



Social Skills

Interpreting Non-Verbal Communication Homework

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Interpreting Non-Verbal Communication Homework

Individuals on the autism spectrum are typically not adept at interpreting non-verbal communication. This is partly due to the fact that they usually do not observe others' behaviors nearly as often or as intently as neurotypical individuals do. That's why I give my students the homework task of observing others and interpreting non-verbal behaviors. I teach my students that "non-verbal communication" includes facial expression, body language, and tone of voice, and we work on interpretation in a number of ways before I give them the homework assignment. We may practice identifying non-verbal signs of various emotions in videos (such as clips of sitcoms, dramas, or reality TV) with the sound turned off. We use the activity *Tone of Voice* to work on using and interpreting tone of voice. We may use *Kinesics: Interest vs. Disinterest* to learn how non-verbal behaviors can indicate interest or a lack of interest. Notably, while the "Looking Out for Others' Feelings Homework" in *Developing Empathy* tasks students with guessing the perspectives of others mainly from context, *Interpreting Non-Verbal Communication Homework* tasks students with interpreting others' perspectives from non-verbal behaviors. The last question of this homework task is significant because while it's important to start observing others more regularly (which I hope the assignment encourages) and to accurately identify how another person is feeling, it's equally important to respond in a helpful manner to another's feelings.

Name _____

Due Date _____

Interpreting Non-Verbal Communication Homework

Where?

When?

What was the situation? (examples: eating dinner with your parents, answering questions during global history class, waiting in line for popcorn at a movie theater)

Whose non-verbal behaviors did you observe?

Describe that person's non-verbal behaviors (may include eye contact, facial expression, tone of voice, posture, actions):

By interpreting those non-verbal behaviors you believe that person felt:
(state emotions)

... and thought:

Did you do anything in response to your interpretation?

Examples:

- tried to build up someone's confidence who appeared nervous
- attempted to calm someone who appeared stressed
- asked someone who appeared angry if everything was okay

