

# Introduction to Social Thinking

*Tools for Enhancing Pragmatic Language Abilities*

**Laurie Shaw, M.S., CCC-SLP**  
Speech-Language Pathologist



**Anna Shaw**  
Children's Institute

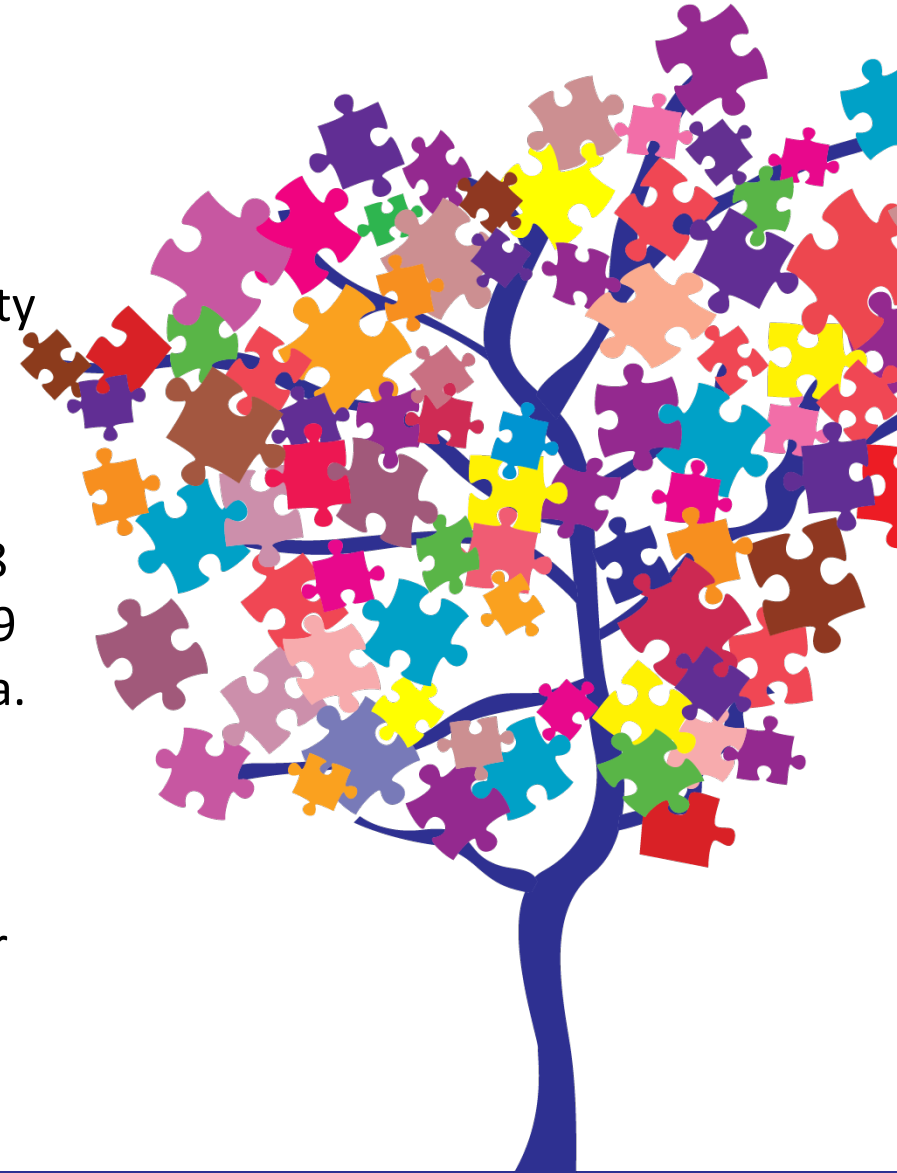
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# Laurie Shaw, M.S. CCC-SLP



- Born in Austin, TX
- Undergraduate degree from University of Texas at Austin
- Masters from California State University Northridge
- Began as behavioral therapist in 2008
- Practiced as an SLP-A from 2013-2019 in a variety of settings in Chattanooga.
- Anna Shaw Children's Institute since Summer 2020
- Specialty certificates in LAMP (Language Acquisition through Motor Planning) and LSVT-LOUD (Lee Silverman Voice Treatment)



# Course Objectives

- Understand Social Emotional Learning
- Understand Social Thinking methodology
- Understand ILAUGH model as it pertains to targeting pragmatic language deficits
- Navigate Social Thinking curriculum and intervention tools



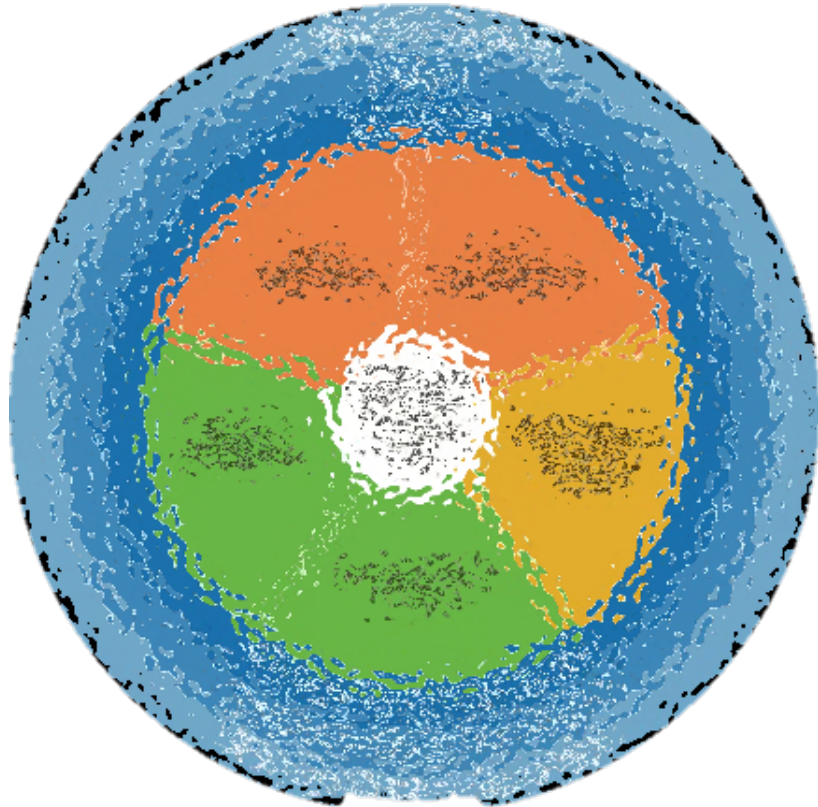
# What is Social Emotional Learning?

**Social and emotional learning (SEL) is the process through which children and adults understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions.**





# *How to facilitate SEL in presence of pragmatic language deficits?*

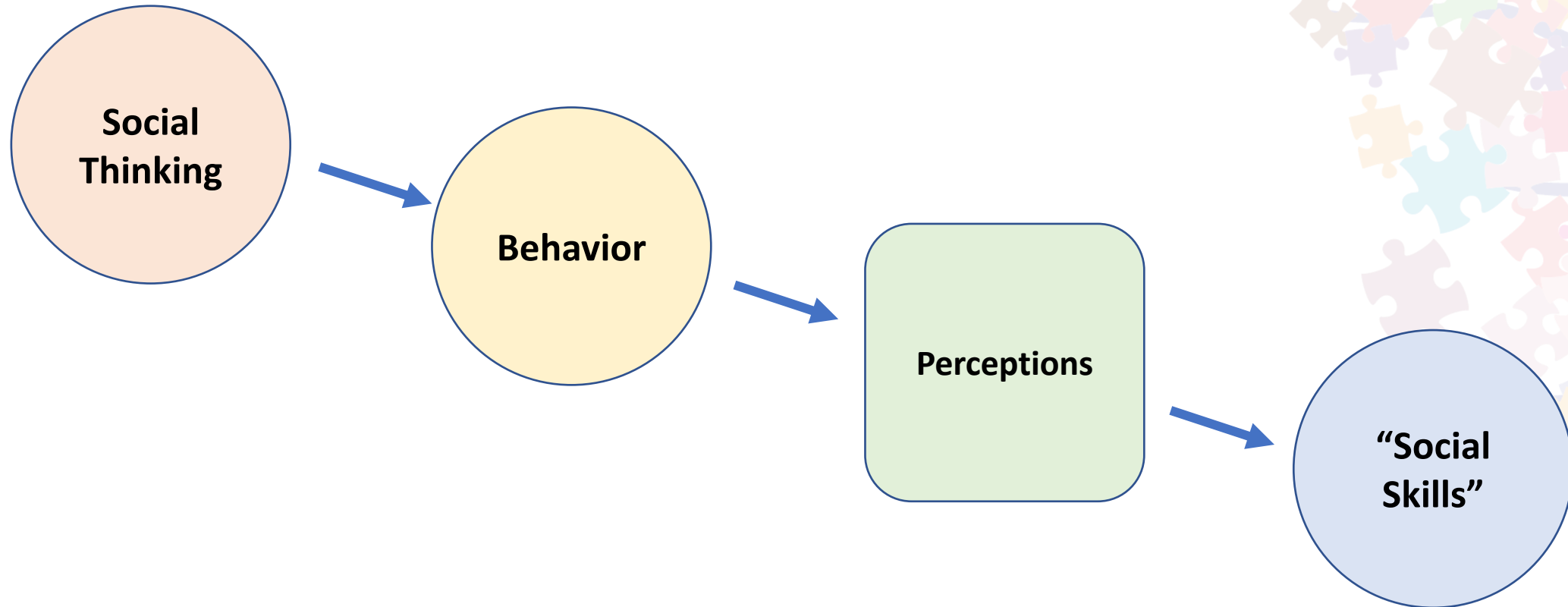


# Food for Thought

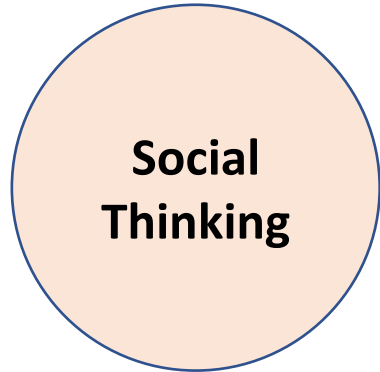
## *Why teach social thinking?*



# Social Thinking vs. Social Skills



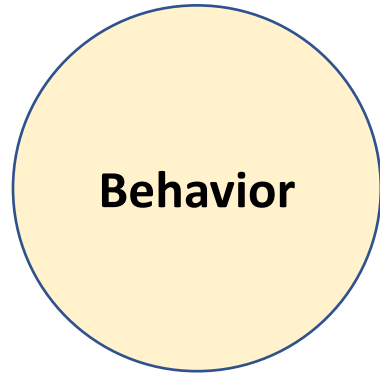
# Social Thinking vs. Social Skills



**Social thinking** is the ability to consider your own and others thoughts, emotions, beliefs, intentions, knowledge, etc. to better understand social situations and what behaviors are expected of you.

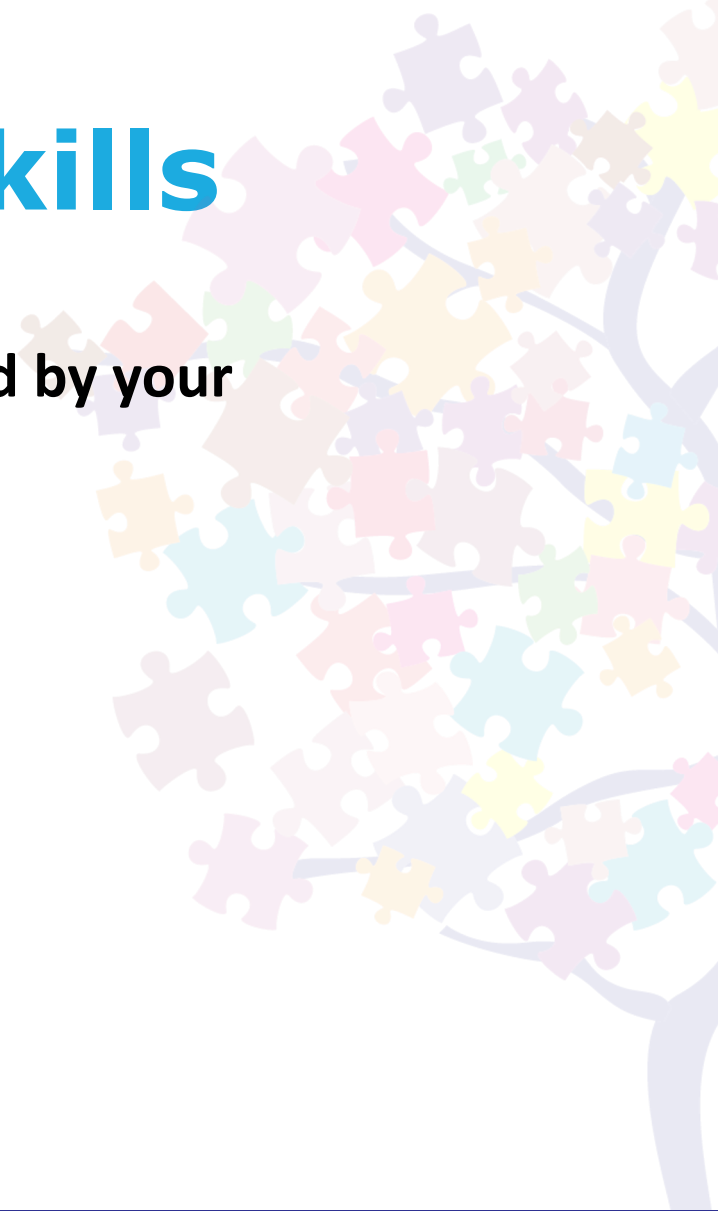
- Executive Functioning
- Perspective Taking
- Self-Awareness

# Social Thinking vs. Social Skills



**Behavioral-responses** are directly influenced by your social thinking.

- Expected
- Unexpected






# Social Thinking vs. Social Skills

## Perceptions

People **emotionally respond** to our behaviors very quickly. Social behaviors that align (expected) or fail to align (unexpected) with what other people expect in that situation determines how others judge your "social skills."

- Rude, impolite, odd
- Friendly, polite

# Social Thinking vs. Social Skills



“Social Skills”

**“Social skills”** are typically thought of as the behaviors a person demonstrates in a social context. Whether or not that set of behaviors is expected or unexpected (appropriate or inappropriate) in that context affects if others will judge that person as having “good” or “poor” social skills.”

# Social Thinking Methodology

**“The ability to consider your own and others’ thoughts, emotions, beliefs, intentions, knowledge, etc., to help interpret and respond to the information in your mind and possibly through your social behavior interactions.”**

*–Michelle Garcia Winner, M.A., CCC-SLP*

# SOCIAL THINKING METHODOLOGY

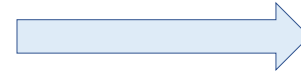
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## 1. Research



Universities conducting research studies

## 2. Framework



Interpreting research data (ILAUGH model)

## 3. Therapy Framework



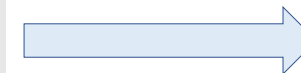
Behavior Mapping  
Four Steps of Communication

## 4. Social Thinking Strategies



Social Thinking vocabulary

## 5. Independent Activities



Hands-on activities for practical application (group activities, games, lessons, etc.)

## 6. Motivational Tools



Superflex, We Thinkers, Social Detective, etc.

*“You can’t just ‘do’ Social Thinking”*



# SOCIAL THINKING METHODOLOGY

Michelle Garcia Winner, MA CCC-SLP and Pamela Crooke, PHD CCC-SLP

## 1. Research

## 2. Framework

## 3. Therapy Framework

## 4. Social Thinking Strategies

## 5. Independent Activities

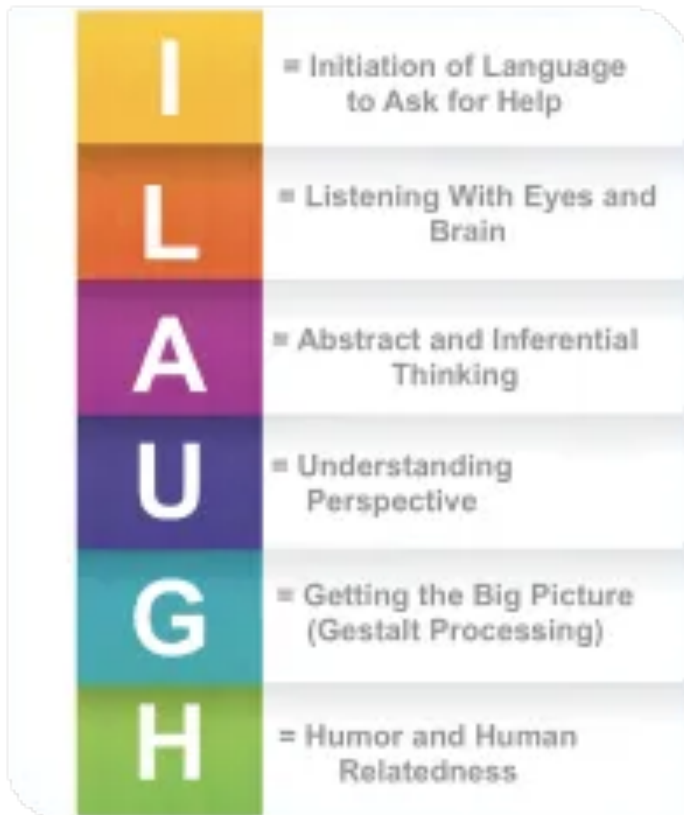
## 6. Motivational Tools

*“You can’t just ‘do’ Social Thinking”*





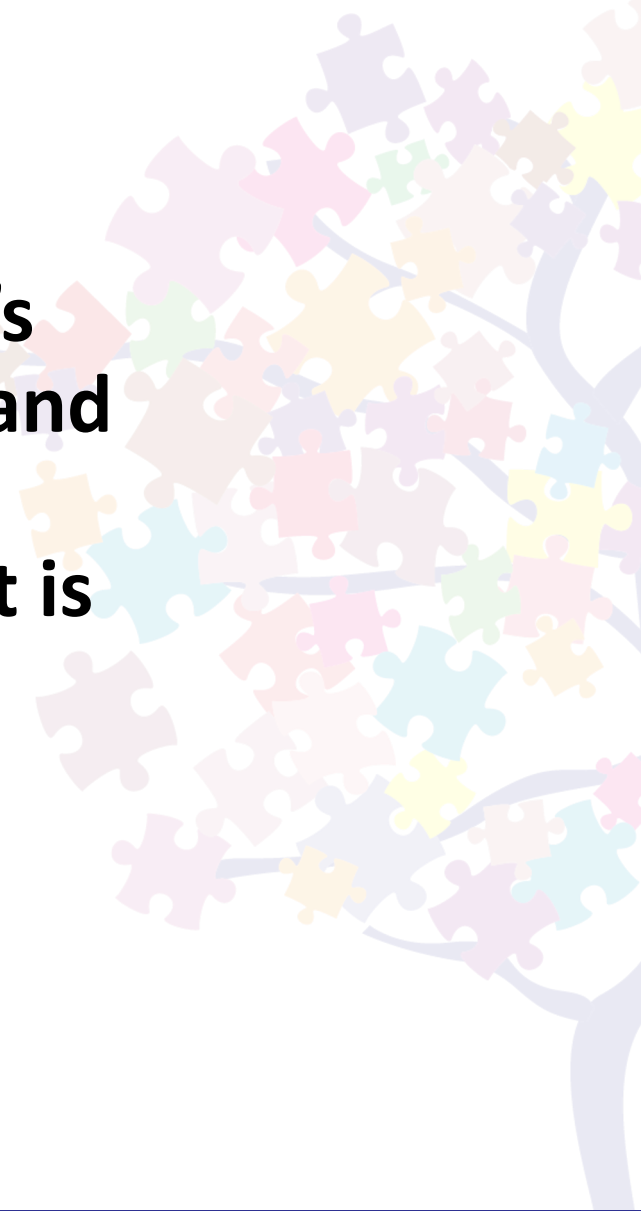
# Social Thinking Framework for facilitating Social-Emotional Learning



|   |  |
|---|--|
| I | = Initiation of Language to Ask for Help       |
| L | = Listening With Eyes and Brain                |
| A | = Abstract and Inferential Thinking            |
| U | = Understanding Perspective                    |
| G | = Getting the Big Picture (Gestalt Processing) |
| H | = Humor and Human Relatedness                  |

## INITIATION

**“The ability to use one’s language skills (verbal and nonverbal) to start (or initiate) something that is not routine.”**



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## Looks Like...

**Difficulty asking for help/seeking clarification**

**Difficulty engaging in novel tasks**

**Difficulty entering/exiting a peer group**

- Prompting to use the sign for “help” BEFORE child needs help.
- Model appropriate play during preferred/familiar activities.

- Provide verbal model for “Help please” after allowing child opportunity to ask.
- Offer novel play routines with faded model prompts.
- Practice responding to greetings.

- Withhold assistance to elicit appropriate initiation of asking for help.
- Provide role-play scenarios for engaging in age-appropriate games/academic tasks.
- Facilitate group activities

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## LISTENING

**“The integration of visual information with auditory information within the [social] context in order to understand the full meaning of the message being conveyed.”**



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## Looks Like...

**Difficulty interpreting visual information into socially relevant contexts**

**Difficulty reading nonverbal/body language**

**-Utilize gestures to reinforce spoken concepts (i.e. shaking head for “no,” pushing non-preferred items away, etc.)**

**-Play a game of imitating facial expressions in the mirror.**

**-Use gestures/body language to “act out” emotions.**

**-Utilize body language to initiate/deter joint play.**

**-Play a game of charades to practice reading non-verbal/body language**

**-Watch videos to practice reading social information (“For the Birds,” “Simon’s Cat,” etc.)**



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## ABSTRACT & INFERENTIAL

**“The ability to gain meaning from things that are not said, or from things that are said in a different way.”**



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## Looks Like...

**Difficulty understanding implied meaning (vocal quality with spoken message)**

**Difficulty interpreting figurative language**

-Use exaggerated tones of voice to match intended message (i.e. sing-song, higher pitch with happy vs low pitch, slow paced for sad)

-Pair tones of voice with intended message (high pitch with happy message)

-Introduce “humor” through age-appropriate play (ex: here’s your car! But hand them a piece of track instead.)

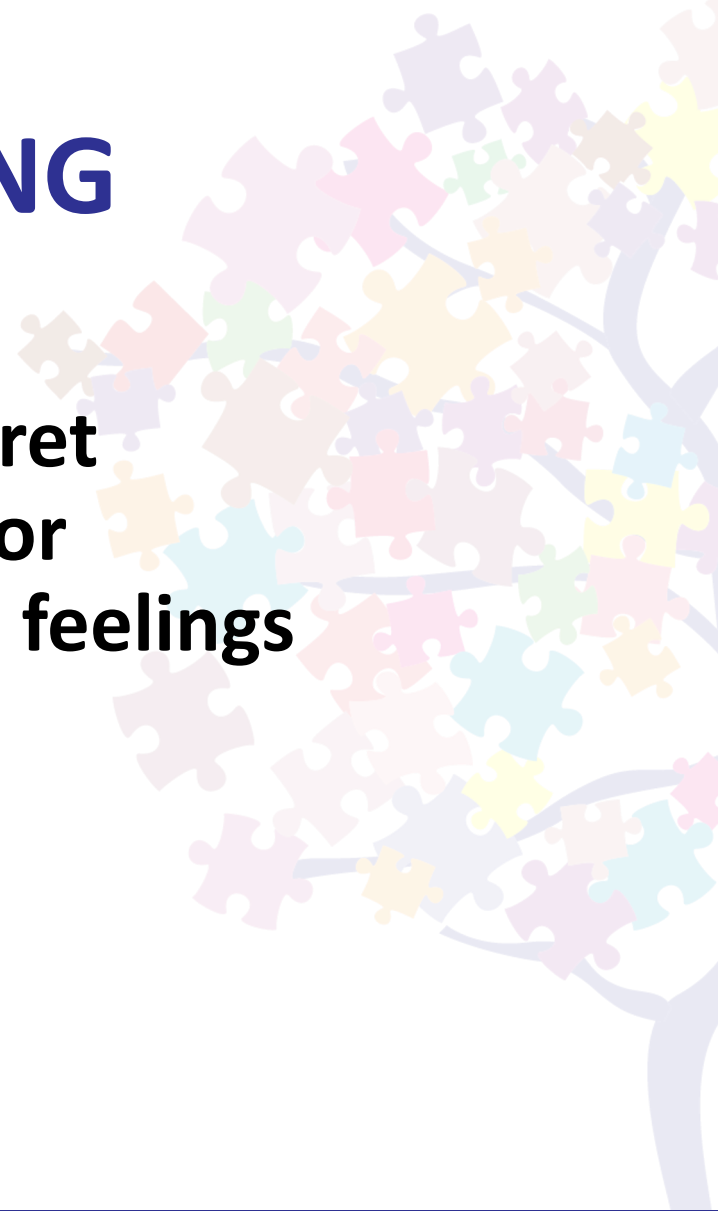
-Practice reading/saying phrases with different intonation patterns.

-Incorporate culturally relevant idioms into sessions to illustrate practical use of figurative language.

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# UNDERSTANDING PERSPECTIVE

**“The ability to interpret others’ perspectives or beliefs, thoughts and feelings across contexts.”**



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## Looks Like...

- Difficulty understanding other points of view
- Difficulty identifying one's own emotions/thoughts.
- Difficulty interpreting others' intentions (physical and/or language)

- Use language to "label" a child's emotional responses (i.e. "You are happy!" "You are mad")
- Use gestures to clearly communicate intentions (i.e. offer a toy with extended hand, hold hand up for high five, etc.)

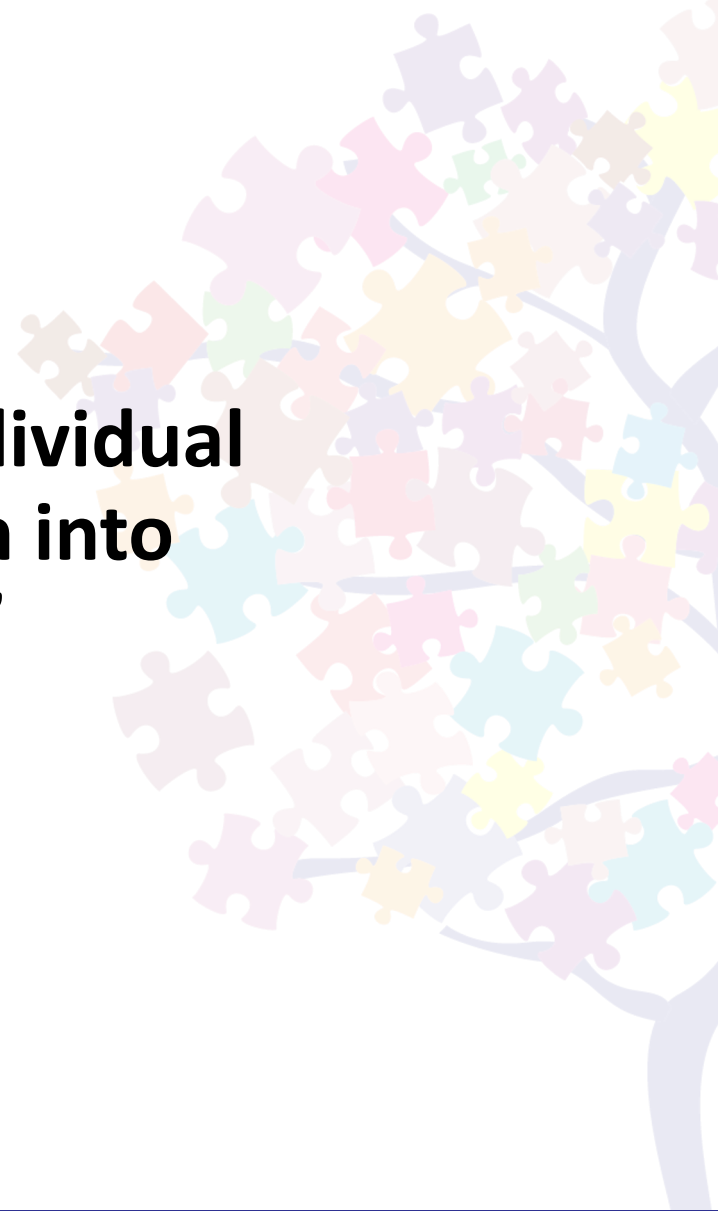
- Incorporate visuals to facilitate connection between "thoughts" and actions.
- Use verbiage to comment on child's and/or own feelings during play.
- Pair gestures with communicative intent.

- Video modeling for identifying communicative intent (physical/language based).
- Play a game of "I Spy" to illustrate "thinking with our eyes"
- Roleplay social scenarios.

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# GESTALT (BIG PICTURE)

**“The ability to tie individual pieces of information into the greater concept.”**





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## Looks Like...

- Difficulty connecting/differentiating “small details” with “big picture” information
- Perseveration on certain topic/aspect of topic vs moving on with communication
- Rigidity in routines, sensory overload

**-Facilitate understanding of broader play schemes (ex: the red car *can* go after the blue car on the train track)**

**-Reduce environmental (visual, verbal, auditory) stimuli to facilitate joint attention.**

**-Offer joint attention/reciprocal play opportunities.**

**-Practice variations on familiar routines (different setting, different partners, different manipulatives, etc)**

**-Practice short 1-2 turn conversation exchange**

**-Practice identifying “small details” vs. “big picture.”**

**-Roleplay conversation exchange with appropriate topic maintenance.**

**-Facilitate emotional regulation strategies.**

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# HUMAN RELATIONSHIP/HUMOR

**“Human relatedness is at the heart of social interaction.”**



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## Looks Like...

- Difficulty understanding how other peoples' beliefs about them affect how they are treated.**
- Difficulty interpreting and utilizing humor**
- Difficulty "reading the room"**

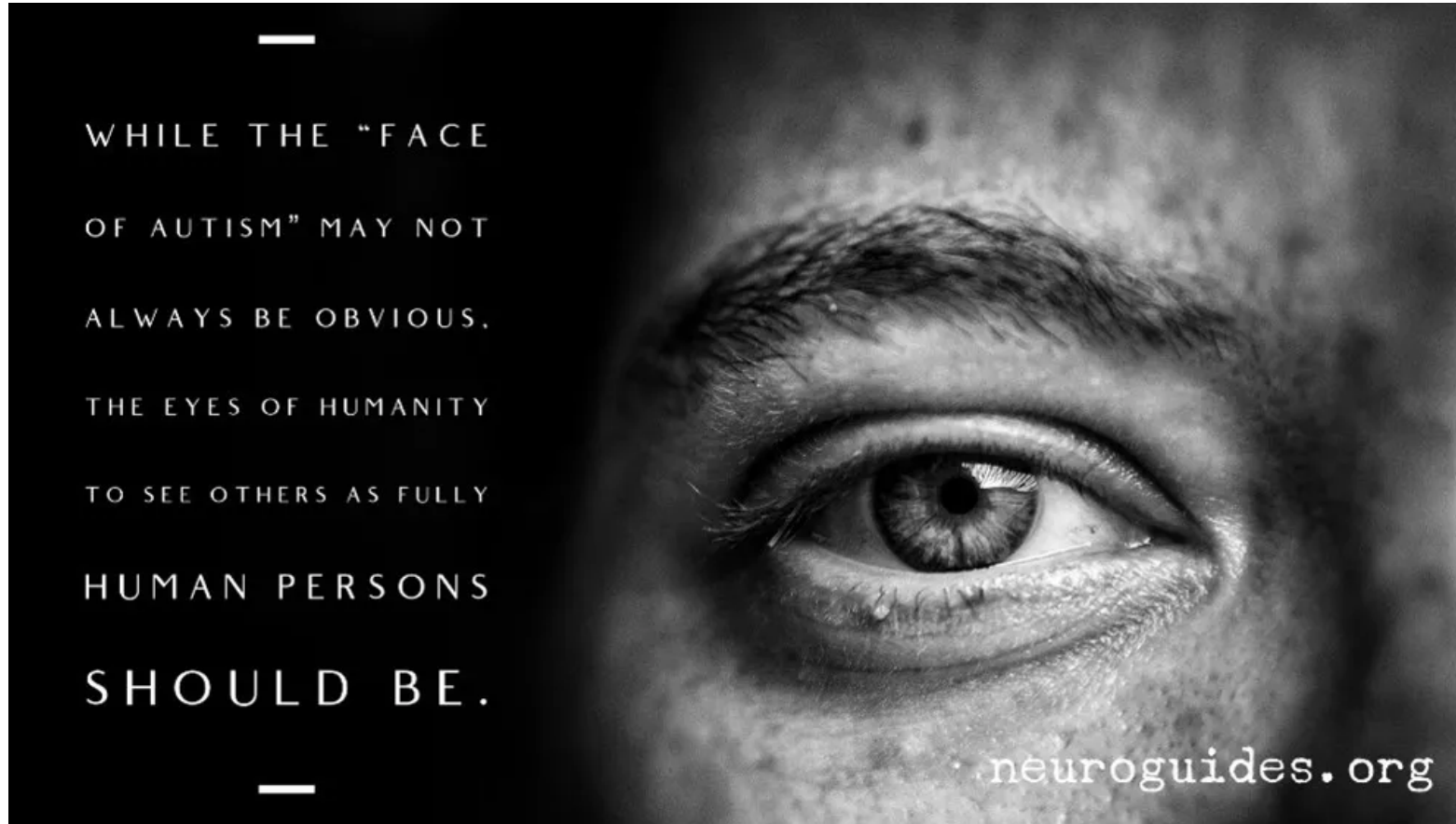
- Demonstrate/engage in joint/reciprocal play.
- Join the child in his/her preferred routine to demonstrate shared interest.
- Offer positive attention freely and frequently

- Practice positive ways of gaining attention (tapping on shoulder, saying name, etc.)
- Balance preferred and non-preferred activities/sharing and turn-taking.

- Practice making smart guesses about people/situations.
- Facilitate role-playing and/or group activities
- Make "friend files" to facilitate positive social interactions with peers

# Social Thinking and the Neurodiversity Movement

## *Where does it fit?*



### For further reading:

- [www.neuroclastic.com](http://www.neuroclastic.com)
- <https://www.health.harvard.edu/blog/what-is-neurodiversity-202111232645>
- <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5118262/>

# Social Thinking Methodology as an Effective Treatment Tool



- **2007 Study by University of Arizona (UA) Grunewald-Blitz Clinic (GBC) for Children with Communication Disorders and the Tucson Alliance for Autism.**
  - All male, ages 9-11
  - All had a diagnosis of Asperger's Syndrome or High Functioning Autism (HFA)
  - 2 attended school in general education
  - 1 received additional services for reading/writing
  - 1 attended private school and received outside speech-language services
  - 2 were home-schooled with no additional services

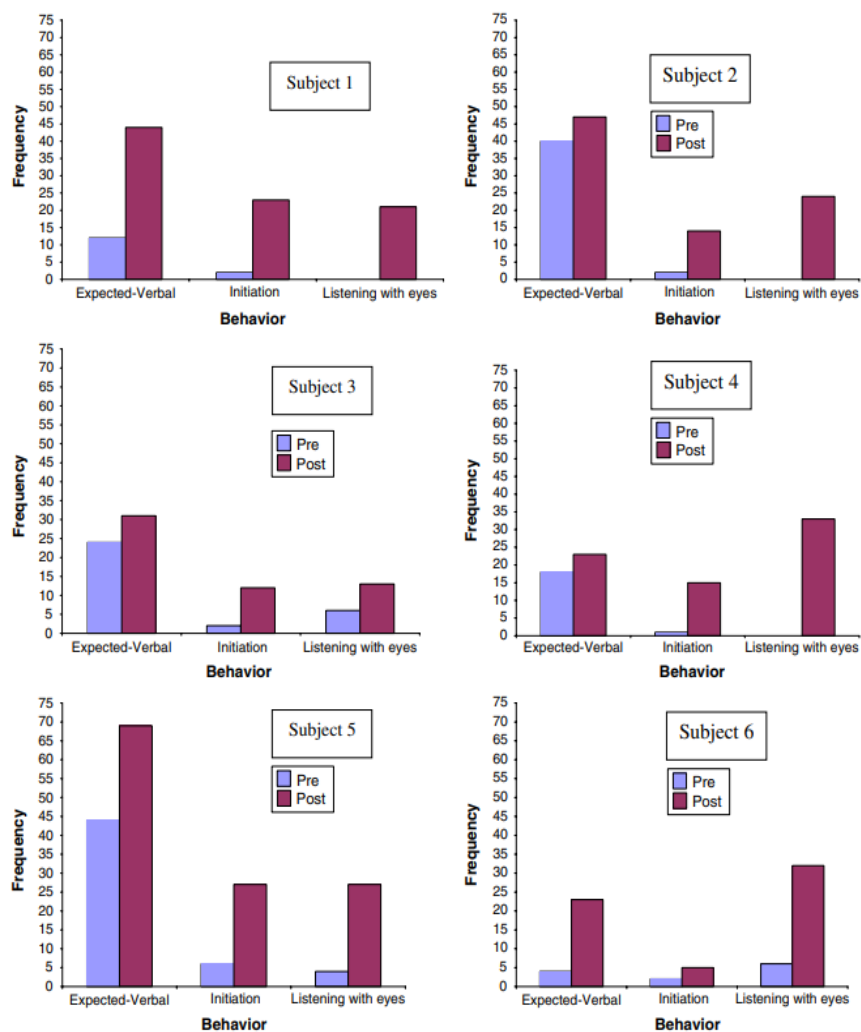


# Social Thinking Methodology as an Effective Treatment Tool

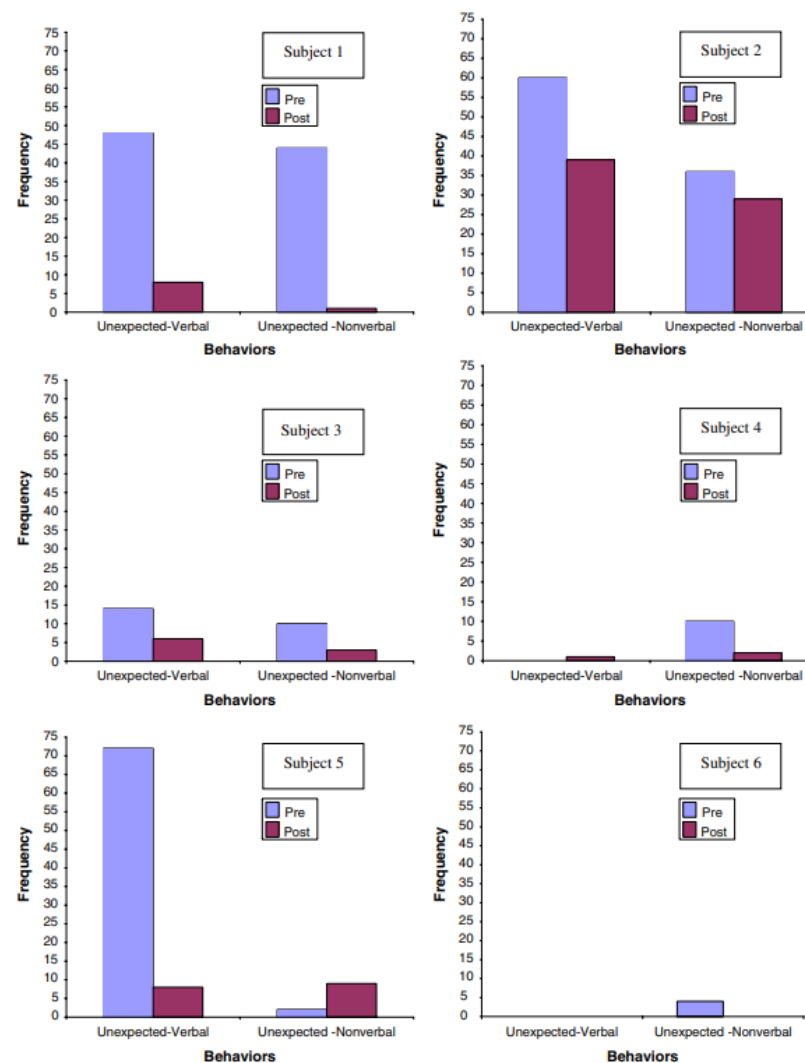
- **Three verbal and two nonverbal behaviors were selected as dependent measures.**
- **Behaviors were measured by counting the actual frequency of occurrence of each behavior (i.e., verbal or nonverbal) during a social exchange.**
- **Social Exchange was defined as any verbal or nonverbal behavior produced by one partner toward another partner within the context of a mutual or shared activity.**

# Social Thinking Methodology as an Effective Treatment Tool

**Fig. 1** Pre- and post-measures of categories of EXPECTED behaviors (expected-verbal, initiation, listening/thinking with eyes) by subject



**Fig. 2** Pre- and post-measures of categories of UNEXPECTED behaviors (unexpected-verbal, unexpected-nonverbal) by subject





## Social Thinking Methodology as an Effective Treatment Tool

“The distinction between teaching social skills and Social Thinking is subtle, but important...Social Thinking teaches the **underlying social cognitive process** of producing the outwardly apparent social skill. It is important to note that this intervention, although based on a manualized curriculum from Winner (2002, 2005) is **not a “cookbook” approach**. The curriculum is designed to promote core principles (e.g., steps of communication, steps of perspective-taking, etc.) through social cognitive activities, but the basic principles **must remain dynamic** according to the interactions within each treatment session.”

# SOCIAL THINKING METHODOLOGY

Michelle Garcia Winner, MA CCC-SLP and Pamela Crooke, PHD CCC-SLP

## 1. Research

## 2. Framework

## 3. Therapy Framework

## 4. Social Thinking Strategies

## 5. Independent Activities

## 6. Motivational Tools

*“You can’t just ‘do’ Social Thinking”*

- Universities conducting research studies
- Interpreting research data (ILAUGH model)
- Behavior Mapping  
Four Steps of Communication
- Social Thinking vocabulary**
- Hands-on activities for practical application (group activities, games, lessons, etc.)
- Superflex, We Thinkers, Social Detective, etc.



# Shifting Our Language to Support Social Thinking



| Conventional Language      | Social Thinking Language    |
|----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Bad/inappropriate Behavior | Unexpected Behavior         |
| Good/appropriate Behavior  | Expected Behavior           |
| Open-minded                | Flexible Thinking           |
| Close-minded               | Stuck Thinking              |
| Group participation        | Brain and body in the group |



# SOCIAL THINKING METHODOLOGY

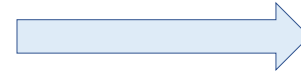
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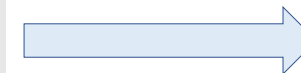
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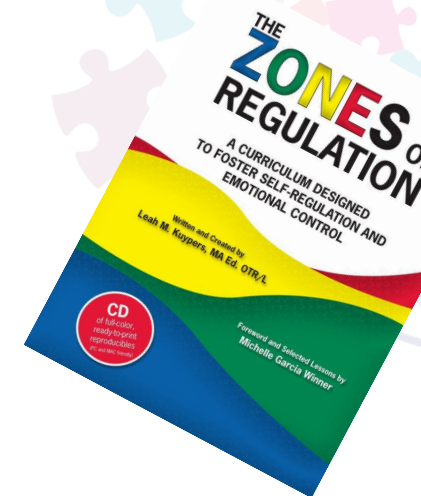
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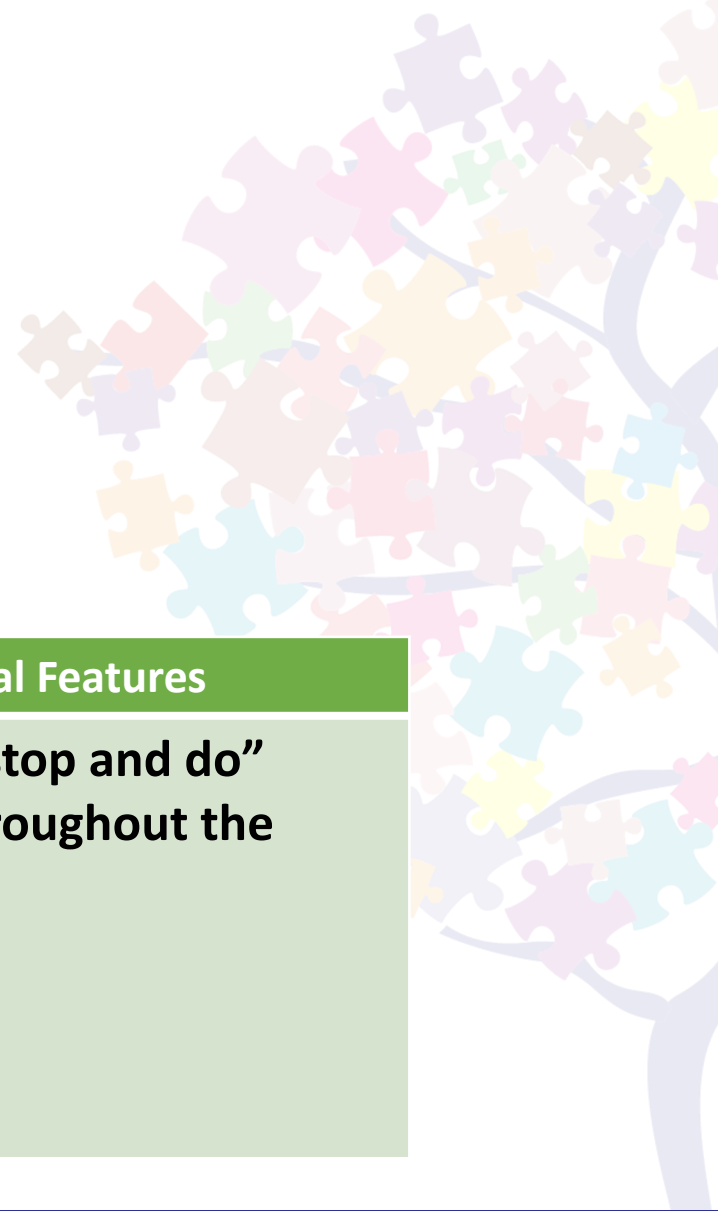
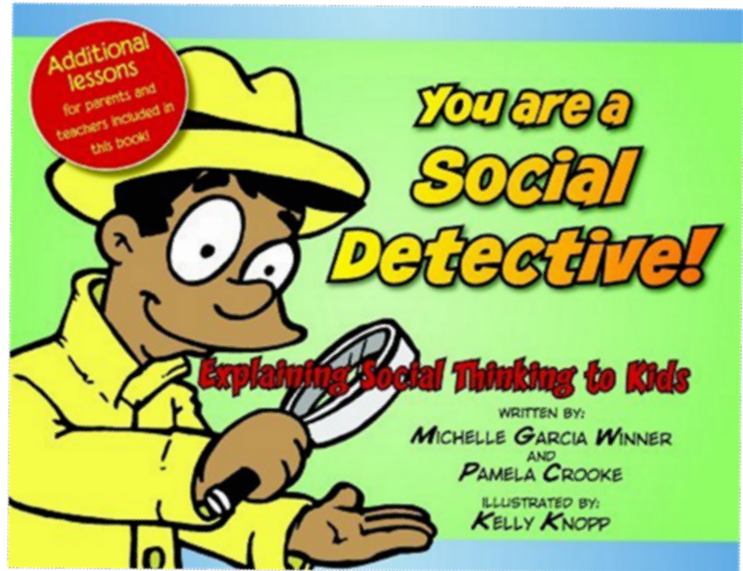
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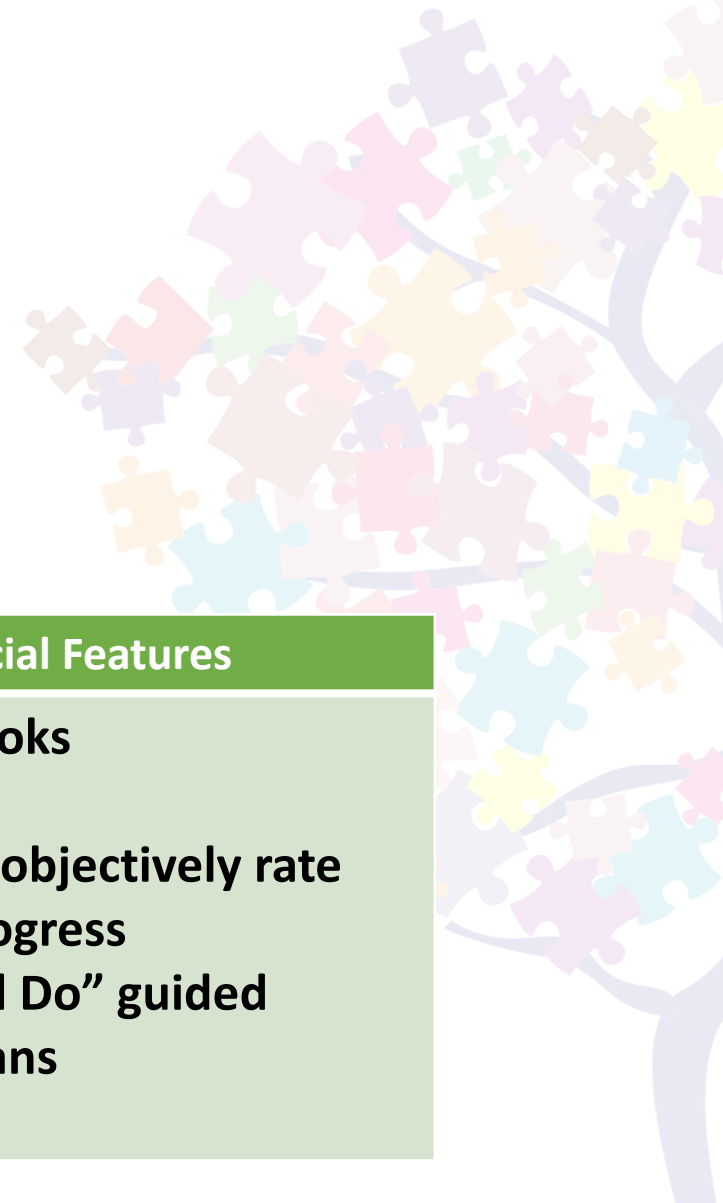
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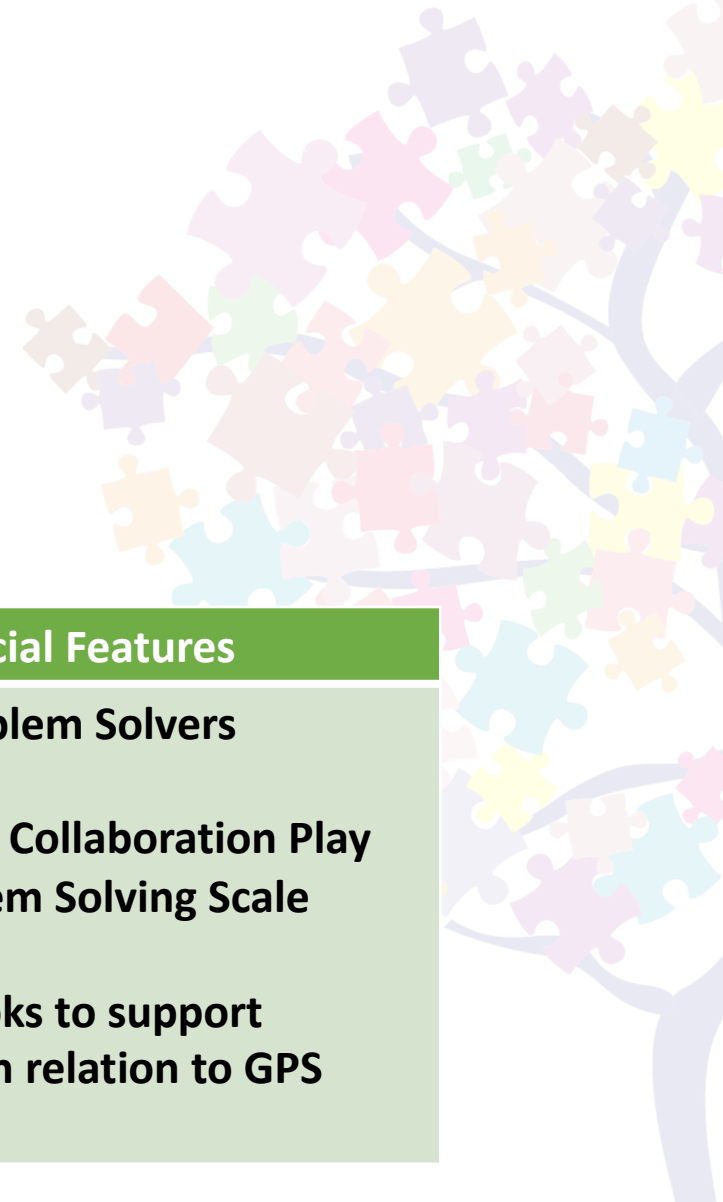


| Target Age Group                                 | Concepts Introduced   | Special Features  |
|--|---|---|
| <p>Kindergarten through 4<sup>th</sup> grade</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fundamental vocabulary/concepts to understand the social world</li> <li>• Social-emotional chain reaction</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Includes “stop and do” lessons throughout the book.</li> </ul> |



| Target Age Group | Concepts Introduced   | Special Features   |
|------------------|---|--|
| 4-7 years old    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Thinking thoughts/feeling feelings</li> <li>• Group plan</li> <li>• Think with your eyes</li> <li>• Body in the group</li> <li>• Whole body listening</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 5 storybooks</li> <li>• Music CD</li> <li>• Rubric to objectively rate child's progress</li> <li>• "Stop and Do" guided lesson plans</li> </ul> |

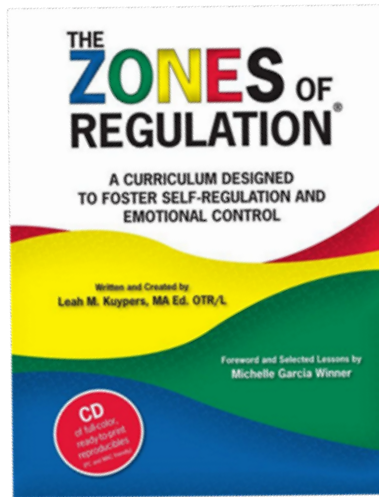




| Target Age Group   | Concepts Introduced   | Special Features  |
|--|---|---|
| <p><b>4-7 years old</b><br/> <b>*only after vol 1*</b></p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Hidden rules (expected/unexpected)</b></li> <li>• <b>Making smart guesses</b></li> <li>• <b>Flexible vs stuck thinking</b></li> <li>• <b>Size of the problem</b></li> <li>• <b>Sharing imagination (collaborative play/teamwork)</b></li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Social Problem Solvers curriculum</b></li> <li>• <b>The Group Collaboration Play and Problem Solving Scale (GPS)</b></li> <li>• <b>5 storybooks to support concepts in relation to GPS scale</b></li> </ul> |



| Target Age Group                                 | Concepts Introduced   | Special Features   |
|--|---|--|
| <p>Kindergarten through 5<sup>th</sup> grade</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promotes self-awareness</li> <li>• Identifying personal/individualized “Superflex” and “Unthinkables” in our brain.</li> <li>• Trains in strategies for defeating your Team of Unthinkables</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CD with printable materials</li> <li>• Storybook for introducing Superflex/Unthinkables</li> <li>• Guided lesson plans with parent handouts and weekly homework guides</li> </ul> |



| Target Age Group | Concepts Introduced  | Special Features   |
|------------------|--|--|
| Ages 4+          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Teaches strategies for emotional and sensory self-management</li><li>• Uses 4 colors to identify feelings based on emotions and levels of alertness.</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• USB includes learning activities and visual supports</li><li>• Can be used in conjunction with/as a supplement to Social Thinking methodology.</li></ul> |

# CASE STUDY: Anthony

| Age | Overall Language Ability   | Strengths / Interests   | Social Thinking Areas of Focus (ILAUGH)  | Motivational Tools  |
|-----|--|---|--|---|
| 7   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Strong understanding of basic language concepts.</li> <li>-Emerging abstract language abilities</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Verbal (brief conversations)</li> <li>-iPad/technology</li> <li>-Responds well to structure</li> <li>-Pretend Play</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Difficulty with transitions</li> <li>-Difficulty with topic maintenance</li> <li>-Human relatedness</li> <li>-Understanding Perspective</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Zones of Regulation</li> <li>-Size of the Problem</li> <li>-Superflex/Unthinkables (One Sided Sid, Topic Twistermeister, Rock Brain, Glass Man)</li> <li>-Behavior mapping</li> </ul> |

# References

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- Crooke, Pamela J., Hendrix, Ryan E., Rachman, Janine Y.. (2007) Brief Report: Measuring the Effectiveness of Teaching Social Thinking to Children with Asperger Syndrome (AS) and High Functioning Autism (HFA). *Journal of Developmental Disorders*, DOI 10.1007/s10803-007-0466-1
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