Using Games in Social Skills Groups  
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We’ve been running social skills groups consistently over the past year. We have found that incorporating games within the group session can help convey important messages as well as help the participants practice appropriate social skills in a non-threatening and fun way! Below is a list of a few games and how they have been used in our social skills groups.

- **Jenga** can be used to cover a variety of topics. We have attached labels with emotions to the pieces. When participants select a piece, we ask them to demonstrate the emotion or share a time when they felt that emotion. We have also put qualities of friends and boyfriends/girlfriends and had the participants sort the game pieces appropriately.

- **UNO** can be used to answer certain questions based on the number on the card they put down. For instance, all 1s are questions about favorite movies, 2s are about pets, etc. This is a great way for participants to get to know one another without feeling pressured to engage in a conversation. Or, you can have the topics based on colors and every time the color changes, a question is answered based on the topic associated with the new color.

- **Hot Potato** can be used to address a variety of topics. When the music stops, the person with the ball has had to identify whether a behavior or place was private or public. We have also identified appropriate places to meet someone to date while playing hot potato. This game can be used to cover topics/themes for a variety of groups.

- **5 Second Rule** is a great game to get people thinking. Participants select a card with a task (e.g. name 3 vegetables) and then the participant has 5 seconds to complete the task. It can be used with small groups and works on team building skills as well as auditory processing. There is a version for ages 10 and older as well as a junior version for those under the age of 10. We have even adapted the game and created our own version for the holidays!

- **Bingo** has been used at various times to work on auditory and visual processing as well as following instructions. We modify the Bingo card based on the theme of the group.

- **We have used playing catch** to demonstrate the back and forth nature of conversations. When one person is holding the ball, they ask a question and then throw the ball to their partner, who then answers the question, asks a new one, and then throws the ball back. They can even take steps back each time they ask a question to see how far apart they can get from each other during the conversation.

Games act as a warm-up so that the participants feel comfortable in a group setting. They also work on skills like taking turns, waiting/not interrupting, listening, and following instructions. All of these skills are important social skills that our loved ones with Down syndrome need to learn to successfully navigate the world around them.

Watch for our games groups that will begin in early 2018 for all ages!