

SODA: STOP-OBSERVE-DELIBERATE-ACT

CHARACTERISTICS OVERVIEW CHART

Verbal Skills	Grade Levels	Cognitive Level	Areas Addressed
<input type="checkbox"/> Nonverbal	<input type="checkbox"/> PK	<input type="checkbox"/> Classic	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> (Pre)Academic/Cognitive/Academic
<input type="checkbox"/> Mixed	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Elementary	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> High	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Adaptive Behavior/Daily Living
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Verbal	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Middle/High	Functioning	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Behavior
			<input type="checkbox"/> Communication/Speech
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Social/Emotional

BRIEF INTRODUCTION

Social deficits that affect interactions with people are among the most distinct features of autism (AU). These challenges are exacerbated by the difficulties individuals with autism have learning incidental social skills. They often feel confused or even frightened because they do not understand social and nonverbal cues (i.e., voice tones, gestures, facial expressions, or postures) or unspoken rules that everybody is supposed to know (e.g., knowing the dos and don'ts of how to behave when standing in front of teachers).

Stop-Observe-Deliberate-Act (SODA) is a social behavioral learning strategy to promote social interaction skills, especially for children and adolescents with Asperger Syndrome (AS). Developed by Bock (2001), this strategy helps students participate in novel social activities appropriately.

DESCRIPTION

SODA guides students to interact with other people, such as peers, in various situations. The purposes of the strategy are to (a) teach the student a set of rules that can guide his social behavior, (b) teach the student the ability to self-monitor his thinking processes and choose better options, and (c) help the student participate in social interactions appropriately. The acronym SODA stands for: Stop, Observe, Deliberate, and Act. This is an advanced social strategy

in that students need to know how to observe situations, understand social rules, and possess problem-solving skills.

STEPS

The following steps comprise SODA:

1. *Stop*. This component helps the student develop a framework for a specific situation that requires social interactions. When the student enters a novel situation, she uses self-questioning to decide what to do. The first question guides the student to develop an organizational schema for the setting (i.e., Where should I go to observe? What is the room arrangement?). The student identifies a place to stand to observe and learn about the social situation.
2. *Observe*. The second step, Observe, helps the student become more aware of social cues other people use in the setting. In this step, the student should pay attention when she can hear other people's conversations. She can also note how others conduct themselves (formal vs. informal language), length of conversations, conversation topics, whether individuals stay in groups or move from group to group, etc. However, the student should be careful not to eavesdrop on people's private conversations or be seen as suspicious by loitering. During this step, the student seeks to understand the roles of various social cues and the meaning of typical phrases or behaviors used in the setting (i.e., When people say, "Where have you been?" you are not supposed to name all of the places you have visited). Thus, the goal of the Observe step is to identify what others are doing.
3. *Deliberate*. The overarching question that should be asked during this stage is, "What do I need to do to successfully participate in this setting?" This component helps the student decide what to say and how other people will perceive her. The student can ask herself, "What would I like to do?" and "How will other students react if I say this?"
4. The secondary issue to be addressed during this stage is to identify particular aspects of the event that might be problematic and identify strategies to address these. For example, if the situation is loud and the student is sound sensitive, she may need to remind herself to wear

her earplugs or immediately create a plausible excuse that will allow her to leave the situation quickly.

5. *Act*. The final step guides the student in how to interact with others. The student identifies people with whom she wants to interact in the specific setting and acts according to the plan she developed during the *Deliberate* stage.

BRIEF EXAMPLE

Stop:

1. Where should I go to observe?
2. What is the room arrangement?

Observe:

1. What are people doing?
2. What are people saying?
3. What do they look like when they are talking?

Deliberate:

1. What would I like to do?
2. What would I like to say?
3. How will I know when other people would like to end this conversation?

Act:

When I go to _____ I plan to

- (a)
- (b)
- (c)
- (d)

TIPS FOR MODIFICATION

The author of the SODA strategy (Bock, 2001) noted the importance of basing the SODA on the student’s need. In this sense, selecting different icons to represent each step of the SODA for the student may be considered. In addition, when the anticipated situations do not occur in a natural setting, videos may be used to help the student learn about and observe certain social behaviors.

SUMMARY

SODA is an effective social-behavioral learning strategy for teaching children and adolescents with AS to learn social interaction skills. Using the SODA strategy can enhance students’ appropriate behaviors in various settings.

RESEARCH TABLE

Number of Studies	Ages (year)	Sample Size	Area(s) Addressed	Outcome
2	9-12	5	Social behavior, social interactions, appropriate behavior, spontaneous initiation, cooperative learning, participation in social activities	+

STUDIES CITED IN RESEARCH TABLE

1. Bock, M. A. (2007b). The impact of social-behavioral learning strategy training on the social interaction skills of four students with Asperger Syndrome. *Focus on Autism and Other Developmental Disabilities, 22*, 88-95.
Four male elementary students with Asperger Syndrome participated in the study, which was an expansion of a previous study (Bock, 2007a). The results showed that all participants with Asperger Syndrome increased time spent in cooperative learning activities, playing organized sport games and visiting with their peers during lunch.
2. Bock, M. A. (2007a). A social-behavioral learning strategy intervention for a child with Asperger Syndrome: Brief report. *Remedial and Special Education, 28*, 258-265.
A middle school student with Asperger Syndrome and his peer participated in this study, which investigated the effect of SODA training on the ability to participate in cooperative

learning activities, play board games, and visit peers during lunch. Using a multiple-baseline-across-settings design, the results revealed that the participant's percentage of spending time across settings increased.

REFERENCES

- Bock, M. A. (2001). SODA strategy: Enhancing the social interaction skills of youngsters with Asperger Syndrome. *Intervention in School and Clinic, 36*, 272-278.
- Bock, M. A. (2007a). A social-behavioral learning strategy intervention for a child with Asperger Syndrome: Brief report. *Remedial and Special Education, 28*, 258-265.
- Bock, M. A. (2007b). The impact of social-behavioral learning strategy training on the social interaction skills of four students with Asperger Syndrome. *Focus on Autism and Other Developmental Disabilities, 22*, 88-95.

RESOURCES AND MATERIALS

These documents describe the SODA strategy.

- Lynn, A. & Smith Myles, B. (2004) Asperger Syndrome and six strategies for success. *Beyond Behavior, 14* (1) Fall, 3-9.
- Bock, M. (2000). *The impact of social behavioral learning strategy training on the social interaction skills of eight students with Asperger Syndrome*. Unpublished manuscript, University of North Dakota.
- Bock, M. A. (2001). SODA strategy: Enhancing the social interaction skills of youngsters with Asperger Syndrome. *Intervention in School and Clinic, 36*, 272-278.

GENERAL RESOURCES

- Autism Internet Modules (AIM) www.autisminternetmodules.org. The Autism Internet Modules were developed with one aim in mind: to make comprehensive, up-to-date, and usable information on autism accessible and applicable to educators, other professionals, and families who support individuals with autism spectrum disorders (ASD). Written by experts from across the U.S., all online modules are free, and are designed to promote understanding of, respect for, and equality of persons with ASD.

- The Autism Web Course: http://cdd.unm.edu/swan/autism_course/about/index.htm. This web course was developed out of materials from the Interactive Collaborative Autism Network (ICAN). The Autism Programs at the University of New Mexico has updated and added information to this web course.
 - Characteristics
 - Assessment
 - Academic Interventions
 - Behavioral Interventions
 - Communication Interventions
 - Environmental Interventions
 - Social Interventions
 - Family Support Suggestions

- Indiana Resource Center for Autism (IRCA) <http://www.iidc.indiana.edu/irca/fmain1.html>. The Indiana Resource Center for Autism staff's efforts are focused on providing communities, organizations, agencies, and families with the knowledge and skills to support children and adults in typical early intervention, school, community, work, and home settings.
 - IRCA Articles: <http://www.iidc.indiana.edu/index.php?pageId=273>

- Texas Statewide Leadership for Autism www.txautism.net. The Texas Statewide Leadership for Autism in conjunction with the network of Texas Education Service center with a grant from the Texas Education Agency has developed a series of free online courses in autism. Please check the training page, www.txautism.net/training.html, for update lists of courses, course numbers and registration information. Current courses include the following:
 - Asperger Syndrome 101
 - Augmentative and Alternative Communication and the Autism Spectrum
 - Autism for the General Education Teacher
 - Autism 101: Top Ten Pieces to the Puzzle
 - Classroom Organization: The Power of Structure for Individuals with ASD
 - Communication: The Power of Communication for Individuals with ASD
 - Futures Planning for Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder
 - Navigating the Social Maze: Supports and Interventions for Individuals with ASD
 - Solving the Behavior Puzzle: Making Connections for Individuals with ASD