

What does a difficulty with *social communication* mean?

- Adequate social communication skills allow us to be successful when interacting with other people. These skills involve being able to **use** language for different reasons, **change** language for different situations or listeners and **follow** the rules of conversation. In other words, **knowing what to say, how to say it, and when to say it - and also how to 'read' other people.**
- Young children are still in the process of mastering these skills. They are known for 'speaking their mind', being blunt, or saying something that may not be quite appropriate in a given situation.
- Children who are considered to have social communication difficulties have trouble using their language skills when talking to others *in a way that is expected for a child of their age* and also 'tuning in' to their communication partners thoughts, ideas and reactions.
- These children may appear to understand language well and also have clear, even advanced speech but they often find making friends challenging.
- For a child in kindergarten, this may mean that they experience difficulties with the following:
 - participating in a conversation by *taking turns* with the other speaker and not *interrupting excessively* or constantly talking over others;
 - *noticing and responding to the other person's body language, gestures and facial expressions*, as well as their words;
 - knowing that *there is a way to start a conversation*. You have to give your listener a little background information;
 - *staying on a topic* for a few turns and not immediately switching to something that they are interested in;
 - realizing that other people may not share their interests and therefore *not talking incessantly about topics that other people have no interest in*;
 - *maintaining appropriate eye-contact* and checking back that their messages have been understood.
 - Understanding that we *communicate differently depending on the person* (eg. friends vs teachers).