



Study: The Effect of Skills Training on Classroom Measurements of Learning and Compliance

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Involved: The Life Excelerator Principal Owners
Lamar Consolidated School District

Participants: Students Aged 10 – 17

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Abstract

This study was completed in partnership with a Texas independent school district to determine the affects psychosocial skills training (life, personal accountability, communication, emotional control skills etc) would have on the participants and subsequently on the participant's learning capacity. The study was two-fold in nature with Provenio founders measuring skills levels and assigning training based upon need and the school district measuring impact on the students and learning environment as the skills were addressed.

Results confirmed a significant deficiency in basic skills by the individuals referred into training. However, it was demonstrated that the students were capable of learning these deficient skills and in fact sustained the progress of knowledge throughout the school year. The school district compared the percentage of classes passed, attendance, and the number of documented inappropriate behaviors for a group of the students and found significant progress in both classes passed and attendance. A significant drop in behavioral incidents was also determined.

This study makes the conclusion that the skills training program, LEAPS, is effective in remediating behaviors, improving individual student performance, and creating a more conducive environment for learning. These results were achieved in both an alternative educational site and a normalized classroom setting.

Rationale:

The following study was conducted to determine the efficacy of using social skills training as a behavioral intervention technique with both segregated behaviorally intensive youths and youths in mainstreamed classrooms. The practical aspect of the study was to use social skills training as an intervening process for behaviorally intensive students and as a proactive process for students who were not behaviorally involved but were deemed “at risk”.

Under the guise that behavioral disorders, learning issues, and reduced social/familial supports can be tied to social skills deficiency (San Miguel, Forness, & Kavale, 1996) the study was set to determine if social skills education and adjustment was assimilative and if it would impact academic indicators. Understanding that social skills deficits, much like learning disorders, can be tied to neurological dysfunctions (Boucher, 1986: Olivia & La Greca, 1988: Bryan, 1982)), and that poor classroom performance can negatively impact the self esteem of the student (Osman, 1987), and that students with poor self esteem tend to not undertake social opportunities (Gresham, 1988), and that many students with poor social skills have either a reduction in family support or a family environment that is provocative from a behavioral standpoint ((Wilchesky & Reynolds, 1986), the study measured the social skills functionality from a pre and post participation standpoint. These functionality measurements were compared to determine progress while the participating school district compared academic indicators for a select group from previous year participation to the participatory year.

Background:

In partnership with a Texas independent school district, a pilot program was initiated to use comprehensive psychosocial skills training for the basis of behavioral remediation, educational and classroom integration, and the advent of proper social functioning. This need was realized by the school district as it dealt with behaviorally intensive and disciplinarily recidivistic students. Because of the recidivistic nature of the student participants most other interventions and intervening modalities had been attempted without significant success.

Purpose of Study:

This study was conducted to determine the affect psychosocial skills training would have on school age children, aged 10-17, in regards to grades, attendance, and behavioral incidences. All participants were referred by the participating school district and were determined to be at risk of loss of educational placement due to persistent behavioral problems.

The study was conducted to determine the relevant impact of comprehensive psychosocial skills training on the behaviors, social ability, communication ability, and self-control of the individual participants. By measuring skills knowledge and attainment on a regular quarterly basis it could be determined if the facilitated learning of these psychosocial skills was taking place and if skills knowledge was maintained over the duration of a school year.

Concurrent to measuring the learning and attainment of psychosocial skills, the school district conducted a longitudinal study measuring the impact on grade, attendance, and behavioral incidences for participants. As these measurements were made, the school district then compared the results to the same measurements conducted the previous year for each student to determine progress or regression with the psychosocial skills training being the primary difference in educational approach.

- Hypothesis 1: It is hypothesized that the students who are referred for psychosocial skills training and are placed in an alternative school setting due to disciplinary and behaviorally recidivistic tendencies will have an assessed level of skills knowledge below the minimal acceptable level.
- Hypothesis 2: It is hypothesized that the individual students who attend school in an alternative setting for disciplinary and highly recidivistic students will increase knowledge, attainment, and assimilation of psychosocial skills training and these increases will persist over the duration of the study and will be validated through ongoing quarterly assessments.
- Hypothesis 3: It is hypothesized that the learning of, attainment of, and assimilation of psychosocial skills will have a positive impact on grades and attendance and will lower the measured number of classroom behavioral incidences.
- Hypothesis 4: It is hypothesized that the 95 individual participants who receive training in a normalized classroom setting will exhibit a greater base of psychosocial skills knowledge and attainment but will still have measured deficits of skills knowledge.
- Hypothesis 5: It is hypothesized that the 95 individuals who are participating in skills training in a normalized classroom setting will exhibit measured progress in skills knowledge, assimilation, and attainment.
- Hypothesis 6: It is hypothesized that utilizing a comprehensive psychosocial skills training protocol, specifically relevant skills for learning and classroom compliance can be determined for student participants and can be formed into a concise remediation and learning curriculum and assessment program.

Methodology:

Skills Training Attainment:

Participants: 134 participants were identified by the school district for involvement in the psychosocial skills training. Each participant

had exhibited persistent and/or intensive behavioral patterns that put future educational placement in jeopardy. The participating members of the group ranged in age from 10 to 17. All members resided in a home setting, participated in a standard educational program, and were taught psychosocial skills concurrently with other educational pursuits. Of the 134 participants, 39 participated at an alternative site campus with the remaining participants participating in a normalized classroom setting.

Assessment:

All 134 participants were assessed utilizing the skills need assessment of a comprehensive mental health rehabilitation skills training protocol. The needs assessment was deemed reliable utilizing the Pearson *r* as a correlation coefficient for inter-rater and test-retest reliability. The overall reliability of the instrument was determined to be .94 overall with a test-retest reliability of .88 and an inter-rater reliability of .87 which shows a significant level of reliability in both overall performance and subset measured performance. These determinations of reliability were completed in a separate study.

Upon entry into the psychosocial skills training program each participant was assessed to determine a baseline of psychosocial skills knowledge. Each participant then took part in skills training in both individual and group formats. Reassessments occurred every 12 weeks. The initial results were compared to each quarter's measurements for a determination of primary needs. When acceptable progress was made in moving the level of skills knowledge beyond the minimal acceptable level of knowledge the focus would shift to secondary needs, then tertiary needs, etc.

Finally, upon completion of the study a final assessment was completed and compared back to the initial assessment results to determine sustained skill knowledge.

Intervention:

Each participant was taught psychosocial skills utilizing a comprehensive mental health rehabilitation program. The program taught 315 skills clustered into 20 different functional groups and 107 different individual sessions. Because the treatment protocol was written primarily for adults many of the 315 skills were exempted from the study creating a core of 109 relevant skills.

All participants took part in psychosocial skills training in both classroom or group settings as well as individual settings. All sessions were curriculum driven and were relevant to assessed needs. Each session was purposeful in teaching a specific skill and

then providing the participants the opportunity to try the skill in an *in vivo* format.

The participants maintained placement in the study throughout the duration of the school year. Many members, upon satisfactory progress, moved from receiving both individual and group modalities to a single modality but participation was maintained as was ongoing measurements.

Longitudinal Impact:

Participants: The school district randomly selected 6 individual students for a records review for determination of longitudinal classroom impact. Each participant participated in the skills training protocol and each participant was also part of the assessment process.

Timeline: The measurements for the participants were completed over the course of a single school year and were compared to the prior year's results of the same measurements.

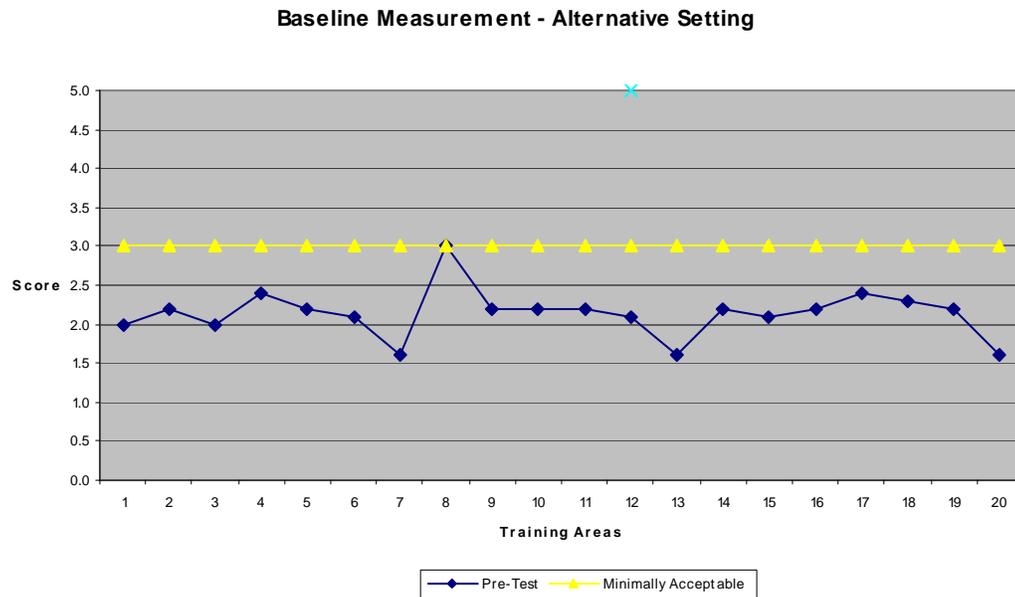
Study: The school district measured the following three categories for each participant:

- Percent of Classes Passed
- Attendance
- Classroom Behavioral Incidences

Data Analysis:

Hypothesis 1: It is hypothesized that the students who are referred for psychosocial skills training and are placed in an alternative school setting due to disciplinary and behaviorally recidivistic tendencies will have an assessed level of skills knowledge below the minimal acceptable level.

Conclusion 1: Each participant was assessed for a baseline of psychosocial skills knowledge and it was determined there was a definite deficiency in knowledge.

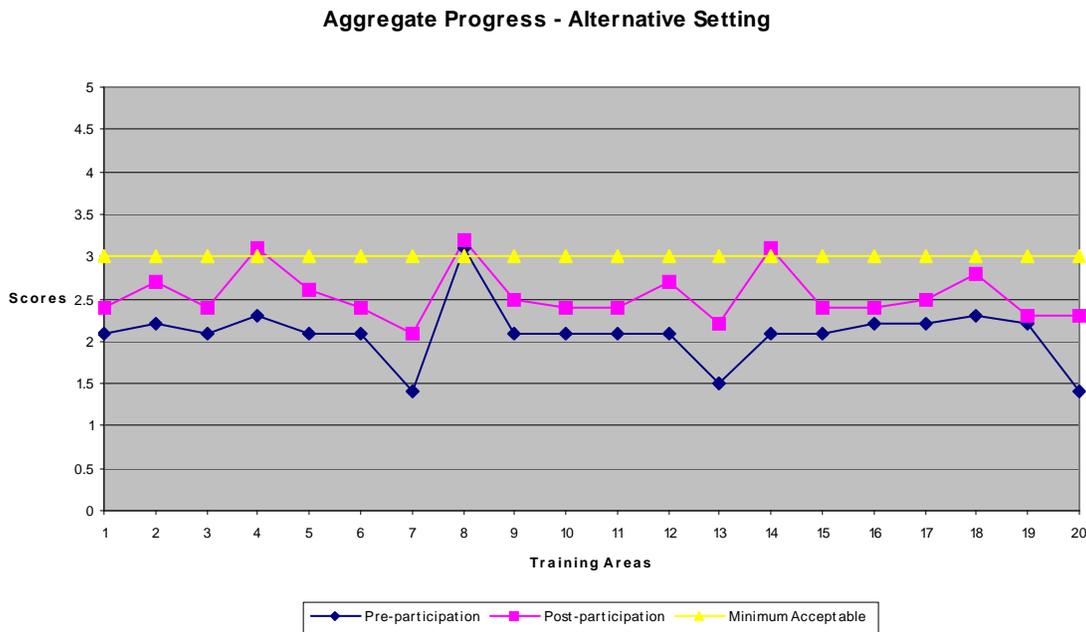


This graph demonstrates the level of skills knowledge for the 20 skills grouping measurements. For the purpose of this assessment, 3 is the normed minimum acceptable level of skills knowledge and, as is represented, only 1 category of skills approached that minimum threshold.

Result: It can be concluded that individual students who exhibit persistent behaviorally intensive patterns of presentation have a psychosocial skills deficit.

Hypothesis 2: It is hypothesized that the individual students who attend school in an alternative setting for disciplinary and highly recidivistic students will increase knowledge, attainment, and assimilation of psychosocial skills training and these increases will persist over the duration of the study and will be validated through ongoing quarterly assessments.

Conclusion 2: A post participation assessment was completed on a quarterly basis to determine current psychosocial skills knowledge. This level of skills knowledge was then compared to the baseline for a statement of progress.

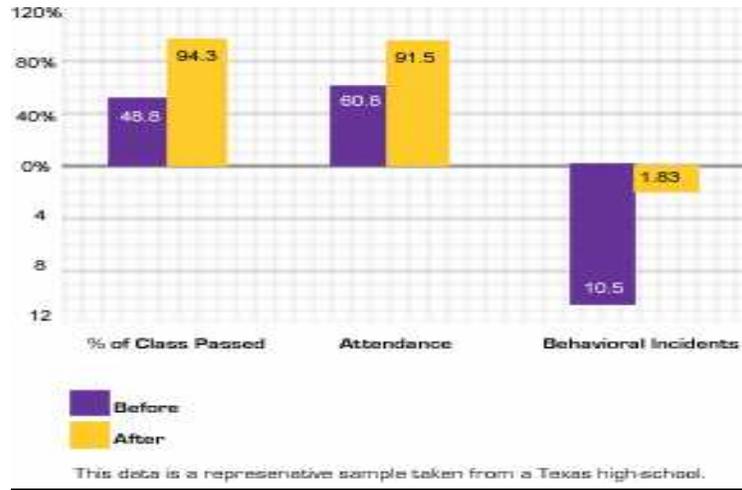


This graph represents the pre and post participation levels of skills knowledge for all skills training participants. The measurements are an aggregate of the entire group and represent the sustained knowledge increase over the course of the study

Result: It can be concluded that the participants in this study showed a sustained level of skills procurement and knowledge of an aggregate mean of 22% above the initial baseline. From these results it can be concluded that behaviorally intensive students are capable of learning psychosocial skills and sustaining that knowledge in excess of a school year.

Hypothesis 3: It is hypothesized that the learning of, attainment of, and assimilation of psychosocial skills will have a positive impact on grades and attendance and will lower the measured number of classroom behavioral incidences.

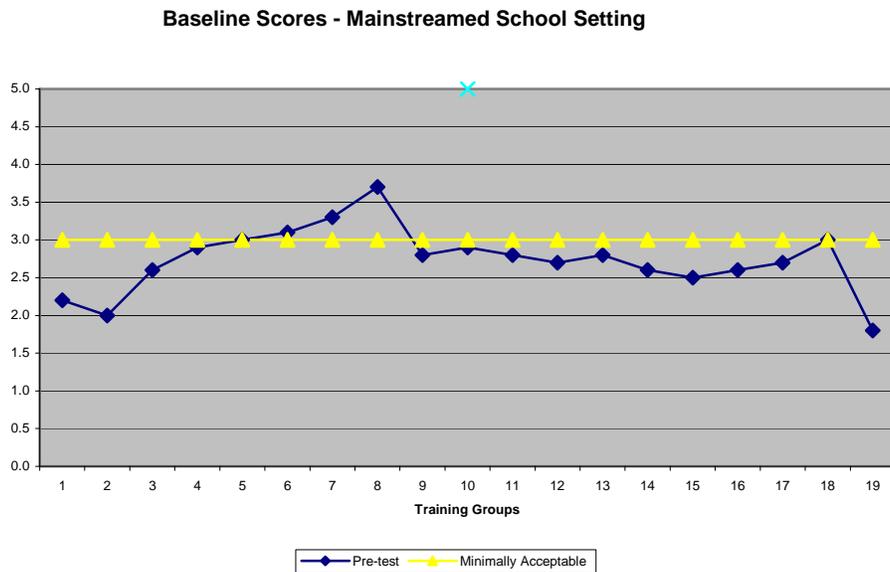
Conclusion: The school district completed three measurements for the designated participants and then compared those measurements to prior year. The following represents the measured improvements:



Results: As indicated above, it can be concluded that significant progress was made in the percent of classes passed (48.8% to 94.3%) and attendance (60.8% to 91.5%). It can also be concluded that a significant drop in measured behavioral incidents is noted (10.5 per reporting period to 1.83). The conclusion of the school district and of this study is that the attainment of psychosocial skills has a direct positive impact on these measurements of classroom compliance.

Hypothesis 4: It is hypothesized that the 95 individual participants who receive training in a normalized classroom setting will exhibit a greater base of psychosocial skills knowledge than those individuals in an alternative educational setting for behaviorally intensive students.

Conclusion: A baseline of skills knowledge was determined for those individuals in a normalized classroom.

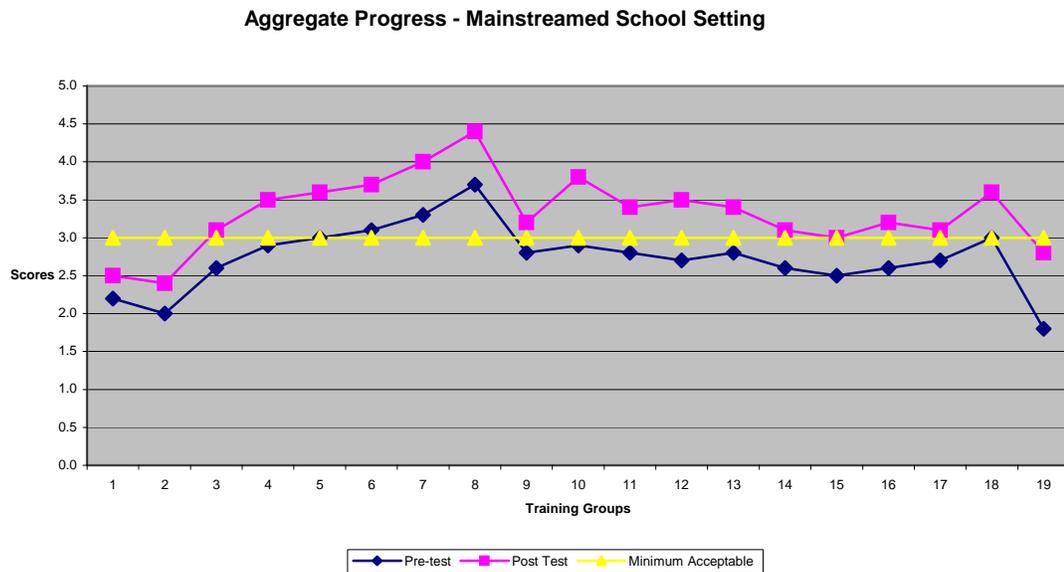


This graph represents the pre participation measurements for those individuals participating in psychosocial skills training in a normalized classroom. The measurements indicates an increased baseline of skills knowledge for students in a normalized classroom setting rather than an alternative setting for students who are behaviorally intensive with recidivistic tendencies.

Results: It can be concluded that students in a normalized classroom setting have a higher baseline of measured psychosocial skills than those students in an alternative setting for behaviorally intensive students. The results also indicate that students in a normalized classroom setting still have measured baseline deficits of skills knowledge below the minimum level of acceptable skills.

Hypothesis 5: It is hypothesized that the 95 individuals who are participating in skills training in a normalized classroom setting will exhibit measured progress in skills knowledge, assimilation, and attainment.

Conclusion: A sub-group mean was determined for those individuals in a normalized classroom setting to determine the attainment of psychosocial skills within this training format.



This graph represents the pre and post participation measurements for those individuals participating in psychosocial skills training in a normalized classroom. The measurements are an aggregate of all participants within the normalized classroom setting and represent a sustained increase in psychosocial skills knowledge of and aggregate mean of 22%.

Results: It can be concluded that a normalized classroom is a legitimate setting for both the teaching and learning of psychosocial skills. It can be concluded that the learning environment for education standards is also conducive for a learning environment for life preparedness skills.

Hypothesis 6: A specific set of psychosocial skills can be determined and differentiated from the typical psychosocial skills afforded to adult populations.

Conclusion: Through the study it was determined that specific psychosocial skills impacted the participants in a positive manner and were directly relevant to the age, functionality, and needs of the participants. The specific skills are attached as exhibit 1.

Results: It can be concluded that there are specifically relevant psychosocial skills that will have a positive impact on both skills knowledge and attainment and classroom performance.

Summary:

The individuals who participated in this study benefited from both skills attainment and in classroom performance. It can be concluded that psychosocial skills training is a viable modality for the remediation of inappropriate behaviors in both an alternative and normalized classroom setting. It can further be determined that as skills knowledge, attainment, and assimilation improves so do the basic educational measurements of classroom performance.

As a result of this study, an assessment and curriculum packet specifically designed for the needs of students within alternative and normalized classroom settings was created. LEAPS, a comprehensive skills training protocol replete with 109 specific skills lessons and assessments, was designed specifically for the needs of teachers, counselors, and other educators who are working to remediate behaviors, increase learning capacity, and create a more conducive learning environment. LEAPS is a direct result of the success of the skills training approach coupled with the input from educators as to format, delivery, and availability.

Exhibit 1

I. Friends

- 1) Making New Friends
- 2) The Responsibility of Friendship
- 3) Helping a Friend in Need
- 4) Recognizing the Inappropriate Behaviors of Friends
- 5) Saying NO to a Friend
- 6) Friends and Family
- 7) Being a Friend vs Being Used
- 8) Friends and the Classroom

II. Stress and Anxiety

- 1) Understanding Stress
- 2) The Relaxation Technique
- 3) Controlling the Day
- 4) Dealing with Acute and Severe Stress
- 5) Coping with Personal Disabilities
- 6) Dealing with Personal Loss
- 7) The Stress of a Conflict
- 8) The Stress of the Classroom
- 9) Calming Down when Taking a Test

III. Respecting Self and Others

- 1) Understanding Respect
- 2) Liking Yourself and Building Self Esteem
- 3) Knowing What I Need, Understanding What I Want
- 4) Making a Mistake
- 5) Showing Respect for Other People
- 6) Using Language to Convey Respect
- 7) How People Judge Our Actions
- 8) Respecting Someone Else's Property
- 9) The Process of Sharing
- 10) Having a Better Attitude
- 11) When Someone Else is Wrong
- 12) Recognizing Cultural and Racial Differences
- 13) The Repercussions of Racial Intolerance
- 14) Having Personal Pride in Your Heritage
- 15) Living with Diversity: School and Community
- 16) Setting Personal Standards
- 17) Defining Personal Expectations and Quality

IV. School Rules

- 1) The Authority of the School
- 2) Defining Serious Misconduct
- 3) The Rights and Responsibilities of the Student

- 4) Standard of Conduct: Dress and Communication
- 5) Standard of Conduct: Resources and Privileges
- 6) School Discipline / Accountability

V. Hygiene

- 1) Understanding the Need for Good Personal Hygiene
- 2) Defining Personal Hygiene
- 3) Clothes and Grooming

VI. Anger and Emotional Management

- 1) Understanding Personal Emotions
- 2) Calming Down in Hostile Situations
- 3) Controlling Yourself
- 4) Silent Emotional Management
- 5) Recognizing and Avoiding Potential Problems
- 6) Applying Emotional Management Skills
- 7) Contact with an Angry Person
- 8) Overcoming Classroom Fear
- 9) Preventing Jealousy from Overriding Judgment

VII. Communication and Presentation

- 1) The Process of Personal Communication
- 2) Personal Space
- 3) Appropriate Conversation
- 4) How Your Appearance Communicates Your Attitude
- 5) Talking to Strangers
- 6) Communicating One on One
- 7) Communicating with a Teacher/Boss
- 8) Communicating with the Opposite Sex
- 9) Body Language
- 10) Communicating by Listening
- 11) Self Expression
- 12) The Process of Group Communication
- 13) Using Manners in a Crowd
- 14) Being Aware of Other People
- 15) Receiving Communication / Hearing Someone Else
- 16) Reading Body Language
- 17) When Someone Says NO
- 18) Receiving Instructions
- 19) Receiving Compliments
- 20) Receiving Criticism

VIII. Decision and Consequences: Accountability

- 1) Decision Making Process
- 2) Making Informed Decisions
- 3) Decisions and Consequences

- 4) Problem Solving Process
- 5) Living with a Mistake
- 6) Understanding Personal Responsibility
- 7) Growing: Maturity and Independence
- 8) Reactions Leading to Consequences
- 9) Personal Accountability: Proactive Problem Solving

IX. Managing Time and Attention

- 1) The Need for Time Management
- 2) Balancing Fun and Work
- 3) Goal Setting for Task Completion
- 4) Setting Priorities
- 5) Scheduling and Personal Mandates
- 6) Time Management and Friends
- 7) The Need for Attention
- 8) Focusing on the Task at Hand
- 9) Self Discipline
- 10) Managing Distractions
- 11) Managing Personal Limitations within Time Parameters
- 12) Multi-Tasking
- 13) Attention Exercises

X. Social Life

- 1) Setting Personal Goals for a Social Life
- 2) How Others People's Perception Affect Your Social Ability
- 3) Setting Personal Boundaries
- 4) How Emotions effect Your Social Life
- 5) Finding Common Interests with others
- 6) Asking for a Date
- 7) Going on a Date
- 8) Saying NO (Respecting Yourself)
- 9) Understanding NO (Respecting Your Date)
- 10) Reading the People Around You
- 11) Understanding Your Community: The Positives
- 12) Understanding Your Community: The Negatives
- 13) Public Expectations for Behavior
- 14) Social Expectations for Physical Communication
- 15) Social Expectations for Verbal Communication

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