

Group Connections / Liana Peña Morgens, Ph.D.
Pragmatic Group Agreement and Confidentiality Form

Please read this form and return the last page signed with your application.

Our groups are comprised of **Six Areas of Concentration**

- Awareness of Self and Others
- Body Language
- Communication
- Social Language
- Emotional Development
- Awareness and Problem Solving
- Critical Thinking

Our Group Therapy Philosophy

As social pragmatics is a developmental issue, our group program runs on an ongoing basis. Mastering the concept of friendship at 5 years of age is not the same as understanding this interaction at 7 years, 10 years or during adolescence. This is because the concept of friendship and social interactions changes developmentally throughout childhood and adolescence, as well as throughout the adult life span.

Our philosophy is that children with social pragmatic difficulties require intervention beyond the very short term, as problems with generalization often accompanies pragmatic issues. Therefore, while short-term training may be beneficial, we feel these children need ongoing training that provides age-appropriate pragmatic instruction/therapy.

We are very excited about our curriculum. However, it is only 50% of therapeutic experience provided during group. The other half is the group process that develops as the sessions progress. Over time, group members tend to emulate many of their issues from school, home, with peers, etc. during group. This is the time for the group to process and learn from the issues and problems. Group members soon learn that group is a safe place for processing their problems.

The curriculum is very comprehensive and continues on a rotating basis. While the curriculum follows a sequence, we are not tied to a time schedule (i.e., groups are conceptualized as ongoing). This allows us to revisit a difficult topic the following week through another modality. The goal is for the group members to fully understand the topics. More importantly, it is important for the group members to be able to use group time to process any social difficulties they would like to bring to the group. Many times, the scheduled pragmatic lesson may be put aside as a more valuable learning experience may be available as the members attempt to work together to solve a group problem.

Friendships outside of group

As the pragmatic program follows a group therapy model, friendships among group members outside of the sessions are discouraged. This is because outside interactions interfere with the group dynamics, and many times, group members expect interactions among their group mates to be the same outside of group. This assumption leads to false expectations and potential conflict with the other group member. Additionally, group members appreciate having a place to develop their skills where they do not have to worry about their outside peers being present.

Group Member Profile and Readiness

Group members are matched in terms of grade level/age. Currently, our group breakdown consists of the following grade/age levels:

Kindergarten/First Grade
Second Grade
Third/Fourth Grade
Fifth/Sixth Grade
Early Teen
Young Adult
Adult

Group members are required to work together as a group and at times, work with other group members in smaller groups or dyads. For this reason, it is important that children/adolescents in the group are similar in terms of age, developmental level, and cognitive ability.

Ready candidates are children whose main diagnosis is Nonverbal Learning Disability, Asperger's Disorder, or high functioning PDD-NOS. Also, the typical child/adolescent in our groups is high functioning in terms of cognitive ability, but again, struggling with social pragmatics.

Children/Adolescents are not considered ready for the group if emotional/behavioral issues interfere with their ability to participate in the group effectively or the group process (eg., not interfering with the other members ability to function effectively in group). Children whose social problems stem from aggression or other behavioral problems are not likely to benefit from the group program as these issues are not addressed as primary areas.

If a group member is continually disruptive to the group process or creates an unsafe environment for others, he or she may not be considered ready to continue the group. At that time, a referral will be made for services that will better serve the child's most prominent issues.

Our goal is to provide group members with a low stimulating and safe environment to learn and practice the necessary pragmatic skills to succeed socially.

Parent Sessions (for all groups except Young Adult and Adult):

At the end of each topic area, parents will be invited to attend a parent session where we will discuss ideas for incorporating the material the children learn into the home and schools. Parents may also invite the children's school teacher and staff at no additional charge.

In addition to discussing the main topic areas, this session provides feedback to the parents regarding the group members' progress as a whole and as individuals. As each group member's progress is based on an interaction with others, it is not possible to give parents complete feedback without describing the member's behavior relative to his or her interaction with others. This cannot be done without all parents present. Only individual goals that are based on pragmatic and social interactional issues are discussed in group format. Any concerns that are not directly related to the group objectives are discussed with parents in private.

Payment and Attendance:

The fees for our group are:

Diagnostic Consultation	\$140 / hour
Group Therapy	\$55 / session

New clients are accepted when space is available. Group members who enter the group may not be entering at the beginning of unit one. A diagnostic consultation, which occurs prior to the first group session, will provide information regarding an applicant's readiness to participate in the group.

Once an individual is accepted into the group, based on readiness and need for group, a weekly slot is held for the child and parent (parent sessions). The session fee, which is paid at the beginning of each group session, covers this slot, and the client is responsible for the fee independent of attendance. As each session builds on the previous sessions, it is important for your child and the process of the group that each group member attend every session. We understand that, at times, clients cannot make it to sessions due to emergency circumstances. Therefore, each client is allowed to miss up to 6 sessions (child or parent sessions) in a one-year cycle.

A NO-SHOW fee of \$50 for absences. This fee is NOT covered by insurance. Again, we understand that emergencies do occur. Therefore, we withhold the NO-SHOW fee for the first three missed sessions in one calendar year.

At Consultation

Once the Teacher Report Form is completed and reviewed, the family will be notified in writing regarding the child's readiness for the group. If there are questions following the clinic decision, the family may schedule a feedback session at no charge.

Release of Records

Each group member in the group is required to have a release (exchange) of information form signed by their guardian for their school. This gives us permission to send pragmatic and behavioral questionnaires to teachers for the purposes of determining group appropriateness.

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Agreement for Services

I have reviewed and accept the Agreement Form provided to me regarding the Pragmatic Language Group. I consent to providing pragmatic group therapy to my child, _____, as outlined in this form. I understand that I am financially responsible for services rendered unless other arrangements (i.e., insurance) have been approved.

Signature of Parent or Guardian

Date

Privacy and Confidentiality

We are dedicated to preserving the confidentiality and privacy of all our client families. In general, all communication between a client and a psychologist are considered confidential and this confidentiality is protected by law. There are some exceptions and we are required by Massachusetts's law to inform you of the limits on confidentiality. There are a number of rare circumstances in which we cannot maintain confidentiality:

1. If a client presents a clear danger to himself and refuses to accept appropriate treatment, information is released to protect the client.
2. If a client communicates an actual threat of physical violence to an identifiable victim, information is released to protect the potential victim.
3. If a judge orders the disclosure of information or orders me to testify, information relevant to the legal issue would be provided.
4. If services are being covered by a third party payor, I may be requested to provide information. Insurance companies claim to keep this information confidential. If you request it, I will provide you with any information, which I submit, to an insurer on your behalf.
5. If the clinician has reasonable cause to believe that a minor child is being abused or neglected, there is a legal mandate to report to the Department of Social Services.

These situations rarely arise, but if they do, it is our policy to discuss these matters with our before taking any action. In all other circumstances, client information will only be shared upon express written consent of the patient or parent. If you have any questions, please discuss them with your clinician. I have read the information regarding limits of confidentiality:

_____ I understand the limits of confidentiality and do not have any specific questions.

_____ I would like to discuss the limits of confidentiality in more detail with my clinician.

Date

Signature of Parent or Guardian