



Emotions

People experience a range of complex emotions. These emotions have an influence on the interactions between people. When you have a conversation you support your message by showing emotions. For example, when I tell my friend that my favourite toy is broken, I also have a frown on my face and my hands are clenched. This body language supports the message that I am angry about my toy being broken. Some of the body language in our interactions can be very subtle. Understanding the emotions expressed in a message is essential for a successful interaction.

Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) typically find it hard to understand, and express their own emotions. In particular, children with ASD may not be able to send a message with the correct emotion. Similarly, children with ASD may have difficulty interpreting and understanding someone else's emotion or the emotion attached to a message from another person. These issues can impact negatively on social interactions with other people and often create misinterpretations of messages.

The iMsocial™ program teaches children to use facial expressions to show different emotions. It also teaches children to use the correct body language for the emotion. Having these skills will allow children to learn how to support their messages with the correct emotions.

Equally, the iMsocial™ program utilises peers and other people in emotion-based activities in the program. This gives children the opportunity to learn what the same emotion looks like on different peoples faces. These activities enhance children's skills to read someone else's message correctly and supports children to have successful interactions.

Resources

Bauminger, N. (2002), 'The facilitation of social-emotional understanding and social interaction in high-functioning children with autism: Intervention outcomes', *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders*, 32:4, pp. 283-298.

Dodd, S. (2005), *Understanding Autism*, Marrickville: Elsevier, pp. 181-182.