

*National Institute for the Empowerment of Persons
with Intellectual Disabilities (NIEPID)*

Manovikas Nagar, Secunderabad-500009



Empowering Parents: Social Skills Training for Persons with Intellectual Disabilities

**Department of Rehabilitation
Psychology**

What are Social Skills?



Social skills are set of verbal and nonverbal skills used to interact and communicate with one another such as-

- *greeting others,*
- *sharing,*
- *taking turns,*
- *asking for help,*
- *using gestures to communicate and*
- *making friends.*

- Social skills are necessary to form and maintain positive relationships with others and adjust well in the environment.
- These skills may be acquired through gradual learning and are *largely influenced by parents, family members, teachers, friends and community.*



Why Social Skills are Important?

- *Appropriate social behaviours are necessary for any person to be an acceptable member of the society.*
- **Well-developed social skills can help children with Intellectual disabilities acquire –**
 - **strong and positive peer relationships,**



- succeed in school, and
- begin to successfully explore adult roles such as employee, co-worker, family and community member.



Adult with Intellectual Disability as an Employee

❖ **Social skills should be taught systematically.**

❖ **The training should be started very early in life.**



Social Skills and Children with Intellectual Disabilities

- ❖ Generally, children without disabilities learn social skills as they grow, but children with Intellectual disability learn slowly.



❖ The reasons for social skills deficits in children with Intellectual disabilities are-

❖ Deficits in cognitive skills, lack of opportunities and training.



❖ **Parents, family members and teacher's need to provide guidance and exposure for children with Intellectual disabilities to practice social skills.**



❖ **This will enhance their social participation and interaction which makes him/her well adjusted individual of the society.**

What are the various Social Skills?

- **Obeying commands**
- **Sharing**
- **Initiating and sustaining conversation**
- **Cooperating**
- **Using 'Please' 'Thank you' and sorry appropriately**
- **Saying 'No'**

What are the various Social Skills?

- **Asking help**
- **Taking turns**
- **Observation skills**
- **Behaving appropriately with opposite gender**
- **Making friends**
- **Participating in social situations**
- **Developing hobbies and Interests**

Guidelines for Parents in Teaching Social Skills to Children with Intellectual Disabilities



Parents are the role models for their children.
Parents need to practice the appropriate social behaviours at home for their children with Intellectual Disabilities to imitate.



❖ **Start Early-** Social skills training should begin at early age.

–**For example:** teaching smiling in response, reaching familiar people, playing with other children, expressing feelings, and performing for others.



Expressing Feelings: Mother is training child to clap his hands when he feels happy

❖ *Treat your child with respect and insist that other family members also do the same.*

If your child is treated with respect, he will show respect for others which is essential for building social relationships.



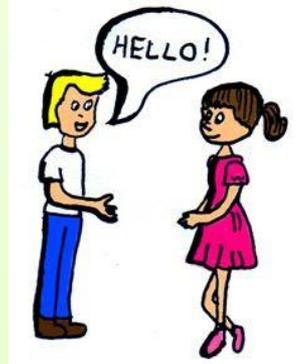
❖ *Parents need to develop a strong social network and try to expose the child to as many people as possible.*

❖ *The more people your child meets, it is more likely that he/she will learn the interaction skills and overcome shyness.*



❖ Provide opportunities for the child to practice the learnt social skills like-

- *greeting,*
- *asking for help,*
- *sharing*
- *taking turn in group activities,*
- *smiling when meeting a friend,*
- *paying attention to the person who is speaking and*
- *asking other children to play a game.*



<p>sharing</p>	<p>I like to play with my toys</p>
<p>but sometimes other kids want to play with my toys</p>	<p>I need to share my toys</p>

❖ *Parents need to encourage the efforts of the child and praise instead of pointing at the mistakes done by the child.*

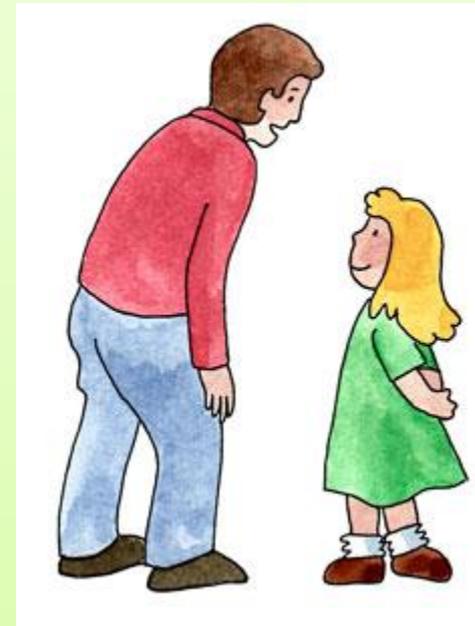


How to teach various Social Skills?



Obeys Commands

- Give simple and specific instructions when asking a child to do something.
- Initially select simple commands which the child likes to do.
- For example:
 - telling the child to *call someone*,
 - *to play with a toy*,
 - *to bring something which he likes*.



- **Gradually, start giving commands related to proper social behaviours like reminding him to ask permission before using other's things, sharing his things and following rules.**
- **Appreciate him/her immediately when he/she obeys.**

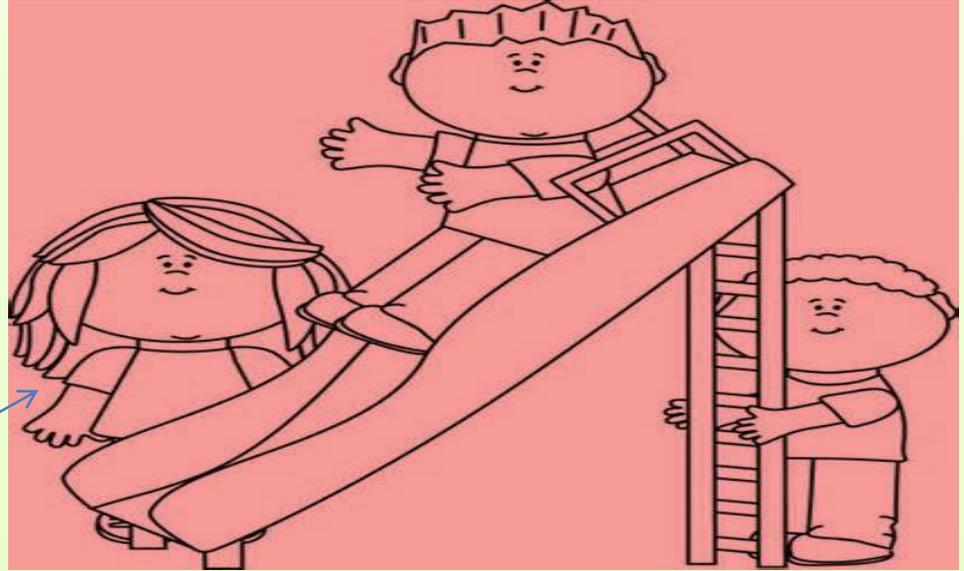


Father appreciating the child for obeying commands .

Waits for his/her Turn

- Parents need to train the child to wait for his/her turn.
- **For example**, when parents take their child to the park and if another child is already in swing, they need to explain the child to wait until the other child completes his turn.

- Show the child, others who are waiting for their turn.



In this picture, child is waiting for the other child to complete his turn.

- At meal time parent need to explain the child to wait when food is being served to others.

- ❖ At the shopping centre parents can ask the child to wait till the shop-keeper settles the accounts with a customer before him.



Child with Disability waiting in a queue.

- ❖ Praise him when he/she takes turns.

Making Friends



- **Provide opportunities for child to play where several children are present.**
- **Let him play with child he chooses. Initially parents can guide the child through modeling how to initiate conversation with a friend.**

- **Parents need to encourage the child with Intellectual disability to talk about his friends.**
- **Occasionally let child take an extra chocolate or biscuit to school to give to a friend.**
- **Do not force the child to play with children whom they do not know.**

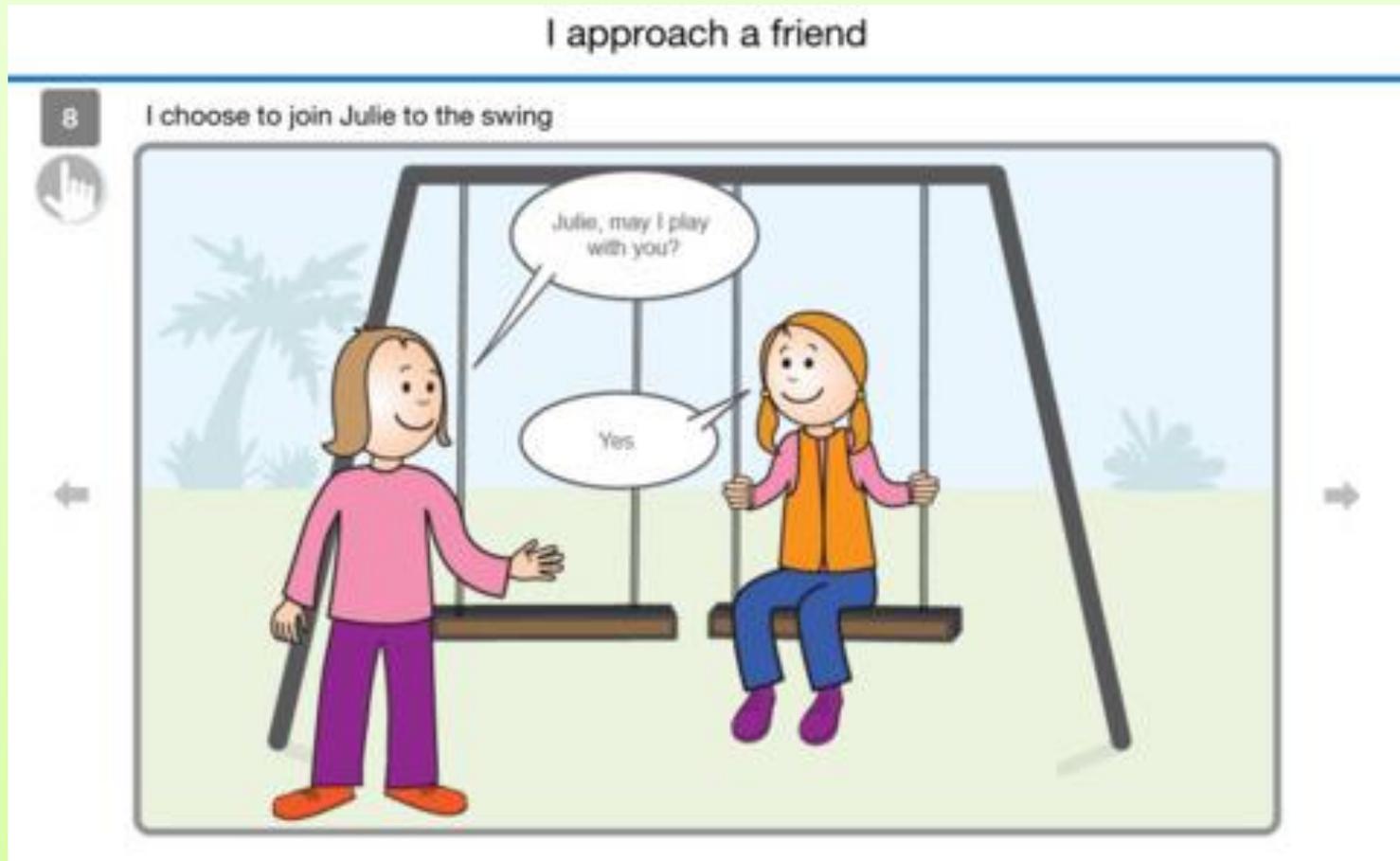
**Meena, Say
Hi, Shall we
play ball game?**

**Hi, shall we
play ball
game?**

Parent teaching child how to Interact with Friends

For example:

- Teaching introducing oneself:
 - *Hello, my name is Julie, What is your name?*
 - *Shall we play Sea-saw?*



Initiating and Sustaining Conversation

- **Parents need to train the child with Intellectual disability to initiate a conversation, initially mother or father can initiate conversation by asking the child about his day at school or play time.**

- Many children with Intellectual disabilities through the school system are used to question/answer type conversations such as:

- "How are you?" - "Fine."
- "And what did you do?" - "Colouring."
- What you ate? – Rice/dal.
- Do you like it? - Yes/no

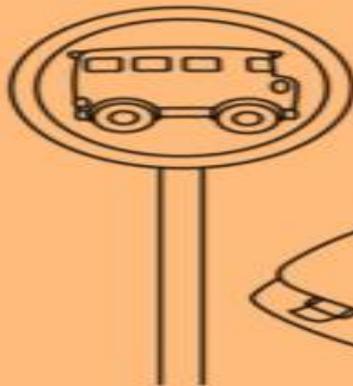
- In this type of conversation, the questions are direct. Sometimes this is because the child with intellectual disability may not be interested in interacting.

- Parents need to train the child to narrate his experience or his/her likes and dislikes *by talking about their own experiences and activities first and expecting the child to listen and respond.*
- **For Example:** Every day whenever possible, mother or father can explain what they did during the day at home or office and encourage the child to narrate about his own.

Asking Questions



by _____



I played with my new puppy last night.

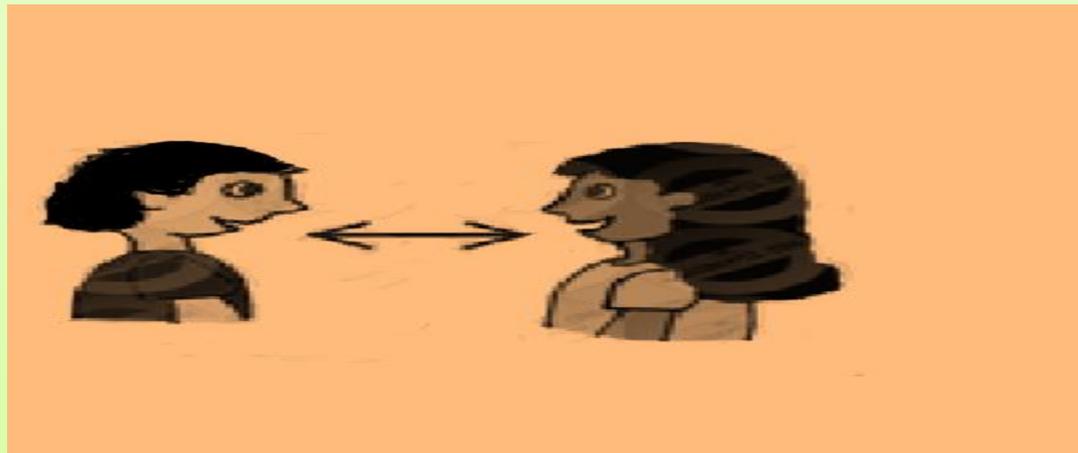
I can ask a friend, "What did you do last night?"
My friend will enjoy telling me a story about his evening.

Child is Initiating the Conversation

Behaves Appropriately with Opposite Gender

- **As the child grows, it is important to train him to behave appropriately with the opposite gender.**
- **Train him/her for proper behaviours with brothers and sisters at home.**
- **When friends/ relatives visits your home, if the child with intellectual disability is a boy train him to receive and wish a girl and vice versa.**

- Instead of keeping him/her away from the persons in the opposite gender, expose him to such situations under supervision so that he develops acceptable manners.
- Explain the child and demonstrate that physical distance is maintained when one interacts with persons of other gender.

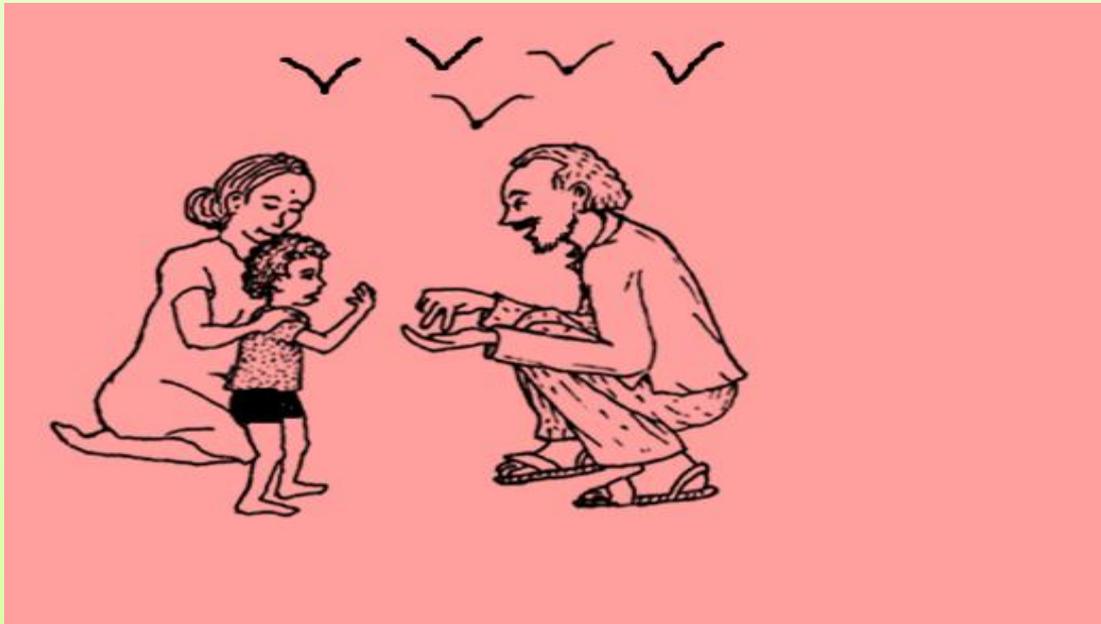


Encourage Observation Skills.

- ❖ **Being able to accurately observe the environment is important to understand nonverbal signals, and children with intellectual disability can have trouble with observation.**

Ways of encouraging observation include:

- Draw the child's attention to particular object/person/ activity when he appears to be inattentive.
- e.g., "Look at that tree!"
- "Can you hear the birds?"



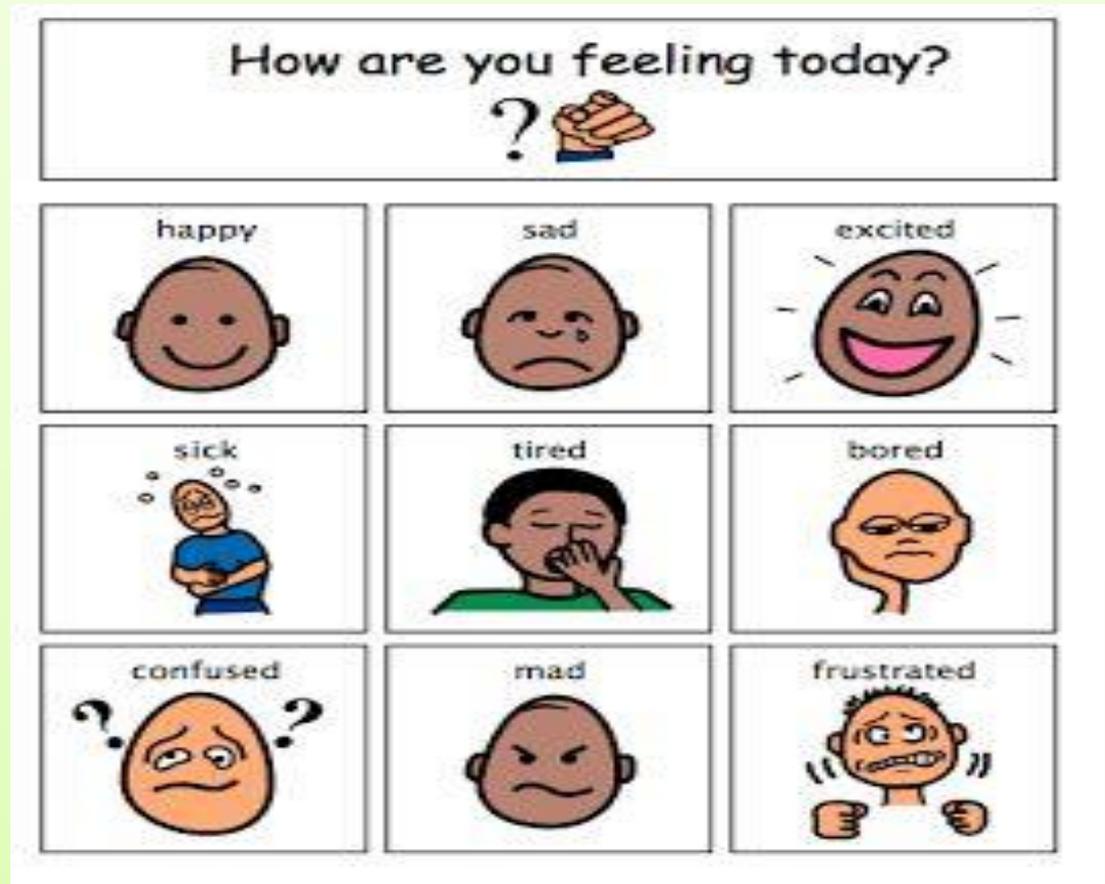
❖ **Encourage the child to respond to the environment.**

- e.g., "Do you like this flower?"
- Which flower do you like best?"

❖ **Asking your child what he saw.**

- e.g., "What did you notice when you walked to school today?"

❖ At a later stage, parents can train the child to observe pictures of people and actions depicting different emotions.



❖ Child needs to identify the nonverbal behaviors like body posture, hand movements, facial expressions to analyze the situation.

Encouraging Hobbies and Interests

- Children with Intellectual disabilities need hobbies and interests so they have something to talk about and hobbies also improves the social interaction skills.
- For ex: Drawing and painting, art/craft, music/dance and collecting toys/ pictures. Parents need to help their children to identify their interest and pursue them.



Parents need to identify the Interests of the child and encourage him/her to pursue their hobbies.

Teaching Appropriate Behavior in Social Situations

- **Parents are required to explain the child with intellectual disability ways to respond in different social situations.**
- **Parents can model the expected social behaviour through modelling, role play, rehearsal and feedback. for ex: receiving guests,**

Role Play:

- Child with intellectual disability can be encouraged to engage in role play.
- Role play is a method where the child is given a chance to “act out” and practice real life situations.
- Role playing allows students to take on roles, provide feedback to one another, and practice new skills. It helps the child to gain confidence to handle the same situations in real life.
- **For example:** reacting to strangers, asking for help and ways to interact with opposite gender.
Parents can act as stranger and child with Intellectual disability can be helped to learn appropriate ways of responding.

Social Stories:

- ❖ **Social stories are pictorial stories that depict life situations.**
- ❖ **Social stories model appropriate social interaction by describing a situation with relevant social cues, other's perspectives, and a suggested appropriate response.**
- ❖ **The stories can be used to teach various social skills like, making friends, asking for help, reacting to strangers .**



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Why You Should Use Social Story Telling



Social



stories



can



help



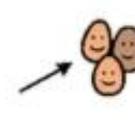
people



understand



how



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should behave,



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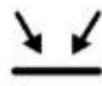
happen,



and



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stressful



situations.

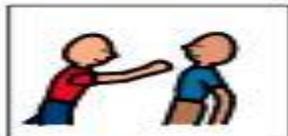
- **Social stories can be prepared by parents and teachers with pictures along with the description.**
- **The stories should be in simple, short and in easily understandable language.**
- **Parents can ask the child with intellectual disability to read out the story related to particular skill or parent can read out the story for the child.**



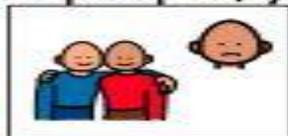
When I'm Frustrated



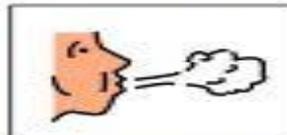
Sometimes I get really frustrated and mad.



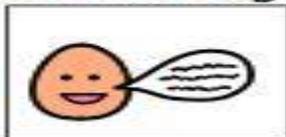
I want to throw things, hit people, yell, and cry.



If I act that way I can get in trouble and people won't want to be my friend.



When I am frustrated, I need to take a deep breath. I can ask for a break, take a walk, get a drink of water, or put my head down.



I tell people around me, "I am frustrated right now." I use my words. Soon I will feel better.

Social story about how to react when the child is frustrated

❖ Incomplete stories involving social judgment can be read to the child. Ask the child to complete the story and encourage him when he makes efforts.

❖ Provide opportunities for the child to discuss consequences of certain behaviours such as –

-Interruptions while someone is speaking,



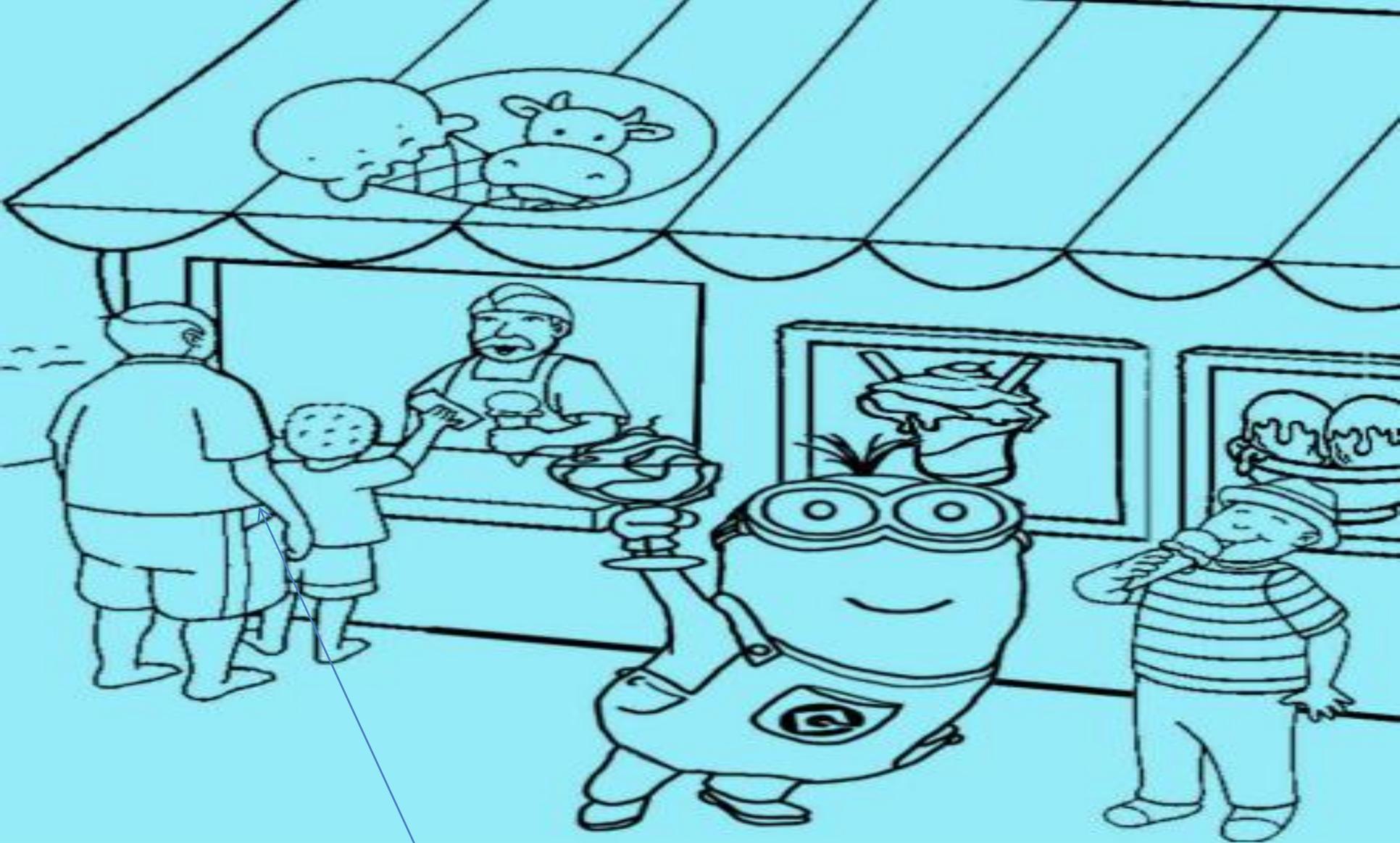
- Child hitting another child while playing a game, or making a face when asked to do something.



- This gives the child practice in considering cause-effect relationships in social interactions

Practicing in Real Life Situations

- **Social skills training in real life situations is the most effective as people with intellectual difficulties may struggle with generalization.**
- **The child can be taken to a real life situation, like the shopping mall, or the post office where he is asked to do a task like buy food items from shopping mall or buy stamps .**
- **The parent can go with the child and prompt him whenever required. After a couple of times, the child may be confident to do the task without support.**

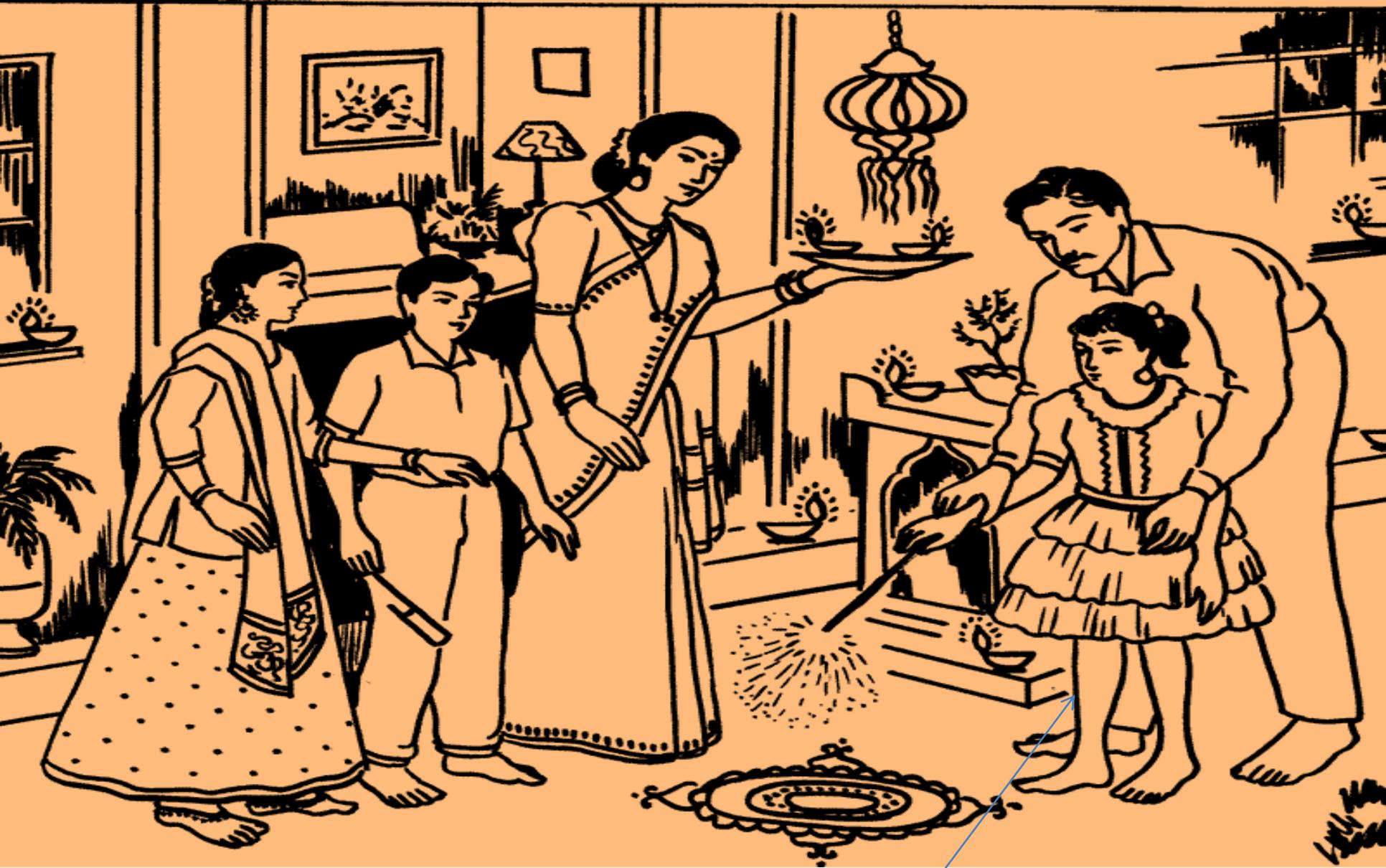


Parent helping the child to buy Ice cream from a parlour

Encourage your Child to Join Group Conversations.

❖ Parents need to involve the child in group conversations. If the child sits quietly, ask his opinion and encourage him to say something.

For example: while planning to decorate the house for family functions and festivals ask what the child likes to do.



Parents need to encourage the child to participate in family festivals



Parent engaging the child in family conversation

- **With the attempts of parents and teachers Children with Intellectual Disabilities can learn and practice social skills.**



- Finally, social skills training will reduce maladaptive behaviors in children with intellectual disabilities and in turn improves their quality of life.

★ These are only guidelines ,please consult a professional psychologist for further programming ★