

Role Play – Empathy

Person 1: Played by adult with autism.

Person 2: Played by neurotypical adult.

Understood: Person 1 and Person 2 are friends and spend time together daily. Person 2 is usually chatty and friendly. Person 1 and Person 2 go out for ice cream every day at 4:00.

Person 2 is sitting in a chair and staring into space.

Person 1: "Hi! It's 4:00. Time for ice cream!"

Person 2 sighs and looks down.

Person 1 taps Person 2 on the shoulder.

Person 2 looks up.

Person 1: "Time to get ice cream."

Person 2: "I'm not hungry today. You go without me."

Pause and talk about the emotions Person 2 may be feeling; then resume role play.

Person 1: "Is your stomach upset?"

Person 2: "No, my stomach is fine."

Person 1: "Why aren't you hungry for ice cream?"

Person 2: "This is just a hard day for me."

Pause and discuss appropriate course of action. Should Person 1 leave and get ice cream alone? Should Person 1 ask for more information? What's the appropriate way to do that? Resume role play after discussion.

Person 1 sits down next to Person 2.

Person 1: "Are you upset about something?"

Person 2: "Yes, I am."

Person 1: "Would you like to talk about it?"

Person 2: "Actually, that might help me."

Pause and discuss why talking about it might help.

Person 1: "I'm sorry you're upset. Please tell me what's going on."

Person 2: "Well, you know my dog, Sam? He was hit by a car yesterday."

Person 1: "Is he okay?"

Person 2: "I'm not sure. The vet did surgery and has to keep him there for a few days."

Person 1: "I'm so sorry you're going through this. Sam is a good dog."

Person 2: "He really is a good dog. I'm so worried about him."

Pause and discuss how to proceed when someone is sad and worried. What are some options? Resume role play after discussion.

Person 1: "What can I do to help?"

Person 2: "Just talking has helped me. Thank you."

Person 1: "Let me know if there's anything else I can do."

Person 2: "Let's go out for ice cream. It's 4:15, instead of 4:00. Is that okay?"

Person 1: "Sure! That's no big deal!"