

SOCIAL PARTICIPATION

For this Key Topic we will:

1. Define social participation and describe possible social participation goals.
2. Identify things that might help or interfere with your social participation.
3. Identify strategies that might help you accomplish your social participation goals.

■ What is Social Participation?

SOCIAL PARTICIPATION is spending time and doing activities with others. This can involve doing activities that you are interested in with others such as:

- Joining an after school class, club, or sport team
- Going to a special event at school or in the community (for example: *a movie, dance or concert, parade, sports game, museum, park, restaurant*).



■ What are Social Participation Goals?

A **GOAL** is what you want to accomplish.

Social Participation Goals could focus on:

1. Trying out new activities while meeting new people **OR**
2. Being more involved in familiar activities by interacting more with others or taking a more active role

Your coach will work with you to reach your social participation goals by using the SPAN app and SPAN's Goal Setting and Planning Tip and Topic.

■ Getting started

You identified some social participation goals when you built your profile. You and your coach will pick a goal and develop a detailed plan with specific steps and strategies to help you accomplish it.

■ What helps or interferes with social participation?

Social participation can become harder or easier depending on you, the people around you, the activity and/or place where the activity occurs. As you make a plan to reach your goals, keep these things in mind:

✓ Things about you:

- Things that you like about yourself and that other people like about you
- Things that you are good at and that you know how to do
- Things that might be hard for you to do or that you don't know how to do
- Things that you like to do or don't like to do

✓ Things about people around you:

- People who are helpful and supportive when needed.
- People who are nice to you and easy to get along with
- People who are NOT helpful, NOT supportive and/or NOT friendly

✓ Things about the activity:

- Think about what the activity will involve. For example:
 - The number of steps, the physical, social and thinking skills needed, how slow or fast the activity is, how long the activity takes, how the activity is organized, and the equipment and materials that are used
- Think about the parts of the activity that you are able to do AND the parts that might be challenging

✓ Things about the place where the activity occurs:

- Is there a cost and can I afford it?
- Can you get to the activity conveniently? Are there places that are more conveniently located?
- Is the activity in a safe environment?
- What is the space like (indoors or outdoors; small or large; cluttered or organized; bright or dim; accessibility or not; noisy or quiet; places to sit or stand)?
- What people are involved? How many people?
- Can anything about the space be changed so that you are able to participate and enjoy yourself? For example, having less people involved, being in a quieter room?

▪ How to use strategies to promote social participation



What are strategies?

STRATEGIES are things that you or others do to help you accomplish your goals.

Strategies are often used to manage challenges or problems that make it harder to reach your goals

Social participation strategies can be organized into these 3 categories:

1. Find or create opportunities that will help you reach your social participation goals.
2. Change some things about the activity or place where the activity occurs so that you are able to participate and enjoy yourself.
3. Teach others about things that help or interfere with your social participation.

In the SPAN program, you also will develop and keep track of additional strategies to help you accomplish your social participation goals.

1. Find or create opportunities that will help you reach your social participation goals. This involves two parts:

A. Find or create opportunities in your school and community

- Some locations that may have bulletin boards, flyers, online postings for activities and special events for teenagers include your school, clubs, community centers, religious centers, sports and fitness centers.
- Your local newspaper may also have a special events and community activities section.
- To find out more, you can call or email questions asking whether these locations have activities or events. Websites may include general contact information.
- Visiting the location in person can allow you to observe the activities and events that you are interested in and to ask your questions.
- Another option is to create your own activities with the help of family and others in places that you know and like.



B. Find out about the activity and place to see if it works for you

- **Find out if there are certain things about the activity or place where the activity occurs that might be a challenge for you.**
- **Here are some ways to gather information and ask questions:**
 - ✓ Prepare a list of questions to be asked about these things
 - ✓ Ask if there are different ways to participate based on your strengths and possible challenges
 - ✓ Ask if you can visit and observe so you know what to expect and what will be expected of you
 - ✓ Consider the things that will be needed in order to participate such as transportation, costs (fees, materials, equipment) and permissions

- **Consider your supports and strengths (things that might help with your participation):**
 - Talk about your interests and possible opportunities with family, friends, teachers, neighbors and others who you know that might have suggestions.
 - Ask others for help when you need information or assistance in finding or creating opportunities.
 - Contact friends or others who you can do things with (at home, school or other places in the community).

2. Change some things about the activity or place where the activity occurs so that you are able to participate and enjoy yourself

- First, think about supports, strengths, possible obstacles, and challenges related to the activity and the place where it occurs.
- Visit the place ahead of time to observe the activity and environment, so you know what to expect and what will be expected of you.
- Try to do as much as you think you can with or without help from others (as long as it is safe to do so).
- Try to figure out how to do some of the things or parts of the activity that are challenging for you and that you want to be able to do.
- It can be very helpful to prepare or practice before you go.

Change the activity or how you do the activity. *For example:*

- ✓ Take rest breaks if needed
- ✓ Take extra time if possible
- ✓ Use equipment to help you if you need it and you have it
- ✓ Explore other possible equipment and materials that might help
- ✓ Sit or stand closer to the instructor to limit distractions and to hear and see better
- ✓ Sit or stand closer to supportive and helpful people
- ✓ Ask if directions or information can be provided in a way that you understand it better

- For example, more slowly, using spoken, written and/or visual directions, using simpler language, and/or less information at a time
- ✓ Ask if the activity can be set up and/or done in a way that best fits your strengths, abilities and interests
 - For example, can the activity be done in a more organized way, with a slower or faster pace, or using additional equipment or materials?



3. Teach others about things that help or interfere with your social participation.

You can teach others about what you need and do not need help with when participating. It's okay to let important people know beforehand what helps and interferes. These people include: family members, teachers, friends, coaches, activity leaders, neighbors.

This might include telling others:

1. How you like to be helped
2. How you don't like to be helped
3. What bothers you or interferes with your participation
4. Your strengths and interests
5. How an activity or environment could be changed so that it is easier for you to participate

Sometimes you won't know about all of these things until you try the activity or observe others participating in the activity.

■ Ways to have a positive experience when you participate

- ✓ Try to do things and interact with others who might have similar interests to you, who would understand and be supportive of you, and who you enjoy being around.
- ✓ Talk to others about activities and/or interests that you may have or that you may share with another person.
- ✓ Help someone who needs help. This may help you both have a positive experience!
- ✓ Refer to the Staying Positive Key Topic to assist you with positive thinking.
- ✓ Don't forget to HAVE FUN!



■ Future goal setting and planning

- Finally, consider that you might need to change your social participation goals and/or your planned steps and strategies that you use to reach your goals. This is true for everyone!
- This is something you can do on your own, with your coach AND/OR with your family and other supportive people in your life.
- Use SPAN's Goal Setting and Planning Tip and Topic to help you.
The process includes four key steps: **Goal → Plan → Do → Review**
 - ✓ **Goal:** Identify your goal or what you want to accomplish
 - ✓ **Plan:** Create a plan for how you will accomplish your goal
 - ✓ **Do:** Try out your selected plan with specific steps and additional strategies
 - ✓ **Review:** Think about what worked and did not work (make changes if needed)