Want Strong Social Skills? Top Execs Say These 4 Steps Are a Must.

From the time that the modern homeschooling movement began to gain a foothold in American culture, there is one question that prospective homeschoolers have received more than any other: "What about socialization?"

The flip side of this, of course, is the implication that students attending traditional public or private school are models of exemplary social skills. But given that roughly [15 percent](#) of the population in general qualifies as socially awkward, and only [3.4 percent](#) of the school age population is homeschooled, it seems fair to say that homeschooling is not the primary petri dish of poor social skills that we've always been told.

So what exactly *is* socialization and why does it matter if an individual has good social skills?

That question is answered by well-known businessmen Ted Malloch and Whitney MacMillan in their book, *[Common Sense Business](#)*. According to Malloch and MacMillan, strong social skills are one of the key components which determine if an individual has common sense. They define socialization in the following way:

> *"Social skills are any skills that facilitate interaction and communication with others. These rules and relations are communicated in both verbal and nonverbal forms. The process of learning this set of skills is called socialization."*

For those who feel they missed the socialization lessons that schools are purportedly supposed to teach, Malloch and

MacMillan offer encouragement: building strong social skills is a continual process. Given this, they offer four ways the average person can cultivate strong social skills:

1. Don't Fly Solo – "Seek out admirable mentors," Malloch and MacMillan advise. Trying to learn strong social skills without having strong, successful examples to follow is an uphill battle. Letting certain individuals know that you admire their interaction in social settings is a compliment, and the person with genuinely strong social skills is not likely to turn down another individual who asks for help in developing those same skills.

2. Be an Observer – This applies not just to others, but primarily to yourself. Those who wish to grow in their social skills will monitor "the thoughts and feelings… sen[t] to others both verbally and non-verbally." Take a good look at your clothes, your actions, your attitudes, and your patterns of speech and give yourself an honest assessment of how you would view yourself if placed in another set of shoes.

3. Reach Out – For the introverts among us, reaching out and connecting with others can be a challenge, but it's also essential. Those with strong social skills will reach out and "express empathy, healthy self-disclosure, and respectful contact" toward those around them.

4. Avoid Pitfalls – Staying humble and maintaining strong character is apparently key to developing strong social skills. As such, Malloch and MacMillan advise individuals to avoid bad character traits, such as "arrogance, prejudice, insecurity, and ignorance," which are "the enemies of socialization."

In 1818, [Thomas Jefferson laid out](#) what he thought the goals of primary education should be, whether performed in a classroom or under the direction of parents at home. Along with the usual admonitions on reading, writing, and

arithmetic, Jefferson sought to ensure that a child learned "to observe with intelligence and faithfulness all the social relations under which he shall be placed." Furthermore, he wanted American education "to form [children] to habits of reflection and correct action, rendering them examples of virtue to others, and of happiness within themselves."

In 2012, [a survey](#) conducted by Pew Research predicted that by the year 2020, most millennials would "lack 'deep-thinking capabilities' and 'face-to-face social skills.'" Is this a sign that we have failed to establish Jefferson's best social practices in schools? Is it time we focused more on instilling these essential social skills, not only in our children, but in ourselves as well?

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