

Apps for Social Emotional Learning

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App: Smiling Mind

Developers: Smiling Mind

Availability: iPhone, iPad & Android

Cost: Free

Target Age: Smiling Mind has multiple sessions for various age groups. The age groups are broken down into meditations for individuals age 7 to 9, 10 to 12, 13 to 15, and 16 to 18. Smiling Mind also has “Classroom” sessions for those age groups as well.

About The App/ Including Features: The 7 to 9 year old age group focuses on young children who are learning social skills and learning to be independent with their new responsibilities as students and friends. The app takes children through different meditations exploring belly breathing, sounds, tastes, and senses. The meditations vary in length from 1 1/2 minutes to 11 minutes and can be used with children with a variety of different attentional needs. The app provides the child with the opportunity to notice things in their environment that they may not have noticed before. It provides meditations that help students connect with empathy, kindness, gratitude, and self-compassion. The app also has bite-sized meditations that are shorter in length for students with attentional issues or for when you just don't have enough time. In addition, there are activities that can be used at home.

The 10 to 12 year old age group focuses on helping children understand the power of their words and how important it is to treat others with respect. It also supports them as they become more independent and take on different roles in their life. The meditations in this section are very similar to those geared towards the younger age group, but also include mindful listening, mindful learning, and various partner activities.

The 13 to 15 year old age group focuses on supporting students in their vulnerable teenage years. This includes dealing with friendships, exploring emotions, and recognizing physical sensations associated with emotions. It helps students make choices using the “Three C's; Calm, Clear, and Content.” This section also supports adolescents navigate relationships during this time in their life. The app also challenges students to recognize when they are getting caught up in insignificant details or over-thinking.

The 16 to 18 year old group helps support teenagers as they move on to the next stage of their life. It supports them in getting to know themselves through the practice of self-compassion. The app also helps the student focus on who they hope to become. Most importantly, the app teaches the student to manage stress and ground themselves in times of pressure. The app encourages a “growth mindset” approach; students learn that they are on the road to getting to where they want to be.

The “Classroom” programs are for educators and are the same type of meditations discussed above, tailored to a classroom setting.

Also included is a “Mindfully Back-to-School” section that helps students, teachers, and parents maintain a sense of calmness in what can be a very hectic time at the start of the school year. Specifically, this section supports students by helping them cope with change, treating others with compassion, and learning to identify their emotions.

Recommended Use: A School Psychologist has various opportunities to use this app in both group and individual counseling sessions. The app has different meditation sessions that can be used with almost any type of student. Shorter meditation sessions allow for more time for the school psychologist to work through any concerns the student may bring up. Longer meditations can provide a sense of relief to a student that may not be ready to talk.

App: Breathe, Think, Do with Sesame Street

Developers: Sesame Workshop

Availability: [iPhone](#), [iPad](#) & [Android](#)

Cost: Free

Target Age: The Sesame Street website suggests this app works best with children ages 5 & under, but this app could be used to help children in grades pre-k – 2nd depending on the child's cognitive development.

About The App/ Including Features: Breathe, Think, Do with Sesame Street is a research based app that works as a tool for parents and other educational professionals to utilize when working with children who are struggling with self-regulation skills, social- emotional skills and who need help understanding social cues. This app is user friendly and provides all parties involved with a simple yet effective three step problem solving strategy: Breathe (put your hand on your tummy now take a deep breath and exhale slowly, now repeat three times), Plan (think, think, think of a plan), Do (pick the best plan and follow-through). There are two buttons on the main screen, a "parent" button that offers tips and strategies for addressing different issues like sibling rivalry, patience, managing aggression, etc... and the "Español" button, which allows users to use the app in Spanish. In the "settings" there is an option that allows the user to personalize the app by recording their own voice.

The app presents its users with five different scenarios/ activities where the Monster is struggling with different common challenges, that children may have difficulty succeeding with on their own. The also depicts the Monster feeling upset, anxious, nervous, fearful or angry. The narrator helps the child to detect these changes by describing the Monster's body language, for example: "Oh no, the Monster is frowning, and his shoulders are all scrunched up, the Monster is upset." The app then prompts the child to help the Monster practice breathing. The next step is to "think of three plans" the app then presents the user with some bubbles to pop while the Monster "thinks, thinks, of a plan." After the child has helped the Monster think of a plan, the child must now help the Monster pick the plan they think the Monster should try. After the Monster has overcome the presented scenario, the narrator reminds the user to practice the learned strategies such as: Breathe, Think and Do, whenever they are presented with challenging circumstances.

Recommended Use: If a school psychologist wanted to add this app to their "tool box" they could utilize it in various ways. They could ask the child to tell them about a time he or she felt angry, sad, anxious, nervous or upset and what they did when they felt this way. If a child is presenting difficulty expressing themselves verbally, the child could draw a picture. Furthermore, the app could help the clinician practice identifying emotions with the child, by pausing the app or relating back to the app and asking the child "when the Monster's cheeks were red and his arms were folded in front of his chest... how do you think the Monster felt?" A school psychologist could also refer back to specific scenarios and ask the child if they ever experienced a similar situation, and how they went about resolving it? For example, "remember when the Monster was in the playground waiting online for the slide and started to feel impatient and upset? Has this ever happened to you?" Most importantly, a school psychologist could use this app as a fun way to teach and practice the breathing strategy with a child who is having difficulties controlling their emotions. In addition to that, another suggestion would be to give the child homework. Instructing the child to practice breathing whenever he or she feels frustrated, anxious, nervous or sad in class, at home, or even in the playground. Overall, this is a great app and resource for all adults who want to help children appropriately express different emotions.

App: Conversation Planner

Developers: Happy Frog

Availability: iPhone & iPad

Cost: Free

Target Age: The Conversation Planner App can be used with children ages 5-15 years old on the Autism Spectrum. It works best for children who are verbal and have moderately developed social skills. Children with more advanced social skills may not benefit from learning the skills in this app.

About The App/ Including Features: This app has a very specific goal in mind and can be very helpful to students on the autism spectrum. It takes the student through four free levels of conversational skills followed by 14 more levels for a price of \$2.99. The levels are set up with a series of ten questions to answer. In order for you to move on to the next level, you must get at least 8 out of 10 correct. Each level focuses on different parts of a conversation that include identifying a talking partner, identifying each person's goal in the conversation, recognizing when there are others in close proximity to the conversation and how the conversation can affect the people nearby. The app also quizzes students on judging the length of conversations to see if they know what is socially appropriate. For example, if you are at the coffee shop ordering a drink, you will not engage the cashier in a ten-minute long conversation. Your goal is to order your coffee and her goal is to take your order. However, if you go out with your mom to get your nails done, you will most likely engage her in a long conversation about things that interest you both. Conversation Planner also has exercises that help students understand when the other person is ready to have a conversation with them. The app provides a scenario and then a choice of three responses of nonverbal cues. It also reviews how to start and end a conversation with different people.

Recommended Use: The Conversation Planner app will probably be best used in a one on one counseling session. You can use it to go over social skills the student already knows, or teach them more developed social skills. Since the app is more specific for use with children with social skills deficits and ASD, it is really up to the School Psychologist to determine its appropriate use. You must have a solid understanding your student's current level of social functioning in order for the app to be useful in a school setting.

App: Positive Penguins
Developers: HR Inside
Availability: iPhone, iPad, & Android
Cost: \$0.99

Target Age: Positive Penguins can be used for children ages 5 to 8 with the assistance of an adult or for children ages 8 and up alone.

About The App/ Including Features: Positive Penguins is an app that utilizes cognitive behavioral techniques in a fun and inviting manner for children. At a one-time price of \$0.99, the app provides four options: examples, meditation, how are you feeling, and game mode. The guided meditation uses a calm, child-friendly voice. The app provides an example on the “home page” which helps users understand how the app works. It also features a game that can be helpful for breaks. The app delves into identifying the child’s current emotional state upon selecting “How Are You Feeling.” Children are able to customize their penguin by picking its gender and clothing, which allows them to connect to their character. After designing their penguin, children are prompted to choose how they are feeling from 13 feelings, including “other.” After entering their emotional state, the user is asked, what happened to make them feel like this and why they think they are experiencing this emotion. Each question provides a textbox for the child’s answers and the app uses the answer in the following question. Next, the “4 positive penguins” say they would like to help challenge the negative thought. Evi is a detective and gets more details about why the child is feeling this way, Ollie asks the child about other things that could influence this thought and make the situation seem worse, Happ asks the child to list all things that could happen (good, bad, and unlikely), and Buddy has the child type how they would help a friend with the same negative thought. The app prompts the child to use the strategy they would tell their friend to use and concludes that the user has successfully challenged their negative thought.

Recommended Use: This app is a worthwhile intervention tool for children experiencing negative feelings, such as anger, sadness, and nervousness, in order to achieve more positive thoughts and feelings. Positive Penguins can aid in emotional development by helping children identify their emotions and learn how to change negative thoughts and feelings. A school psychologist can use this in a one-to-one setting with a child to get the child more comfortable talking about his or her feelings and as a guide in the counseling session.

App: Social Stories Creator and Library

Developers: Touch Autism

Availability: iPhone & iPad

Cost: The app is free, with in-app purchases ranging from \$0.99 to \$2.99 for each individual, pre-created social story. To purchase the full package, which includes all of the stories and upgraded features, the app costs \$29.99.

Target Age: The creators of the Social Stories Creator and Library app suggest using the app for children ages 6 to 8, but the app can be used for children 4 and up.

About The App/Including Features: This app can be used for children who have difficulties across social settings, and can be particularly useful for students with Autism Spectrum Disorder, ADHD, and Down's Syndrome. Students with special needs often benefit from social skills training and may learn the skills more easily when presented with visual supports. The Social Stories app can be utilized by school psychologists, parents, teachers, speech language pathologists, and occupational therapists. There are 23 pre-created stories, including stories on divorce, emotions and feelings, personal space, taking turns, and "wh" questions. Upon selecting a story, the user is presented with two choices: story and rules. Each page of a story includes written sentences that are read aloud and are accompanied by pictures. Users are also given the option to create a social story from scratch. This feature allows the user to take pictures using their device, write his or her own sentences, and record his or her own voice. Stories can be saved as PDFs and/or printed. The app can be used to make visual schedules or other visual prompts. The professional can lock the app into certain categories at any given time for particular skills, students, and/or classrooms.

Recommended Use: Social Stories are often beneficial for students with ASD, ADHD, Down's Syndrome, and any student with a social skills deficit. The school psychologist could use this app in either individual counseling, group counseling, or in the classroom. Any student with a social skills deficit could benefit from the stories created in this app. In a group setting, the school psychologist may decide one of the stories could help students in a particular group, such as a social skills group. Students with ASD in particular may benefit from this app. The school psychologist can consult with classroom teachers to determine whether or not this app could be useful for a student with ASD in the classroom.

App: TF-CBT Triangle of Life

Developers: Allegheny Health Network

Availability: iPhone, iPad, & Andriod

Cost: Free

Target Age: The app is designed for children ages 8 to 12 who have been through a traumatic experience, such as domestic violence, sexual abuse, physical abuse, gun violence, traumatic deaths, wars, and accidents.

About The App/Including Features: TF-CBT Triangle of Life is an app designed by professionals at Allegheny Health Network and students from Carnegie Mellon University. Produced with clinical experts in Trauma Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, the app aims to teach children the connection between thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. Techniques such as cognitive restructuring and challenging negative thoughts are employed through a fun and interactive game. The game starts with a story told by a lion and takes place in a jungle. The user travels through the jungle as the lion, who listens to the stories and dilemmas of different animals and helps them understand their experiences. The lion uses the “thoughts, feelings, and behavior triangle” to help each animal practice generating more positive thoughts during their hardship in order to develop more positive and helpful behaviors.

Recommended Use: Using the TF-CBT game in a counseling session, the school psychologist could use the jungle story as an example when identifying the student’s thoughts, feelings, and behaviors and how they are affecting his or her perception. The app provides a fun and non-threatening outlet for the child to relate and learn the components of TF-CBT. Depending on the student, the school psychologist may let the child play the whole game at once or pause the game intermittently to further explain or relate the lesson back to the student’s experience.

App: Daniel Tiger's Grr-ific Feelings

Developers: PBS KIDS

Availability: iPhone, iPad, Android and for download on PBS KIDS website

Cost: \$2.99

Target Age: The app is designed to help children ages 2-5 identify and express emotions.

About The App/Including Features: Daniel Tiger's Grr-ific Feelings is based on the PBS KIDS show, Daniel Tiger's neighborhood and features four games that promote social emotional development in young children. In the Trolley Game, children have fun using their finger to drive the trolley around the tracks to mini-games that describe different feelings. Children can practice calming down just as Daniel does with a squeeze and a deep breath and learn to count to four with Daniel when he feels so mad that he wants to roar. They also learn to feel proud as they help Daniel clean up and laugh along with Daniel's happy dance. In Daniel's Sing-Along, children can choose from 18 of their favorite Daniel Tiger's Neighborhood songs, each one fully animated and expressing a different feeling. Daniel's Drawing Easel features a variety of drawing materials and encourages children to draw out their feelings. Pictures can be saved to the gallery or shared with family and friends. In the Feelings Photo Booth, children can take pictures of themselves making their sad, mad or happy faces and see how Daniel feels looks when he feels that way.

Recommended Use: This app is an intervention tool for children that can be used to help children identify and appropriately express emotions. That app can be used by parents with their child or by a school psychologist in a counseling session. Since the app features a number of different feelings, the adult working with the child should guide the child to the games that target the identified problem.

App: MindShift

Developers: Anxiety BC and the BC Mental Health and Addiction Services

Availability: iPhone, iPad, & Andriod

Cost: Free

Target Age: MindShift was designed to help teens and young adults cope with anxiety.

About The App/Including Features: MindShift uses a cognitive behavioral therapy approach to help individuals learn how to relax, develop helpful ways of thinking, and identify active steps that will help them take charge of anxiety. This app includes strategies to deal with everyday anxiety, as well as specific tools to help an individual make sleep count, ride out intense emotions, and cope with test anxiety, perfectionism, social anxiety, performance anxiety, worry, panic, and conflict. The app includes seven sections: *Anxiety 101* is a psychoeducational tool designed to teach the user about anxiety. *My Situations* allows the user to add situations they want help with and create a personalized plan of action. The *Check Yourself* empowers the user to check for physiological symptoms of anxiety and rate their anxiety on a 10-point scale. It then recommends a chill out tool for the moment. *Thinking Right* features realistic thinking strategies for managing worry, reframing thoughts, dealing with perfectionism and tackling social fears. It also encourages positive self-talk. *Chill-Out Tools* provides relaxation exercises, visualizations, mindfulness strategies, and keeps track of preferences. *Take Active Steps* provide specific action plans for specific situations to replace worrying. Lastly, the *Inspiration* section has 38 interesting and helpful quotes.

Users can easily access *Quick Tips*, by clicking on the button in the upper right corner. This feature provides immediate help through four different strategies – Calm Breathing Exercise, Quick Mental Vacation, Thinking Right, and Active Coping Strategies.

The *Help* section features an introductory slideshow and includes emergency helpline contact information.

My Situations allows the user to keep track of their anxiety in order to look for patterns.

Recommended Use: MindShift can initially be used in a counseling setting to provide psychoeducation about anxiety and help an individual develop an action utilizing the app's action plan development and mindfulness strategies. Once the user is comfortable with the app, it can be used as a self-management tool and allows the counselor to check on progress. Although the app was created specifically for people with anxiety, MindShift features great tools for individuals dealing with everyday stress or worry.