



# The Stop & Think

# SOCIAL SKILLS

## PROGRAM



Howard M. Knoff, Ph.D.

Revised Edition

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# Preface



My goal in writing this *Stop & Think Social Skills Program Teacher's Manual* was to provide teachers across the country with an effective, proven way to teach their early to middle elementary-aged students the social skills that will help them become more successful socially, academically, and behaviorally. Following the nationally recognized sound principles and procedures of Project ACHIEVE, which is described in detail in Appendix A, the lessons in this manual will guide you, step by step, in:

- Teaching important social skills to your students using simple, effective, age-appropriate procedures that have been successfully implemented in hundreds of school districts across the country.
- Using a consistent “script” as you teach your students each skill and practice the skill with them.
- Demonstrating correctly the social skills that you are teaching, using real-life situations that occur in the classroom and school, and practicing the skills with your students until they can perform them with less and less prompting over time.
- Using the teaching steps and social skills scripts consistently and giving your students incentives to make Good Choices and consequences when they make Bad Choices.
- Helping your students use the skills in different places, with different people, and at different times of the day.

All of the lessons follow the Stop & Think process, in which students are taught to stop and think about how they want to handle a situation before acting, decide whether they want to make a Good Choice or a Bad Choice, think about the steps they need to follow or the Good Choices available to them for carrying out the Good Choice behavior, put their plan into action, and positively reinforce themselves for doing a good job.

The interpersonal, problem-solving, and conflict resolution skills you will teach your students using the Stop & Think process start with the listening, following directions, asking for help, ignoring distractions, and dealing with teasing skills, and other skills that your students need to master. As your students continue to learn and use the skills in the *Stop & Think Social Skills Program*, they will be able to make more Good Choices, more easily and then more independently. Over time, they will become more effective self-managers, which will help them at school, at home, and in the community.

Altogether, there are four *Stop & Think Teachers' Manuals*: one for teachers at the preschool to early elementary school level; one for teachers at the early to middle elementary school level; one for teachers at the middle to late elementary school level; and this one, written for teachers at the middle school to early high school level. Each manual focuses on skills that are relevant and needed by students in the targeted age-group. By teaching your students the lessons in the relevant manual, you will provide them with the skills they need to be more successful in school and more prepared for life.

Howard M. Knoff, Ph.D.

# Overview of This Manual

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This *Stop & Think Social Skills Program Teacher's Manual* is divided into three parts. The first, "Orientation and Introduction to the Stop & Think Process," begins with a discussion of why it is important to teach social skills to your students, and it then introduces the ten social skills considered to be most important for students at the middle school to early adolescent level. The discussion then turns to factors that will be crucial to your teaching success. You'll find that learning the skill steps and the social skills teaching process is important, but just as important are (1) having a strong accountability system in place and (2) teaching with consistency. Indeed, these factors are so important that they are discussed not only in the Introduction but throughout the manual. The Introduction concludes with an explanation of the Stop & Think process used for teaching the social skills and the five important teaching elements:

- Teaching the skills
- Modeling the skills
- Role playing the skills
- Providing performance feedback
- Transferring the training by prompting and having your students use the skills as much as possible during the day

Part II, which makes up the bulk of the manual, begins with an explanation of the two-week schedule and process for teaching the social skills. This is followed by the actual lessons, where you will learn, step by step, how to teach your students the ten core social skills. Skill steps are also provided for ten advanced skills that your students will need as they grow older. The remaining sections of Part II introduces additional social skills that your students may need, as well as classroom and building routines that, like the social skills, can be effectively taught with the Stop & Think process.

Part III provides suggestions for making the Stop & Think process work most effectively. Topics covered include good ways to talk with your students when using the Stop & Think process; how to teach social skills on a schoolwide basis; how to develop your year-long social skills calendar; how to facilitate the transfer of training across time, settings, people, and situations; and, finally, how to evaluate the process to make sure it is being implemented effectively.

The book concludes with three appendices that contain highly useful information. Appendix A is an overview of Project ACHIEVE, which provides the foundation for the Stop & Think process. Appendix B contains important background information on child development as it relates to teaching social skills as well as on accountability, consistency, and punishment. You are strongly encouraged to read this information. The many suggestions provided will help you improve your efficacy in all aspects of teaching. Finally, Appendix C contains a glossary of important terms.

Also available to aid in your implementation of the *Stop & Think Social Skills Program* is the companion resource, *Stop & Think Reproducible Forms*, which contains cue cards of the ten core and ten advanced social skills covered in this manual, “Stop & Think Stop Signs,” a lesson plan form, evaluation forms, and much more.

# Why It Is Important to Teach Students Social Skills



## The Challenges Facing Students Today

It's hard for students to grow up in today's world. They face pressure at school, at home, with peers, and in the community. They are constantly bombarded with mixed messages about how to behave in different situations.

Clearly, students have important choices or decisions to make almost continuously throughout their day. They also have to respond or react to many interpersonal, problem-solving, and conflict situations. All too often they are angry because they don't get their way, they refuse to follow directions when they are told to do something, their feelings are hurt when peers tease or taunt them, or they don't say no when peers pressure them to engage in inappropriate behaviors or to make harmful decisions.

In today's society, students are more at risk for social, emotional, and behavioral problems than ever before. Indeed, many students today, when compared with students just five years ago, are:

- More angry
- More anxious
- More attention seeking
- More tired and pressured
- Less caring
- More worldly and streetwise
- More impacted by TV, the media, technology (including computer games), and their peer group
- Less responsible
- More defiant and disobedient
- Less impacted by incentives
- More impulsive
- Less impacted by punishment (displaying a "don't care" attitude)
- More interested in immediate gratification

- Less motivated
- Exposed more to sex and drugs
- Less attentive
- Less self-confident
- Lacking self-esteem
- Less self-controlled
- Less concerned with adult approval
- Less able to problem solve on their own

The reasons for these changes typically cluster into the following areas:

- Changes in the nuclear and extended family (e.g., divorce, remarriage)
- Less effective parenting skills at home
- The need for more positive interactions with adults
- Changes in the dynamics of the community and the quality or availability of services
- Decreases in respect, support, caring, and acceptance of others' differences and needs
- The economy and the impact of poverty
- Parents' difficulties in making a comfortable living, and the need to have both parents working to "make ends meet"
- The lack of appropriate role models, good day care opportunities, and adult supervision
- The effect of the media – TV, music, video games, and computers
- The need for improvements in education and the accessibility of positive and long-lasting educational opportunities
- Increased access or exposure to drugs, weapons, and alcohol
- Changes in students – more babies born exposed or addicted to drugs; more students with attention problems and other medical disorders; more students from abusive, dysfunctional, or disrupted families

All of this supports the fact that many students are exposed to difficult situations and challenging life circumstances at very early ages. For those at great risk because of these situations and circumstances, adult supervision and instruction are more important than ever before.

## What Teachers Can Do

Given all of this, teachers today often feel that they are constantly monitoring their students, desperately trying to avoid the “Dreaded Ds”: Disobedience, Disruption, Defiance, Disrespect, and Disregard. To many teachers, it seems like a never-ending battle, and it often seems like punishment is the only recourse. But, there is another way, and that is to teach students the skills they need to make Good Choices (that is, prosocial choices) and succeed in life. That is the subject of this manual.

For your students to withstand many of the difficult conditions they face, it is critically important that they learn, step by step, the social skills that will help them succeed in the classroom and, ultimately, in life. These interpersonal, problem-solving, and conflict resolution skills are no longer “recommended” skills; in today’s world, they are *survival* skills. The social skills that are most important for students at the middle school to early adolescent ages to be successful.

All of the social skills in this manual are taught following *The Stop & Think Social Skills Program*, a program that has been implemented successfully in hundreds of school districts across the country. The goal of this program and manual is to teach *you* how to teach *your* students how to Stop and Think and make good social and behavioral choices—even when confronted with difficult situations. Specifically, the five steps to the Stop & Think process are discussed, the teaching process is outlined, and lesson plans are provided for teaching the targeted social skills within the Stop & Think context. In addition, a recommended teaching schedule is presented, and numerous examples of role plays, application activities, and reinforcement approaches are provided.

Ultimately, the key to having your students learn social skills is for you to *teach* them how to perform the behaviors that you expect. For this, you will need to do the following:

- Teach each social skill directly using the steps suggested in this manual.
- Use the same “script” to guide your students through each social skill every time you practice.
- Correctly demonstrate the social skill that you are teaching using “real-life” situations that occur in the classroom or school, and then have your students practice the skill until they can do it with less and less prompting.
- Use the Stop & Think steps and the social skills scripts consistently and give your students incentives to make Good Choices and consequences when they make Bad Choices.

- Help your students use the skills in different places, with different people, and at different times of the day.

By doing these things, you will help your students learn to make more Good Choices, more independently, and more automatically.

## **The Social Skills Covered in This Manual**

Although there are hundreds of important social skills for students to learn, this manual focuses on ten core skills considered to be most important for students at the middle school to early adolescent level (grades 6–8). The skill steps for ten more advanced social skills are also presented, as is a list of additional skills that you might find appropriate for your students. Finally, the skill steps for a number of classroom and building routines are presented that can help your students perform better throughout the classroom and across various school settings.

The ten core skills in this manual were selected because they are so important to the development of good interpersonal, problem-solving, and conflict resolution skills and because they help to create positive classroom climates and safe school buildings. Moreover, they have all been implemented and evaluated by classroom teachers in schools nationwide. These are the skills that your students need to be socially successful with both peers and adults. Finally, they are the skills that are prerequisite to the more advanced skills that your students will need as they grow older.

These ten core social skills at the middle school/early adolescent level are:

- Listening/Following Directions
- Asking for Help
- Ignoring Distractions
- Dealing With Teasing, Being Rejected, or Being Left Out
- Apologizing
- Dealing With Consequences
- Understanding Your Own and Others' Feelings
- Dealing With Anger/Walking Away From a Fight
- Dealing With Peer Pressure
- Dealing With Accusations

The more advanced social skills at these grades levels and presented later in this manual are:

- Setting a Goal
- Evaluating Yourself
- Beginning/Ending a Conversation
- Giving/ Accepting a Compliment
- Being a Good Leader
- Standing Up for Your Rights
- Responding to Failure
- Avoiding Trouble
- Dealing With Fear
- Dealing With Another Person's Anger

These 20 (and all other) social skills can be organized into four skill areas: **survival or prerequisite skills**, **interpersonal skills**, **problem-solving skills**, and **conflict resolution skills**. Although some of these skills could be placed into two or more skill areas depending on the situation, this manual uses the following arrangement:

- **Survival or prerequisite skills** are social skills that are used, directly or indirectly, in performing other social skills. Thus, these skills form the foundation for other skills, and, typically, many of them are first taught to students at a young age. The survival skills in this manual are:
  - Listening/Following Directions
  - Ignoring Distractions
  - Evaluating Yourself
- **Interpersonal skills** help students to interact appropriately with peers, siblings, older and younger students, parents, teachers, and other adults. In essence, they are the skills that help students to build and maintain social relationships. The interpersonal skills in this manual are:
  - Beginning/Ending a Conversation
  - Giving/ Accepting a Compliment
  - Being a Good Leader

- **Problem-solving skills** help students to solve individual, interactive, or group (e.g., peer or family) problems. Some of these skills prevent problems from occurring, while others help students to respond to a problem so that it does not escalate into a conflict. The problem-solving skills in this manual are:
  - Asking for Help
  - Apologizing
  - Dealing With Consequences
  - Understanding Your Own and Others' Feelings
  - Setting a Goal
  - Responding to Failure
  - Avoiding Trouble
- The **conflict resolution skills** help students to deal with significant emotions and emotional situations and to resolve existing intrapersonal and interpersonal conflicts. Among the emotions that students may experience and need to control are anger, embarrassment, frustration, fear, anxiety, jealousy, sadness, impatience, and helplessness. The conflict resolution skills in this manual are:
  - Dealing With Teasing, Being Rejected, or Being Left Out
  - Dealing With Anger/Walking Away From a Fight
  - Dealing With Being Rejected or Left Out
  - Walking With Peer Pressure
  - Dealing With Accusations
  - Standing Up for Your Rights
  - Dealing With Fear
  - Dealing With Another Person's Anger

## Conclusion

It is important to realize that students will need to be retaught many of the social skills in this manual as they get older. Although the names of the social skills do not change over time, how they are taught and adults' expectations for how students perform these skills *should* change. This is because (1) students, over time, are able to handle increased behavioral expectations due to their development and maturation; (2) students experience or confront more complex and challenging situations as they

get older; and (3) adults need to slowly help (i.e., teach) youth to progress behaviorally every day, month, and year, thereby increasing their knowledge and skill level over time.

Thus, your expectations when students perform any of the skills should differ for three-year olds, seven-year olds, and twelve-year olds. As students grow older, they should be expected to perform certain social skills more often, more quickly, for a longer period of time, more independently, and/or with a higher level of self-control. All of this relates directly to the impact of child development and the teaching of social skills. Appendix B highlights a number of developmental characteristics of students at the middle school to early adolescent ages. Please read the first part of the Appendix and begin thinking about the ways you currently structure your classroom to maximize the maturation levels of your present students.

## Social Skills Cue Cards

Following are copies of the cue cards for the **Dealing With Teasing** and **Dealing With Being Rejected or Left Out** skills. These cue cards list the specific steps that you and your students need to follow when using these skills within the Stop & Think process.

*Stop & Think Reproducible Forms* contains social skills cue cards (that you will want to reproduce for your students) for every core and advanced social skill discussed in this manual. Also included in *Reproducible Forms* are a number of “Stop & Think Stop Signs” and “Stop & Think Step Signs” (listing the five steps of the Stop & Think process). Put the “Stop Signs” and “Step Signs” in strategic places in your classroom and around

your school. All of the aids provide reminders to your students that you want them to make Good Choices so that the Stop & Think process can work well for all of you.

### Dealing With Teasing

Skill 4

Grades 6-8: CORE



1. **Take** a deep breath and **count** to five (ten).



2. **Think** about what Good Choices you can make.  
You can:
  - a. Ignore the person.
  - b. Tell the person how you feel.
  - c. Tell the person to stop.
  - d. Ask a teacher or other adult to help.



3. **Choose** your best choice.



4. If needed, **try** another way to deal with the situation or **walk** away from the person.

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### Dealing With Being Rejected or Left Out

Skill 4

Grades 6-8: CORE



1. **Take** deep breaths and **count** to five.



2. **Understand** it's OK to feel: (**sad, upset, frustrated**).



3. **Identify** if you did something to be left out or “pushed” out.
4. **Think** about your Good Choices:
  - a. **Decide** if you want to be included in the group that rejected you; **ask** to be included.
  - b. **Decide** if you want to be included in a different group of people; **ask** to be included.
  - c. **Decide** if there is something else you want to do.
  - d. **Decide** if you just want some quiet time alone.



5. **Pick and plan** your best choice.

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## Apologizing

In general, middle school students are very aware of “right” and “wrong;” they are conscious of the consequences of their own behavior (even though they may not think about them all the time), and they can be sensitive to others’ thoughts and feelings. As such, they have the basic ability and, sometimes, need to apologize for mistakes, inappropriate behaviors, or bad choices. However, many students are embarrassed by having to apologize, some get anxious because they don’t know what to say or how to behave, others will not do it in the face of real or perceived peer pressure, and a few still are unable to control their angry feelings even though they know that they need to apologize. For all of these students and situations, the **Apologizing** skill becomes important.

### Phase 1: Teaching

(Generally, Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday of Week 1)

As with all skills, students should be taught to **Apologize** by first asking them to **Stop and Think**, and then asking if they **are going to make a Good Choice or a Bad Choice**. Once they have decided to make a Good Choice, begin to teach them the **Apologizing** skill.

The **Steps** that students need to follow to learn and demonstrate the **Apologizing** skill are:

1. **Decide:** Do you need to apologize for something you did or said?
2. **Walk** up to the person you need to apologize to.
3. **Look** directly into the person’s eyes and **say**, “I’m sorry,” explaining why or describing what you did wrong.
4. **Listen** to the person’s response.
5. **Talk** to the person about something else (or do something else with him or her), or **say**, “Thanks for listening” and walk away.

Once your students are ready to demonstrate the **Apologizing** skill, ask them to **Do It!** When your students are successful, have them tell themselves internally that they have done a **Good Job**.

Remember to teach every social skill using the same teaching process. This process involves:

1. **Teaching** the steps of the desired social skill
2. **Modeling** the steps and the social skills language (or script)
3. **Role playing** the steps and the script with your students, providing them practice opportunities
4. **Giving performance feedback** to your students as to how accurately they are doing with both the script and the new behavior
5. **Applying, and having your students use**, the skill and its steps as much as possible during the day to reinforce the teaching over time, in different settings, with different people, and in different situations

As you initially model, role play, and have your students use the skill during the day, it is important to choose situations in which (1) the skill will be used frequently, (2) the skill will be noticeable – by peers as well as by you and other adults, (3) the skill will be viewed positively, (4) many different people will reinforce your students, and (5) your students are likely to succeed.

As you plan practice situations for this skill, think about when and where your students already demonstrate the behavior. Also, think about situations in which you wish your students would demonstrate the behavior.

### *Suggested Role Plays for This Social Skill*

It is important that the **Apologizing** skill be role played across a variety of situations in order to facilitate the transfer of training (i.e., the use of this skill and skill script) from one situation to another. Suggested role plays for the **Apologizing** skill include apologizing:

- To another student for teasing him or her
- To an adult for interrupting him or her
- To a teacher for not following directions
- To peers for not following instructions or not completing an assigned task during a group project
- To an adult for breaking the rules

- To someone for accidentally bumping into him or her in the hallway

### *Teaching Tips*

The **Apologizing** skill is actually an adaptation of the **Asking for Help** skill, and some of its steps and elements overlap with other social skills that teach students how to verbally interact with others (e.g., **Dealing With Teasing**). For the **Apologizing** skill, you may find two additional steps useful at times:

- If your students get very emotional when they have to apologize (e.g., when they are either very embarrassed or somewhat angry), you may want to add a “**Take** a deep breath and **count** to five (or ten)” step.
- If emotionality results in a student’s using too loud a voice or an inappropriate tone of voice, you may want to remind him or her to use (or add the step of using) an appropriate voice tone or volume.

The **Apologizing** skill is one that you will need to practice periodically and strategically with your students. Fortunately, you can role play the skill with your students before they actually have to use it. Then, when a real situation occurs, you can continue to practice and use this skill by helping your students to (1) calm down, (2) think about and practice the **Apologizing** skill and steps, and (3) actually make the apology in a way that ensures success.

## **Phase 2: Application Activities**

(Generally, Thursday and Friday of Week 1 and Monday and Tuesday of Week 2)

Remember that the purpose of your application activities is to integrate the social skill that has just been taught into regular academic, preacademic, or social/interactional lessons. Your goals with application activities are (1) to give your students more opportunities to practice the skill and script, and (2) to give this practice in more real-life classroom and, perhaps, building situations. The application activities are usually conducted over a 20- to 30-minute period during a regular academic, preacademic, or social/interactional lesson on the three or four days following the teaching of the skill.

In order to help students practice the **Apologizing** skill in the classroom, you may want to set up situations in which students “accidentally” knock over someone’s books, push against someone, make a mistake as part of a group project, interrupt someone inappropriately, or break a

class or group rule. As these situations occur, students then can demonstrate the **Apologizing** skill and script under these more real-life circumstances. These application activities might begin with classroom situations, move to out-of-classroom situations, and work their way to the more unstructured situations that typically occur in the common areas of the school (e.g., hallways, cafeteria). You should initially set up practice application activities that are less emotional, and move systematically toward more and more emotional situations for students.

### **Phase 3: Infusion Opportunities** (Generally, the Rest of Week 2)

There are numerous situations over the course of the school day where students either accidentally or consciously hurt or offend other students. These are teachable moments that can be used both to practice the **Apologizing** skill and to remediate the situation at hand. Possible infusion situations for the **Apologizing** skill include having students apologize to peers for:

- Bumping into them in the hallways or lunchroom
- Interrupting a conversation that peers are having with another person
- Making inappropriate or incorrect statements (e.g., about another person) inside or outside of the class

### **Social Skills Cue Cards**

Following is a copy of the cue card for the **Apologizing** skill. This cue card lists the specific steps that you and your students need to follow when using this skill within the Stop & Think process.

*Stop & Think Reproducible Forms* contains social skills cue cards (that you will want to reproduce for your students) for every core and advanced social skill discussed in this manual. Also included in *Reproducible Forms* are a number of “Stop & Think Stop Signs” and “Stop & Think Step Signs” (listing the five steps of the Stop & Think process). Put the “Stop Signs” and “Step Signs” in strategic places in your classroom and around your school. All of the aids provide reminders to your students that you want them to make Good Choices so that the Stop & Think process can work well for all of you.

## Apologizing

### Skill 5

Grades 6-8: CORE



1. **Decide:** Do you need to apologize for something you did or said?



2. **Walk** up to the person you need to apologize to.



3. **Look** directly into the person's eyes and **say**, "I'm sorry," explaining why or describing what you did wrong.



4. **Listen** to the person's response.



5. **Talk** to the person about something else (or do something else with him or her), or **say**, "Thanks for listening" and walk away.

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# The Stop & Think Social Skills Program

*Teacher's Manual for Grades: 6–8*

by Howard M. Knoff, Ph.D.



*Stop & Think* is a nationally acclaimed program that teaches students prosocial behaviors that can turn their lives around. When students learn appropriate skills for getting along with others, solving problems, and resolving conflicts, acting out is no longer their only option.

*Stop & Think* empowers your students by giving them choices. They can make good choices or bad choices. At the same time, the *Stop & Think Teacher's Manual* and companion *Reproducible Forms* empower you. They equip you with:

- Proven-effective methods for teaching the skills and steps to students
- A neutral system of incentives and consequences that eliminates the emotional charge
- Effective ways of integrating skill use into the schoolday, taking full advantage of teachable moments
- Specifics on maintaining a safe, positive classroom structure that fosters skill use
- A venue for meaningful parent involvement
- Techniques for promoting student responsibility and use of skills across settings—even in emotional, stressful situations

## Your Students Will Master 10 Core Skills—The Ones Most Integral to Classroom Learning:

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| • Listening/following directions                          | • Dealing with consequences                    |
| • Asking for help   | • Understanding your own and other's feelings  |
| • Ignoring distractions                                   | • Dealing with anger/walking away from a fight |
| • Dealing with teasing, being rejected, or being left out | • Dealing with peer pressure                   |
| • Apologizing   | • Dealing with accusations                     |

Plus, your students will gain 10 more advanced skills: Setting a goal, evaluating yourself, beginning/ending a conversation, giving/accepting a compliment, being a good leader, standing up for your rights, responding to failure, avoiding trouble, dealing with fear, and dealing with another person's anger.

193 Pages



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