



Learning how to use language appropriately in social settings is a pragmatic communication problem and can be addressed.



PRAGMATIC/SOCIAL LANGUAGE

SOCIAL LANGUAGE USE (PRAGMATICS)

You have invited your friend over to dinner. Your child sees your friend reach for some cookies and says, "Better not take those, or you'll get even fatter." You're embarrassed that your child could speak so rudely. However, you should consider that your child may not know how to use language appropriately in social situations and did not mean to be rude by their comment. An individual may say words clearly and use long, complex sentences with correct grammar, but still have a communication problem if he or she has not mastered the rules for social language known as pragmatics. Adults may also have difficulty with pragmatics, for example, as a result of a brain Injury or stroke they may have inappropriate words or thoughts to other individuals during conversation.

PRAGMATICS INVOLVE THREE MAJOR COMMUNICATION SKILLS

1) USING LANGUAGE FOR DIFFERENT PURPOSES

- greeting (e.g., hello, goodbye)
- informing (e.g., I'm going to get a cookie)
- demanding (e.g., Give me a cookie)
- promising (e.g., I'm going to get you a cookie)
- requesting (e.g., I would like a cookie, please)

2) CHANGING LANGUAGE ACCORDING TO THE NEEDS OF A LISTENER OR SITUATION

- talking differently to a baby than to an adult
- giving background information to an unfamiliar listener
- speaking differently in a classroom than on a playground

3) RULES FOR CONVERSATIONS AND STORYTELLING

- taking turns in conversation
- introducing topics of conversation
- staying on topic
- rephrasing when misunderstood
- how to use verbal and nonverbal signals
- how close to stand to someone when speaking
- how to use facial expressions and eye contact

These rules may vary across cultures. It is important to understand the rules of your communication partner.

SOCIAL LANGUAGE DELAYS

Social Language delays may exist if your child experiences the following:

- pragmatic problems in only a few situations.
- says inappropriate or unrelated things during conversations.
- tells stories in a disorganized way or loses topic during conversations.
- uses little variety in language or uses repeat memorized speech patterns.

Pragmatic disorders often coexist with other language problems such as vocabulary development or grammar. Pragmatic problems can lower social acceptance. Peers may avoid having conversations with an individual with a pragmatic disorder.

If you have concerns about your child's social language use, please contact us and speak with one of our Speech Language Pathologists.



101 CLEVELAND AVE. STE D. MARTINSVILLE, VA 24112
PH: 276-352-4465 | F1: 276-293-1212 | F2: 276-352-4467
www.ACMETHERAPIES.COM
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