

## Social (Pragmatic) Communication Disorder

Social (Pragmatic) Communication Disorder or SCD is a disorder in which a person has difficulty with social interaction and pragmatics. Children with SCD are able to understand word structure and grammar, but struggle to communicate appropriately in social situations. They often have difficulty altering speech based on social contexts and understanding implied information that is not specifically stated. Children with SCD also experience difficulty understanding the give and take of communication.

Children may begin to show signs of SCD at an early age, but are often not diagnosed until they begin school.

Symptoms of SCD include the following:

- Lack understanding of how to greet people
- Dominate conversations
- Does not adapt speech to accommodate changes in environment (i.e., speaking to adults and peers the same way or speaking the same way in the classroom as they do at recess)
- Trouble understanding nonverbal communication or sarcasm
- Begin a conversation without providing background information



Children with SCD can have problems making friends and interacting with their peers. Their behaviors (i.e. interrupting or dominating conversations) can come across as rude or as if they lack manners, which can make it difficult to make and keep friends. They are also more likely to act out or become withdrawn. SCD can also affect academic development. Children with SCD often struggle with reading comprehension and may experience difficulty developing writing skills.

SCD overlaps with signs of autism spectrum disorder. It is important to have the child properly diagnosed to rule out autism spectrum disorder. Once a diagnosis has been made, a speech pathologist can help determine a treatment plan.

There are cultural considerations for diagnosis and treatment of SCD. Social norms play a significant role in the way we communicate with others. It is important to have an understanding of the student's culture when working with the student on communication skills. A speech pathologist can help determine the difference between cultural differences or a disorder.

Strategies for parents:

- Read stories with your child and have discussions to help them with reading comprehension
- Schedule structured play dates with one friend at a time limited to 90 minutes
- Model and practice appropriate communication; make eye contact and discuss appropriate ways to ask questions
- Talk to your child's school about developing a 504 plan or an individualized education program (IEP)

- Learn about the resources available in your community (i.e., therapist or support group)

Sources:

<https://www.understood.org/en/learning-attention-issues/child-learning-disabilities/communication-disorders/understanding-social-communication-disorder>

<https://childmind.org/guide/social-communication-disorder/what-is-it/>

<https://www.autismspeaks.org/blog/2015/04/03/what-social-communication-disorder-how-it-treated>