
- Social Autopsies should also be performed on positive social interactions to reinforce appropriate social behavior.
- Students should be aided in the identification and classification of their own feelings and emotions. Journals can be extremely effective for this goal.

Because these children may have difficulties correcting labeling and identifying emotions, The Kline scale (Lavoie, 1994) is included at the end of the booklet that accompanies the video. This scale provides lists of feelings with visual cues under three headings: sad, mad, glad.

Much of social interaction involves non-verbal cues. Many children may have deficiencies in these areas. Lavoie describes

three main areas that the Social Autopsy approach can target:

- **Kinesics:** reading body language and facial expressions. This also involves the inappropriate use of physical gestures.
- **Proxemics:** understanding of appropriate use of physical space, including standing too close to others.
- **Vocalics:** understanding the social nuances of voice volume, tone, and speed and what each communicates to others.

4. In what type of settings should Social Autopsy approach be used?

The Social Autopsy approach should be used with children who have difficulties with social skills, in all setting at all times, because all interactions between people are social interactions. There is no limited to where this approach can be used. Social Autopsies are generally conducted one-on-one.

5. To what extent has research shown the Social Autopsy approach to be useful?

There has been no research on the Social Autopsy approach per se. However, research investigating social skills interventions clearly demonstrate that necessary components of successful approaches involve teaching in context, as close as possible to real-life situations, with multiple significant people to promote generalization. The Social Autopsy approach achieves these goals. This approach is widely used and easily adaptable to fit individual children's needs.

References

1. Lavoie, R. (1994). [Video] Learning disabilities and social skills with Richard Lavoie: Last one picked... first one picked on. Washington, DC: WETA. (Distributed by PBS Video).

Stokes, B. F. & Baer, D. M. An implicit technology of generalization. Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis, 10, 349-367.