



Episode 09: Social Skills In Treatment: Attuning and Teaching

Hosts: Tracy Stackhouse · Cory Dundon · Michelle Maunder



LISTENER NAME

DATE LISTENED

TOTAL LISTENING + REFLECTION TIME (MINS)

CPD HOURS CLAIMED



Episode Summary

Picking up from last episode's work on regulation and engagement, we move into the social-emotional capacities. Cory names a tension she has been sitting with: kids who have moved past basic regulation and now have their own ideas, but who get overwhelmed and sticky when she tries to add hers. The stickiness, she notices, often starts as a social challenge and only then spills into dysregulation, which raises the therapist's perennial question of how much to follow the child and how much to hold a line. Tracy reframes it through the layers of development, the DIR functional emotional developmental capacities and the spiralling continuum from Gilfoyle, Grady and Moore, showing how agency and reciprocity emerge separately at each level and do not always gel at once. When reciprocity tips into a power struggle, that imbalance is read as a slide into dysregulation, and the linchpin becomes co-regulation and trust. The conversation lands on Dan Hughes' PACE, the monster-game standoff, Michelle's story of a teen who simply needed to finish his thought, and Tracy's boy who asked her to stop talking over his thinking, all illustrating that explicit social strategies only take hold once the child is curious about their own problem. It sets up executive functions for next time.



Resources & Mentions

- The DIR functional emotional developmental capacities, the layered model used to locate where a child's social-emotional development actually sits.
- Gilfoyle, Grady and Moore, the spiralling continuum of development, showing agency and reciprocity emerging separately at each level.
- Dan Hughes' PACE (playfulness, acceptance, curiosity, empathy), the attuned stance for staying connected through a sticky or escalating moment.



Reflection Prompts

Take a few quiet minutes to consider each prompt and write freely. Add or remove a prompt block to suit the episode.

- 1 Once kids move past basic regulation into having their own play ideas, stickiness often comes from the social challenge first and dysregulation second, not the other way round. Where have you seen that order play out?

- 2 Agency and reciprocity emerge separately at each developmental level and do not always gel at once. For a child you're working with, which is further along, and how does naming the gap guide your just-right challenge?

- 3 When reciprocity tips into a power struggle, that imbalance is a regulation cue, the moment to hold the space rather than push. Recall a recent standoff: what might holding, rather than pressing, have opened up?

- 4 We argue pushing is rarely the answer and curiosity almost always is. Think of a moment you added your idea and a child went sticky: how could curiosity, rather than insistence, have kept you both connected?

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Explicit social teaching only sticks once the child is curious about their own problem. For a child you'd like to teach a social skill, how would you help them want it first, before you offer the strategy?
