



The iModeling Boundaries™ Model

Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) often have challenges understanding appropriate *affectionate communication*. When do you hug someone and when are you only allowed to show someone you care by placing a hand on someone's shoulder? And when are you expected to show empathy?

Having difficulty with this form of communication could be explained by a few underlying difficulties. Some children with ASD have difficulties with their sensory processing. Therefore children could be seeking the physical contact with the other person. In contrast, children may also be seeking to avoid physical contact. For children with ASD, the decreased Theory of Mind often leads to missed or misreading social cues therefore misunderstanding someone's feelings and intentions. This means that children can exhibit behaviours that are or perceived as inappropriate by others.

Rather than tackling the inappropriate behaviour it is important to address the underlying cause for the behaviour. The best way to do this is by explicitly teaching the skills you want the child to learn. In this case, communication skills and the social behaviour needed for teaching the child appropriate affectionate communication is addressed.

Children with ASD typically have difficulties in generalising skills. This means learned skills might not be transferred to new situations. To help the child with ASD to learn how to use appropriate affectionate communication an adaptation has been made to the Interpersonal Boundaries model.

The iMsocial™ boundaries model and iModeling Boundaries™ app supports children to learn appropriate affectionate communication and greetings between different people. The model is based on a visual and structured approach to teaching affectionate communication skills. However, the boundaries model allows for different greetings and touch in different circles.

When using the boundaries model, children will place people that they may come into contact with in the group that has the appropriate type of greeting or touch for that person. This model is further supported by the iModeling Boundaries™ app, which specifically focuses on different groups of people and the different kinds of affectionate communication and touch. This allows the child to learn what kind of touch is allowed for each group of people.

References

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