



## **The Social Navigator App**

### What does it take to be social?

Effective social interaction requires a coordination of some basic cognitive abilities:

1. Paying attention to social cues and environmental conditions (scanning visual field and orienting attention to relevant variables)
2. Evaluating cues from other people and correctly interpreting situations (social referencing, empathy and central coherence)
3. Recognizing one's own intentions and agenda ( self-awareness, goal development)
4. Accurately predicting likely reactions and outcomes (working memory and discrimination skills)
5. Planning a response ( predicting likely outcomes and sequencing actions)
6. Acting out that response (performance- expressive language, inflection/tone, physical expressions, maintaining focus and attention, etc.)
7. Monitoring the effectiveness of one's response (reevaluating interaction)
8. Adjusting behavior according to other's reactions

## **Behind the Design**

*The Social Navigator* has been thoughtfully developed to address the neurological differences and cognitive deficits that lead to poor interpersonal functioning. Social competence requires that the child can engage in specific cognitive tasks. Every component of *The Social Navigator* has been designed to support, practice and enhance these cognitive skills.

### **Reduces Impulsivity**

*Children with social and emotional challenges can be highly reactive and often don't think before they act. They typically use their feelings to guide their actions and rarely consider possible outcomes or how their behavior will impact others. They are often cognitively impatient and have a hard time considering various options when they have to solve even simple problems.*

The *Social Navigator* automatically redirects the child's attention from their emotional reaction to thinking about the strategies they can use to get their needs met. Simply put, it shifts their attention from *how* they feel to *what* they can do. Additionally, the app processes information for them and instantly generates realistic options and considerations to guide their behavior.

### **Directs Attention**

*Many children with social challenges have difficulty paying attention to what's going around them and rarely consider environmental circumstances before they act. Often they don't take the time to consider the type of situation they are in, with whom they are interacting or even their location.*

The *Social Navigator* draws attention to these considerations by asking the user to enter their current circumstances. Situational concerns are then addressed in the output section in an effort to both guide behavior *and* strengthen cognitive associations.

### **Improves Self-awareness**

*Behaviorally impulsive children rarely consider their own concerns or the self-interests that drive them to act. Most struggle to both identify and articulate what it is they want to be able to do in any given situation.*

The Social Navigator prompts the child to identify their need. The drop down menu is a convenient format that allows the child to identify what they want with little effort and also assists them in distinguishing subtle descriptive differences.

## **Expands Social Awareness**

*Individuals with social challenges commonly have trouble accurately identifying what others are thinking and often do not readily appreciate how their behavior affects others. Additionally, they have difficulty obtaining information from the environment and often fail to consider the type of situation they are in or what is expected of them under those circumstances.*

- The “Situation” page is designed to improve social comprehension and formally teaches the child the normative rules that apply to common situational factors.
- The “Strategies” page is designed to improve empathy skills. Suggested approaches remind the child of the other person’s perspective and how their behavior will likely affect others.
- The “Reminders” page is designed to prompt the child to consider the environmental factors that may be challenging for them to manage.

## **Organizes a Plan of Action**

*The majority of children with social and behavioral challenges have difficulty holding information in their conscious mind and using that information to organize and plan their actions.*

The “Accomplishments” page provides the child with a condensed list of the suggested strategies and actions specific to their situation. This page allows the user to document the child’s performance, but *also* assists the child in planning and execution.

## **Reduces Reflexive Negativity and Agitation**

*So many children with social and emotional issues have been corrected so many times, that they become highly reactive to any redirection. Concurrently, adults attempting to manage and aid these children often become overwhelmed and frustrated by the chronic challenges they present. Both parties wind up overreacting when even small conflicts arise and concentrate on overpowering each other, instead of finding a way to resolve the conflict.*

The Social Navigator is tool designed to aid in conflict resolution. It decreases resistance in the child because the directives are being presented by the app, not a person. More importantly, The Social Navigator redirects attention from a power struggle to a problem to be solved for both the child and the adult. Finally, it reduces frustration for both parties by doing the work for them and generating suggestions and ideas to help the child get his or her needs met in a socially acceptable manner.

## **Promotes Generalization**

*Traditional interventions concentrate on teaching social skills and self-management skills through stories, formal lessons or reinforcement models. When the child is interacting with others or is experiencing a conflict, they are expected to apply what they have learned. This assumes that the child is calm enough to have the capacity to reason, the discrimination skills to recognize what type of situation they are in and how others are reacting to them, and the planning skills to quickly formulate an appropriate response. All of which are skills that have been identified as particularly challenging for this type of child.*

The Social Navigator was developed to address these neurological differences and deficits, not ignore them. The app guides the child in real time, through actual events and sets them up to succeed. Associations are more likely to be reinforced through actual experience, and through practice, under-developed neural connections can be strengthened.