

Emory Dyssemia Index – Autism Form (Draft)

Dyssemia is a term used to refer to ***dysfunctional nonverbal social communication*** (Nowicki and Duke, 1992).

Dr. Stephen Nowicki and Dr. Marshall Duke of Emory University, suggest that a lack of competence in the area of nonverbal communication can have a devastating effect on a child's social development. The nature of nonverbal communication impacts not only how the child perceives the world, but also how the world perceives the child's motives and mental stability. How caregivers ***think*** about a child's motives, often dictates the strategies chosen to change that child's behavior. This scale was adapted by Kari Dunn Buron from the original Dyssemia Rating Scale which can be found in the book *Will I Ever Fit In?* (2002). Educators can use this scale as a ***screening instrument*** when evaluating children who demonstrate interpersonal problems at school. This is not meant to be a diagnostic tool nor should it be the only tool used in an educational evaluation. Problems in the area of *Dyssemia* could indicate the need for IEP goals and objectives that directly address the behaviors described in this tool. The results can be recorded on the summary sheet and used when determining educational needs and/or objectives for the social skills curriculum.

This scale is a DRAFT. Please feel free to use it and if you do, give us feedback on its usefulness: kari@5pointscale.com

Student name: _____

Date completed: _____

Completed by: _____

Directions: Check the items you *have observed frequently* in your interactions with this student

Section A: Gaze and Eye Contact

Observed

Does not orient body towards another when talking	
Does not look at people when talking	
Does not look at others when speaking in a group	
Avoids eye contact when passing peers in school	
Fails to turn to name	
Watches people out of corner of his/her eye	
Stares excessively at other people	
Does not shift gaze from person to person in a social conversation	

Total # ____ out of ____

Section B: Space and Touch

Observed

Seeks excessive physical contact with people	
Pulls back when approached by people	
Grabs people to get their attention	
Spreads materials beyond his/her area or desk	
Makes others uncomfortable with his/her physical positioning	
Enters private offices or desk areas without permission	
Joins groups (lunch, recess) without being invited	

Total # ____ out of ____

Section C: Paralanguage

Observed

Speaks too softly to be heard easily	
Speaks too loudly for situation or environment	
Uses vocabulary inappropriate to listeners or situation	
Tone of voice does not fit emotional state	

Observed

Tone of voice does not fit situation	
Mumbles when speaking	
Speaks in a monotone	
Speaks with “baby talk” beyond early elementary years	
Fails to alter speech volume to fit situation	
Talks in a “bookish” or overly formal way	

Total # ____ out of ____

Section D: Facial Expression

Observed

Facial expressions do not fit emotional state	
Uses inappropriate facial expressions	
Face is blank when being reprimanded	
Usual resting facial expression is negative (sad or angry)	
Does not smile back when smiled at	
Looks disinterested or bored often	

Observed

Facial expressions are exaggerated	
Facial expressions are significantly limited	
Often fails to notice or misreads other's facial expressions	

Total # _____ out of _____

Section E: Objectics (Fashion sense and grooming)

Observed

Problems with personal hygiene	
Problems with inadequate grooming (hair, teeth)	
Clothing inappropriate for age	
Clothing inappropriate for school setting	
Uses excessive perfume or cologne	
Uses poor manners when eating or drinking	
Seems unaware of styles within peer group	
Wears the same thing day after day	
Adjusts clothing in odd ways	

Total # _____ out of _____

Section F: Hands and Hand Gestures

Observed

Hands communicate nervousness or confusion	
Hand gestures are too intense for situation	
Fidgets with pens, pencils or other objects	
Hides hands in pockets or behind back	
Does not attend to grooming of hands and fingernails	
Flaps hands when excited	
Holds hands in odd positions	
Does not use hands and arms when talking	
Hand gestures are poorly timed with speech content (poor rhythm)	

Total # _____ out of _____

Section G: Social Rules/Norms

Observed

Has difficulty understanding social rules and etiquette	
Lacks common sense in peer interaction	
Seems to lack tact	

Observed

Seems overly concerned with “justice” or getting even	
Prefers social situations with external structure (board games, etc.)	
Does not seem to understand natural social order (the teacher is in charge)	
Does not seem to follow the “hidden social curriculum” (tattles, reports other students)	
Raises conversation topics out of nowhere	
Does not change behavior when others respond negatively	
Social behavior is more typical of a much younger child	

Total # _____ out of _____

Section H: Nonverbal Receptivity

Observed

Easily misreads the intentions of others	
Seems insensitive to others’ feelings	
Seems hypersensitive to others’ feelings	
Overly defensive to correction	

Observed

Behavior is out of synch with demands of situation	
Fails to respond appropriately (or at all) to greetings	
Doesn't seem to sense interpersonal trouble when it starts	
Appears unaware of things going on around him/her	
Often asks if you are mad at him	
Defines a stern voice as a yelling voice	

Total: _____ out of _____

Section I: Conversational Skills

Observed

Often starts talking before others finish	
Does not comment on what the other person has said	
Does not read cues indicating that another person would like a turn to speak	
Does not pick up "your turn" signals	
Speaks too fast for situation	
Speaks too slowly for situation	

Observed

Uses “and that...” or other noncontributing phrases repetitively	
Doesn't seem to listen to what others are saying	
Choice of conversation topics is inappropriate to situation	
Does not inquire about or expand on the other person's topic	
Choses inappropriate topics given the situation	

Total # _____ out of _____

Section J: Chronemics and the Use of Time

Observed

Often arrives late for class	
Walks out of classes or goes on a personal errand at inappropriate times	
Moves slowly between classes	
Walks too fast for situation	
Walks too slowly for situation	
Bolts to leave as soon class or event is over	
Finishes eating long before or long after others	

Observed

Makes people feel pressured to move more quickly	
Checks time too frequently	
Appears overly anxious about time	

Total # _____ out of _____

Area of Concern: Total # Priority

Gaze and Eye Contact		
Space and Touch		
Paralanguage		
Facial Expression		
Objectics		
Hand and Hand Gestures		
Social Rules and Norms		
Nonverbal Receptivity		
Conversation Skills		
Chronemics/Use of Time		

Skills to be taught:

Methods for teaching:

Annual Goal(s) for teaching these skills:

Benchmarks to reach the goal:

References:

Duke, M., Nowicki, S. and Martin, E.1996. Teaching Your Child the Language of Social Success. Peach Tree Publishers.

Nowicki, Stephen and Duke, Marshall. 1992. Helping the Child Who Doesn't Fit In. Peachtree Publishers.

Nowicki, Stephen and Duke, Marshall. 2002. Will I Ever Fit In? The Free Press.