

SOCIAL THINKING

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Overview

- Goal:
 - Introduce Social Thinking Concepts and provide strategies for intervention and support
- What is Social Thinking?
- Why it is so important?
- Social Thinking Development
- Strategies

What is Social Cognition/Thinking?

- -understanding how other people think.
- -predicting other people's behavior.
- -noticing and understanding how one's behavior impacts others.
- -understanding the "hidden curriculum" of school.

Why is Social Thinking Important?

- Impacts relationships with parents and families.
- Impairs the ability to establish and maintain friendships.
- Impacts the ability to function as a member of a classroom or group.
- Impacts academics: understanding of literature, social studies.

Areas Impacting Social Thinking:

- Perspective-taking: Theory of Mind
- Pragmatics/Problem Solving
- Social Communication/Discourse skills
- Emotional Regulation/Sensory Issues
leading to inflexibility, outbursts, frustration
- Narrative skills
- *Generalized anxiety impacts all areas

Social Thinking Development

- Begins in infancy and continues throughout life.
- Early social skills – joint attention, eye gaze, referencing others
- Core skills of joint attention lead to play skills-cooperation, sharing of imagination, working as part of a group
- Sophisticated skills – prediction, inference, understanding motivation, intent

Simple but complicated! “I want my child to have a friend!”

- Motivation – enjoy inner world, interaction too much trouble.
- Think with your eyes – assess situation, share space, body language, facial expression.
- Initiation – how to approach indiv./group
- Think about others – “What you know about people leads to conversation.” (Nancy Minchew).
- Timing – slow response to visual/verbal cues.
- Modify/repair – “blink of an eye”

Friendship Frustration

- Want friends – just don't get it!
 - Talk on-and-on about area of interest.
 - No social fake: walk away if not interested.
 - Nonverbal communication: may be unaware of own facial expression/body language
 - Ignore peers bids for attention interaction
 - Tone of voice (too loud/soft, sarcastic)
 - Blunt, appear rude, obnoxious, bossy, brag
 - May withdraw or act too silly
 - Become upset if lose a game, or rules change.

Goal: Social Thinking, Emotional Regulation, Transactional Support

- Teach social thinking-not just social skills, social vocabulary, perspective taking and related skills using visual supports.
- Provide opportunity for social interaction with coaching as needed.*Create positive emotional memories.
- **Collaborate with parents and teachers to inform intervention/goals-provide support.
- Reduce Anxiety by demystifying expectations.

Overall Strategies

Be flexible, creative, every child is different!

- Basic understanding - “think with eyes”. Be a social detective.
- Just me vs. You and me.
- People have thoughts about you based on how you look, what you do and what you say.
- Keep your body and brain in the group.
- Visual Supports – even for very high functioning ASP student (picture or written).
 - Social Stories
 - Comic strip Conversations
 - 5 Point Scale
 - Social/Behavior Mapping

Examples

- Social Story
- Comic strip Conversation
- Social Behavior Mapping
- 5 point Scale

Social Story

Describes a situation, skill or concept in terms of social cues, perspectives and expectations.

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- Written with child, from child's perspective.
- Uses positive language.
- If a negative behavior is necessary, mentioned carefully .. "Sometimes, people have difficulty"
- Uses descriptive/affirmative sentences to set the scene – 2-5.
- Use 0-1 directive sentence with words acknowledging the difficulty of always doing the right thing: " I will try"

Rotations

In kindergarten we have “rotations.” This means we work in small groups for 15 minutes and then we move to the next group.

When the group is over, the teacher says to “stop working!” and clean up. Sometimes, I am not finished. I tell myself “That is ok. I can finish later.”

We all stop, clean up and move to the next rotation.

Working in small groups can be fun!

Comic Strip Conversations

- Illustrate conversations between two or more people using simple drawings.
- Identifies what people say and do and emphasizes what people might be thinking.
- Used to work through a problem.
- Child draws with cues from adult.



“Hello”.

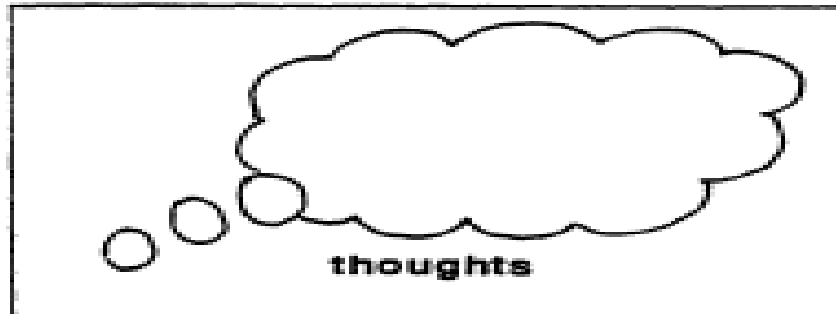
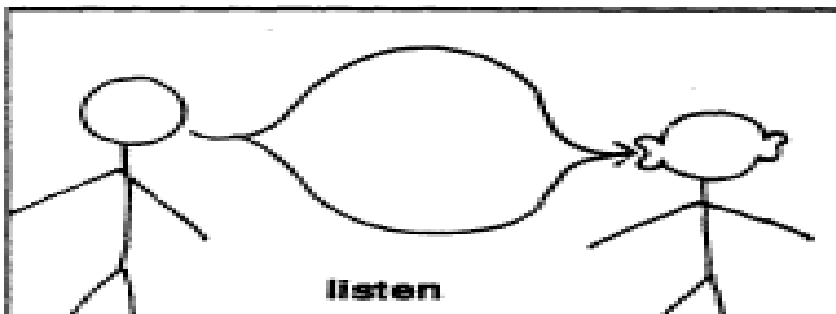
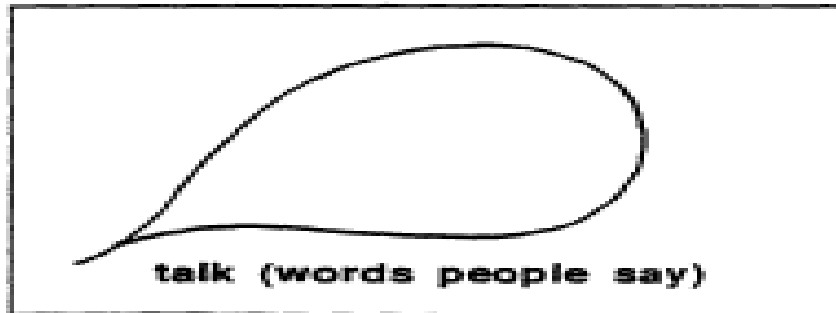
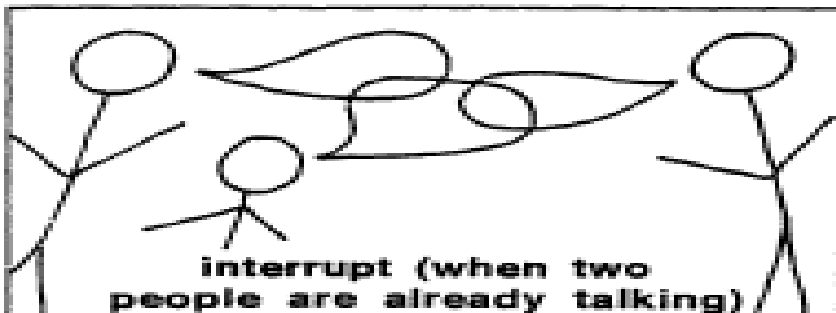
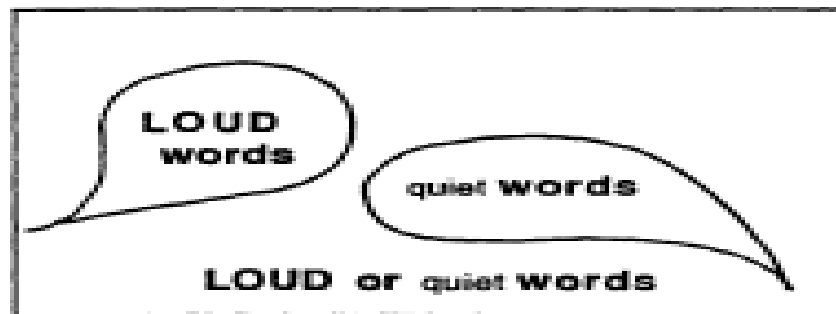
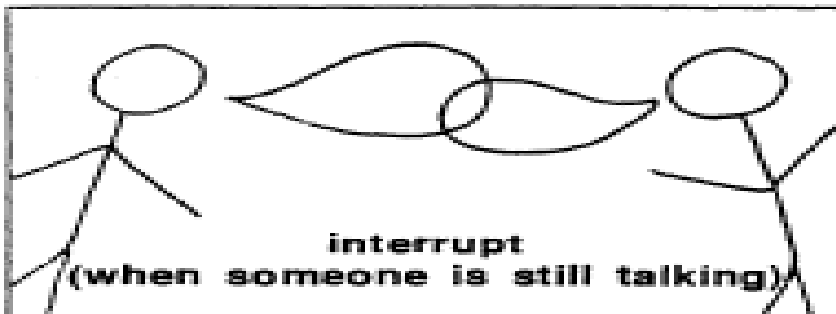
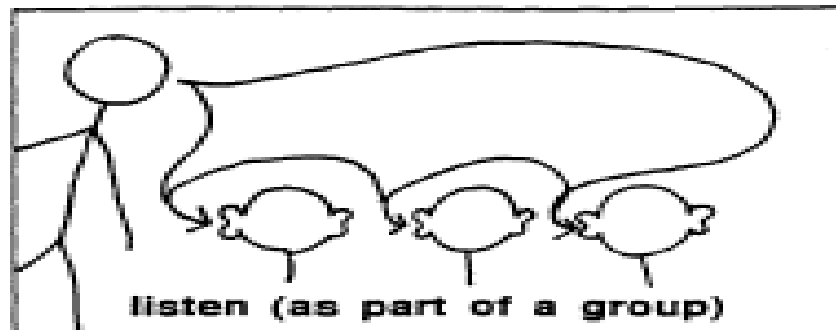
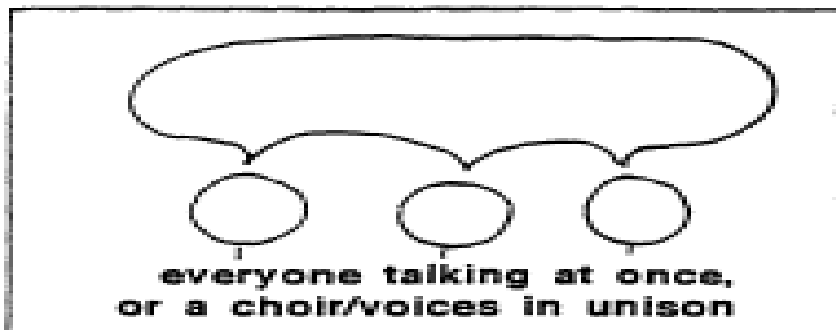
Talk: Words that people say.

I wonder what is on
the lunch menu
today. I hope it is hot
dogs!



Words and pictures of the mind. I have
thoughts. Other people have thoughts.

Conversation Symbols Dictionary



Comic Strip Conversation: Example



Tom called me kid because he didn't know my name, but wanted to play with me. The next time Tom or someone calls me "kid," I'll tell them my name and that I don't like to be called "kid." I'll apologize to Tom and tell him my name is A.S. I will also tell him I don't like being called "kid," and please don't call me that again.

Strategies for Parents

- You are the most important members of your child's social thinking team!
- Collaborate with school team to share information and strategies.
- Use Social Thinking vocabulary: think, know, feel, imagine, guess, plan, emotion words, etc.
- Use visual supports, social stories, cartoon conversations...

Parent Strategies cont'd..

- Make photo albums to talk about shared activities and experiences.
- Video-tape birthday parties, events...use social thinking vocabulary, point out body language, facial expression. “David smiled when you shared your toy with him!”
- Plan play dates --- plan motivating activities, talk about expectations.
- Role-play expected behaviors – keep age appropriate, typical kid specific.

Think Social – Teach Social!

- When kids understand and can express their feelings, improves self-regulation and self-esteem.
- When kids understand how their behavior impacts others—improves relationships.
- When kids become social thinkers, can reach their potential to become more independent members of community.