



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

IRL Social Skills: A community-Based Solution for Loneliness

In a society where social connection is increasingly fragmented, social skills become a necessary survival skill

Portland, OR, April 2024: April is Autism Acceptance Month and Neurodiversity Awareness Month. But did you know that autistic teens and ADHD women are the most at-risk populations for suicide? Why is this? Could it be:

- the 10+ month long waitlist for diagnosis and treatment in the Portland area?
- the ongoing impacts the pandemic has wrought on our social relationships?
- continued economic challenges?
- outdated propaganda and stigma around autism and neurodivergence?
- lack of support for schools and special education?
- the loneliness epidemic, as outlined by Dr. Vivek Murthy, US Surgeon General?

IRL Social Skills seeks to solve these issues through community care and evidence-based group interventions that help teens and young adults navigate social, academic and professional life.

Founded by Mara McLoughlin, program director, speech-language pathologist, and appointed to the Oregon Commission for Autism by former Governor Kate Brown, IRL Social Skills has served over 200 families. Recognized by the US Chamber of Commerce as one of America's Top Small Businesses in 2023, IRL seeks to create a more equitable and inclusive world while supporting autistic and other socially struggling young people and their families.

In his 2023 report on the epidemic of loneliness, Dr. Murthy lays out a case for enhancing social skills to improve quality of life for the health of both individuals and of society. Community alone is not a cure for loneliness, but all the medical interventions in the world cannot even begin to address the very real threat of isolation and loneliness. Social skills are crucial skills that impact one's ability to lead a rich, healthy, and productive life.

To learn more about IRL Social Skills' commitment to autism acceptance, visit irlsocialskills.com.

ABOUT IRL SOCIAL SKILLS

IRL Social Skills is a multicultural team of neurodiverse LGBTQ+ speech therapists, occupational therapists, direct support workers, and mental health professionals. IRL's parent-mediated courses and workshops are conducted online for wide-reaching impact In Real Life.

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