Okay, I'm going to put it up front. The only thing I could find wrong with *Building Social Relationships* by Scott Bellini, PhD, is the font they used for the title and the chapter heads. They're hokey.

Now that's cleared up, I want to recommend this book for every special education teacher who is dealing with children with behavioral or social skills deficit.

**A Foundation for Understanding Social Skills**

Dr. Bellini, the assistant director of the Indiana Resource Center for Autism, is a psychologist and clinician whose practice focuses on the social deficits of children on the spectrum. He begins laying out the three integrated components: Doing, Thinking and Feeling. He explains the challenges that children on the spectrum face in each of the three areas and begins to explain how each can be met.

Definitely not a "cookbook" with recipes, this is a thorough guidebook, one that lays the groundwork for planning and executing meaningful social skills training.

**Assessment for Planning**

The 5th chapter provides both indirect and direct methods of assessing a child's social functioning and the child's needs. Indirect includes parent, teacher and even child questionnaires. Bellini also provides A Social Skills Inventory and a Social Skills Checklist for direct evaluation. He also lays out how to record observations, and how to use assessment information to write Social Skill Goals and shorter term benchmarks, or objectives.

The 6th chapter helps the educator or clinician decide if a child's deficit is an "Acquisition Deficit" or a "Performance Deficit." An acquisition deficit is a skill a child has never learned. A performance deficit is difficulty a child has in executing a skill he or she may have been taught. Determining which a deficit is will determine whether the skill needs to be modeled and generalized, or whether the skill just needs to be practiced and successful execution needs to be reinforced.

**Strategies**

The last part of the book lays out a broad range of strategies for teaching and practicing social skills. Bellini is very clear that he does not intend for the book to be prescriptive, but instead to offer a wide range of strategies for the teacher or clinician to pursue. He provides tools for each of the three components: Doing, Thinking and Feeling. He provides worksheets to help students practice identifying feeling. He provides strategies for teaching self monitoring skills. He suggests lots of fun ways to practice the doing—role playing and social skills games among others.

**This One's for You**

This is a great resource to have on your shelf, especially for teachers who may have students on the Autism Spectrum. Dr. Bellini puts a chapter summary at the end of each chapter, to provide a means to retain your reading.

More and more learning support teachers will be seeing high functioning students with Autism Spectrum Disorder, and this volume will help them identify and remediate deficits in social skills among socially awkward children.

*Links in this article:*
1. http://ercik.about.com/7z=6/2z7k
2. http://ercik.about.com/7z=6/2z7l