There’s a Little Bit of Kramer in All of Us: Social Skills Training Using Sitcoms

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It’s not just about watching TV...
Project Goals

• Identify a different approach to social skills training
• Use a method to communicate information about behaviour which was non-confrontational
• Develop and support skills related to recognizing behaviours and emotions in self and others.
Brain Injury and Social Skills

- Loss of social skills caused by cognitive and behavioural changes related to the brain injury
- Loss of mental flexibility and ability to self-modulate behaviour
- Impaired perception of social relationships
- Impaired problem solving
Why is social competence needed?

• To access peer groups at work, friendships and family life
• To “read” other people and change our behaviour accordingly
• To interpret what is required by a person, people or situation and to self-regulate our responses
It takes rhythm... social rhythm that is...

- Cognitive effects of brain injury can cause problems in perception of others as well as self
- The individual can be “out of sync” with the social rhythm
- Humour in sitcoms is based on misperceptions and interactional problems
What are the attributes of social competence

- Knowledge of rules, roles and routines which apply in different social situations
- Ability to interpret the behaviour and emotions of other people in an accurate manner
- To react to the emotional states of other people in an appropriate manner
- To be able to react in a flexible manner depending on the situation and the behaviour and emotions of other people
Is Social Competence Just Behaviour

- Extends beyond communication, interpreting and responding
- Includes hygiene and dressing
- Knowing how to fit into the activities
- Maintaining impulse control/self-regulation
- Using cognitive skills and to analyze situations and formulate appropriate responses
- Understand the “social rhythm”
Methods of Acquiring Social Competence via Skills Training

• Scripting: learning specific scripts for responding
• Context-Sensitive Practice: using rehearsal training with praise and recognition from the trainer
• Situational Coaching: using real-life situations with advance cues (presetting)
• Training in Social Perception: teaching the person how to read the behaviour and expectations of others
• Training in self-monitoring: learning to recognize “stress triggers”
Social Competence is Complex

• Skills are acquired throughout childhood into adulthood
• Insight and information processing are required for competence to be applied
• Ability to discriminate what is required in social situations is critical to success
• Ability to change behaviour based on situational cues is critical
Research Highlights

• Almost half of the group had limited or no social contacts 1-year post injury (Weddell, et al, 1980)

• 90% with social dislocation and isolation continuing as a pattern over time (Lezak, 1987)
• 92% of family and person with TBI reported that person with brain injury had a change in friendships. 75% report problems making new friends (Bergland and Thomas, 1991)
• 71% reporting no social life, except as arranged by families (Earnes, et al, 1995)
• Over half reporting having lost friends and increased social isolation (Olver, et al, 1996)
Research Highlights Cont’d

- 90% dissatisfied with social interaction, 47% not talking on the telephone, 27% never socialize at home, 20% never visit others (Dawson and Chipman, 1995)
So, what do we do in rehab?

- Provide systemic feedback
- Meta-Cognitive techniques
- Use shaping, fading and cueing
- Teach self-monitoring
- Modeling
- Role Play
- Rehearsal training
- Social Reinforcement
So, what do we do in rehab? cont’d

- Social knowledge
- Awareness Building
- “Brainstorming” alternatives
- Outloud self-direction
- In vivo coaching
How can we make it work better?
Limits of Social Skills Training

• “That’s not my problem”, role of denial
• Lack of awareness of self and others
• Lack of mental flexibility, “getting stuck”
• Misperceiving social cues
• Seeing training experience as confrontational or too juvenile
Why Sitcoms?

• Vignettes “fit” short attention span
• Behaviour of actors is exaggerated
• Character consistently replicates the behaviour
• Canned laughter provides cue that something is wrong/funny
• Safe, non-confrontational way to look at behaviour and feelings
What about sitcom behaviour?

• Either “too much” or “too little”
• Misperceptions of others are common
• Behaviour of actors addresses common themes:
  • Assertiveness
  • Impulsivity
  • Awareness of others/boundaries
  • Self-control/anger management
“The Technique”

- Analyze what happened in the vignette
- Inquire about a similar situation that was personal
- Ask about how other people reacted
- Ask about how you felt
- Ask about what you did
- Ask about what could have been done differently
The Vignettes
Assertiveness - Office Space

Click below to watch this video:
http://ia341302.us.archive.org/0/items/milton_618/Asserting-MiltonFinal.wmv
Example Questions

- Was this clip funny?
- What do you think of this man?
- Why doesn’t he get listened to?
Assertiveness – Elaine Benes

Click below to watch this video:
http://ia341340.us.archive.org/1/items/asserting/Asserting-Dr.Reston.wmv
Example Questions

• How is Elaine acting? Why?

• Have you ever felt inferior? How did that feel?

• What can you do to overcome this feeling? How can you get your power back?
Anger Management – Meet the Parents

Click below to watch this video
http://ia341343.us.archive.org/1/items/Luggage/Anger-LuggageIncident.wmv
Example Questions

• Was that funny? Why was it funny?
• Did this man act inappropriately?
• Have you ever acted like this before? What was the other person’s reaction?
• How did you feel afterwards?
Anger Management – Happy Gilmore

Click below to watch this video:

http://ia341334.us.archive.org/1/items/AngerMini/Anger-MiniPutt.wmv
Example Questions

• Have you ever felt frustrated like this? What did you do?
• What was the reaction of others? How did this make you feel?
• Why do we feel regret?
• Are we responsible only for ourselves or for others as well?
Boundaries - Kramer

Click below to watch this video:
http://ia341315.us.archive.org/0/items/intrusive/Intrusive-TheKeys.wmv
Example Questions

• Why do we have boundaries?

• Who decides what each person’s boundaries are?

• How do feel when someone does not respect your boundaries?
Impulsivity – That Delicious Eclair!

Click below to watch this video:
http://a341340.us.archive.org/0/items/impluse/Implusive-GeorgeAndEclair.wmv
Example Questions

• Ever done something you immediately regretted?

• Ever purchased something you couldn’t afford?

• How do you feel afterwards? How can we slow ourselves down?
Social Awareness -

Click below to watch this video:

http://ia341336.us.archive.org/0/items/SocialAwareness/SocialAwareness-CloseTalker.wmv
Example Questions

• Have you ever spoken to someone who did not respect your personal space?
• How did you feel? How did you react?
• How can we tell when we are making someone uncomfortable?
• Does it matter? Why or why not?
Applying the Technique

• Use television watching to create “safe opportunities”
• View self by looking at behaviour of others
• Teach cues, scripts and the application of alternatives in the safety of the television watching experience
• Help remove the elements of interpersonal living which produce social withdrawal and isolation, such as failure and rejection
Outside the House

- Pre-set responses
- Lay out cues
- Rehearse, role play
- Plan alternatives
- Analyze “what happened”
- Praise successes
- Learn from problem
In the “real world”

- Taking rehab strategies into real life situations
- Rehearse, interact and analyze
- Know problem causing situations
- Practice alternatives
Questions?
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- With our thanks to the actors, writers, producers and directors of our favourite sitcoms

- This presentation does not endorse using only these specific vignettes; many different movies and television shows can be used to the same effect.