



Teaching Social Competencies—More Than Social Skills

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## Concept #3: The Group Plan

Presented by:

Michelle Garcia Winner, MA-CCC

Moderated by: Pamela Joan Crooke, PhD-CCC  
Speech-Language Pathologists

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10 webinars

10 months

10 Social Thinking concepts

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Today's webinar topic:

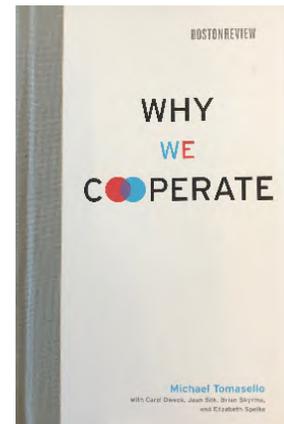


The third Social Thinking Vocabulary concept, ***the group plan***, is essential for participating in society, being part of a group, being productive in a classroom, hanging out with friends, playing sports, etc.

As we each acquire an understanding of group think, our knowledge about how the world works socially helps us interpret history, social studies, literature, etc. (reading comprehension).

This same knowledge guides our written expression. What do we need to explain, what do we assume people already understand about each other?

Dr. Michael Tomasello, an evolutionary anthropologist, explains humans are born to cooperate.



Tomasello, M. (2009) Why We Cooperate. Boston Review; MIT Press. Cambridge, Ma.

What are the building blocks of cooperation?

- Joint attention
- Shared intentions – shared goals
- Mutual knowledge
- Motives to share with and/or help others (altruism)

This also requires abilities explored in our first two webinars:

- Thoughts and feeling
- Thinking with your eyes
- As well as 7 more concepts to be explored in our upcoming webinars!

Joint attention fuses into joint intention

- Early development of joint intention
- Ex. As children approach their first birthday they are actively reading others' intentions (excited a caregiver is preparing food for the child).
- Right after first birthday – infants move toward ***We Collaboration, We Thinking, Shared Intentions***

## Research with kids age 18 months

Richardson, P. & Boyd, R. (2006) Not by genes alone; How culture transformed human evolution. Chicago: University of Chicago Press

18-month-old children observe another's behavior to determine if it is accidental (e.g., drops a clothespin) or purposeful (e.g., throws down the clothespin). If accidental, the majority (22 of 24 in this study) helped the adult fix the accident (e.g., retrieve the clothespin for the adult), and they did so quickly.

## Research with 3-year-old children

Two children worked together to complete a complex task – the children each held one end of a pole and get it positioned in an apparatus (not easy to accomplish). When a child put his or her end of the pole in place, a reward was given. However, what they found was upon receiving the reward, the children did not feel finished with their task.

Whether the first child ate the reward right away or delayed eating the reward, he or she would then go to assist the other child to get the other end of the pole in place. This allowed the other child to get their reward.

If a child's intention was only to get the reward, he or she would not seek to assist the other child.

Hammann, et al (in press at time of Tomesello book publication)

Humans, across cultures, are born to altruism. With age we become more selective about who we help and how we help.

As part of our humanity we seek to help others.

In preschool and school we don't teach children to collaborate, we expect them to have the social cognitive hardware to figure out that people have expectations for each other, and the student's job is to learn what is expected of them.

Teachers and parents encourage the practice of collaborating with others through providing opportunities to play, especially peer-based play, helping with chores, doing events together as a family, etc.

Teachers of younger children teach explicitly how to get organized for learning (e.g., here's where you put your things as you enter the class), how to stand in lines, walk together down the hall, gather back into a group at the end of free playtime, etc.

Teachers also provide an overview to students about the group plan by:

- Providing a schedule
- Giving reminders
- Explaining how something is going to be done

If a child has not developed, for whatever reason, solid social-cognitive software and does not understand the base expectations, that groups have plans and his or her job is to figure out the plan, they are often called a behavior problem. If in preschool, they may be kicked out of the program.

Through all of our teaching, we rarely explain to students:

“When in a group there is a plan. Each of us has a job to figure the plan.”

We know students with ASD, ADHD, exposed prenatally to drugs/alcohol, may develop an attachment disorder and other social learning challenges, may not realize the group plan exists. They need explicit instruction.

We also are learning that kids born to solid social intelligence may not be practiced in observing and interpreting the group plan given their attention has been focused on looking at a device rather than figuring out what's happening around them.

In the Social Thinking  
Methodology we call this ...

## The Group Plan

By using the language, the Group Plan, we also encourage the teacher to explain the group plan and notice who may not intuitively think with their eyes, to notice it.

Noticing the group plan and understanding one's role in the group is not a behavior, it requires each child to socially attend, interpret and problem solve in order to figure out the behaviors expected.

Specific Social Thinking Vocabulary helps students to notice and attend to what is going on in real time and in books, media, etc.

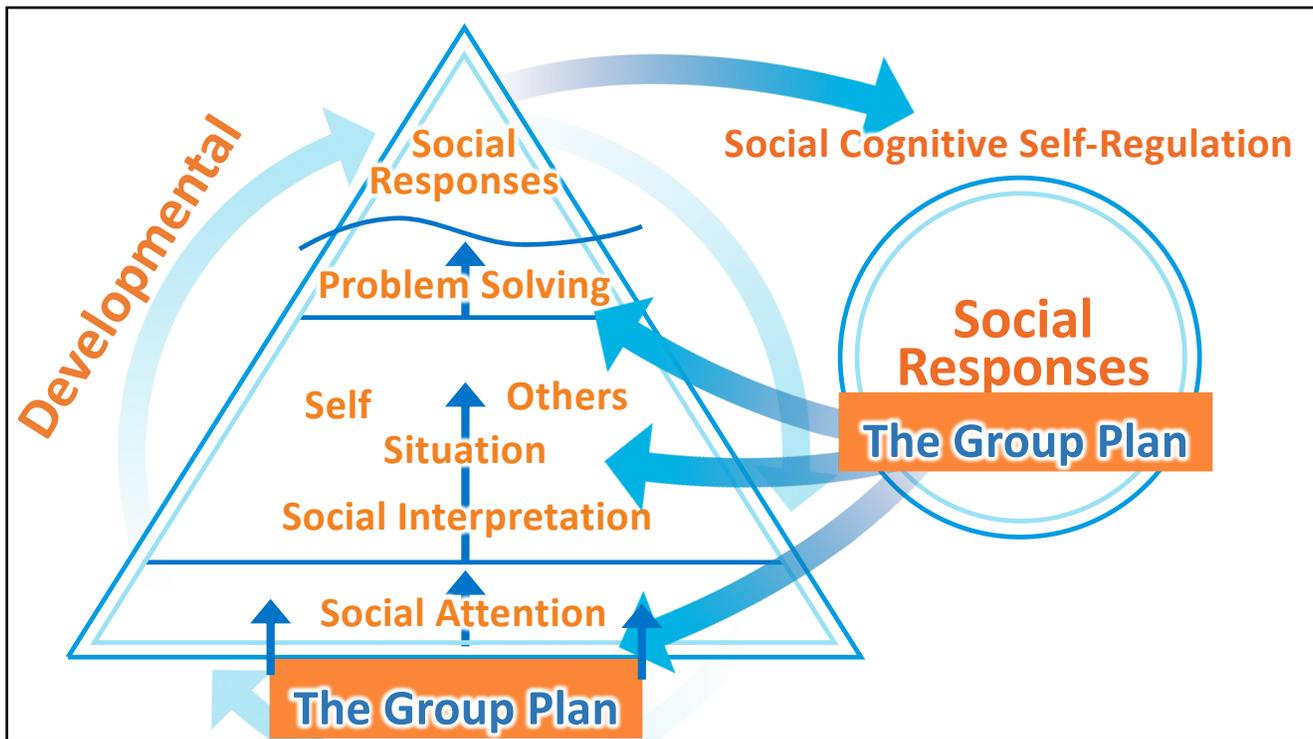


### MINI BOOK REPORT: Fantasy



Title:	Charlie and the chocolate factory
Author:	Rodid Dahl
Characters:	Charlie Bucket, Mr. Willy Wonka, Augustus Gloop, Veruca Salt, Violet Beddlegurde, Mike Teavee.
Setting :	When: presente      Where: chocolate factory
Summary:	Main Problem/Conflict: All the kids were not following the group plan and they get in trouble.

## The Group Plan and Social Thinking's Social Competency Model



As each person's social competencies emerge, they are not only figuring out what's going on around them (Input), but they are also figuring out how to respond, or if they should respond (Output).

One person's output is another  
person's input.

**Input:**

Interpretation of all social and situational information, experiences and world knowledge, etc.

**Output:**

Responses within “live” social interactions (face-to-face, digital messages, performances, etc.)

Social-academic-vocational responses (reading comprehension of literature, written expression, collaborating on a team, etc.)

Input....

A coworker called in to have a cake made for an employee who was leaving the company.

They were told to write on the cake:  
“Best wishes Suzanne, underneath that, we will miss you”

<http://www.snopes.com/food/prepare/caketalk.asp>

Output...



How does one interpret the *input* to produce the expected *output*?

Why was it wrong or considered funny to write exactly what one was told to write?

Our communication assumes shared, mutual knowledge. We do not explain exactly what we mean by what we say or do.

We expect people to figure each other out. Making a **Smart Guess** will be a concept explored in Webinar 7.

When we consider The Group Plan this is also a very simple way to talk about “reading intentions” or “motives”.

Each of us is constantly in loops of processing the input and responding with output.

The Group Plan  
(intentions, motives, etc.)

Can we teach this?  
To whom  
How?

How much a student can learn to figure out the plan, understand people have intentions, share in group goals, etc. depends on the level of their social learning abilities.

But, all individuals can be exposed to the concept that a group plans exist and that there is an expectation to follow the plan.

Rather than simply post the  
schedule, explain:

This is our **Group Plan** for the day.

In preschools and classrooms, across the school years, we routinely bring students into a collective environment and expect them to behave.

## Here's what we usually don't tell them:

- Everyone in this room has thoughts and feelings about what is happening around them and to them. We hold a lot of our thoughts in our head.
- When in the class, we work together to accomplish shared goals.
- Throughout the day we are expected to think with our eyes to figure out the group plan.

Through our Social Thinking Vocabulary, treatment frameworks, and strategies we seek to expose this social-cognitive code.

We also encourage students to talk about the fact that people have thoughts and feelings about what's going on in a class, it is not just the teacher who has these thoughts.

We want students to come together with the same goal (this is what we mean by being part of a classroom!).

What are the goals?  
Let's talk about them!

Keep in mind, we must have  
goals to have a plan!

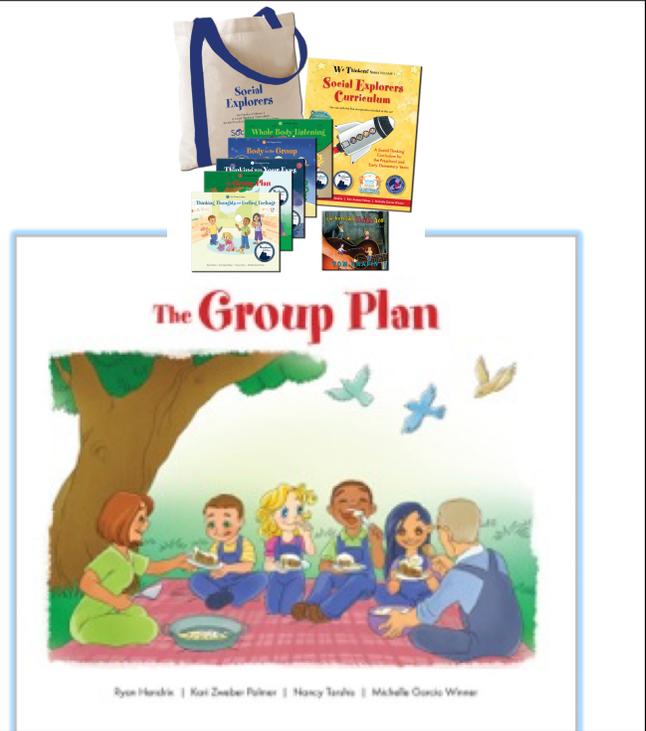
Talk to 6-year-olds, 8-year-olds, 18-year-olds,  
and college students about this!

With younger kids or students with  
limited social learning abilities we talk  
about the fact that  
***people have plans.***

When in a group, a group shares the  
same plan.

## We Thinkers! Volume 1 Social Explorers Package (for ages 4-7)

Concept is introduced in the third storybook, **The Group Plan** and taught as a chapter in the curriculum.



On the way to the apple trees, Evan sees the tractor. He climbs on and pretends to drive! Now Evan is thinking about a tractor. He is following his own plan.

With some students, words such as “motives” and “intentions” may feel too abstract. Drill down to...people have plans, can you figure out their plan?

In the room, in a book of literature, in a You Tube Clip, Movie, video game, people have plans.

People working together toward the same goal, have a group plan.

We also have to figure out people's individual plans.

When people share space (e.g., walk down a crowded hallway), if each person doesn't read others' plans and navigate around them, the space may become chaotic or upsetting.

When with others in a face-to-face or in a digital community, we also consider how people are reading our intentions, plans, motives, etc.

A student walking in the hallway, was he bumped by accident or bullied?

It depends on the intentions of the person who caused the bump and how the person who was bumped into reads the intentions of the bumper!

If we realize we did something that was considered by others to be “rude” (and our intention was not to be rude), then we apologize.

How do we figure this out?

## Social Thinking's Four Steps of Perspective Taking

1. I have a thought, you have a thought
2. We each consider each other's plans (intentions, motives)
3. I think about how you may be thinking and feeling about me, based on my behavior.
4. I monitor and possibly modify my behavior to try and keep you thinking about me the way I want you to think about me!

Some of our goals are intellectual (what we are learning) and others are behavioral (how we expect each other to behave).

Even students considered "behavior problems" still have solid expectations for how others should behave!

Playing sports is as much about having a group plan and related strategies as it is about one's own individual athletic accomplishments.

Consider how to help kids see that even when running around we have to think about the group plan and not just the physical movements?

P.E. teacher:

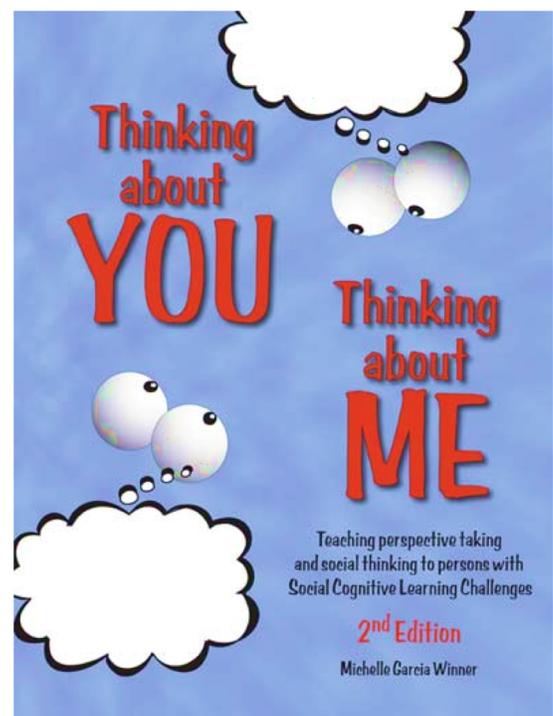
Let's discuss the Group Plan for this sport.  
Each team has to aware the team's plan is to do what?  
How do you work together to accomplish the plan?  
How is the other team trying to mess up your team's plan?  
What's the best strategy to carry out your team's plan while also trying keep the other team from scoring?

The group plan is not just something we listen to, it's also something we can observe.

Think with your eyes (listen with your eyes) to see that the class is lining up; if joining a line, we enter the line by going to the end, which may then become the middle of the line, etc.

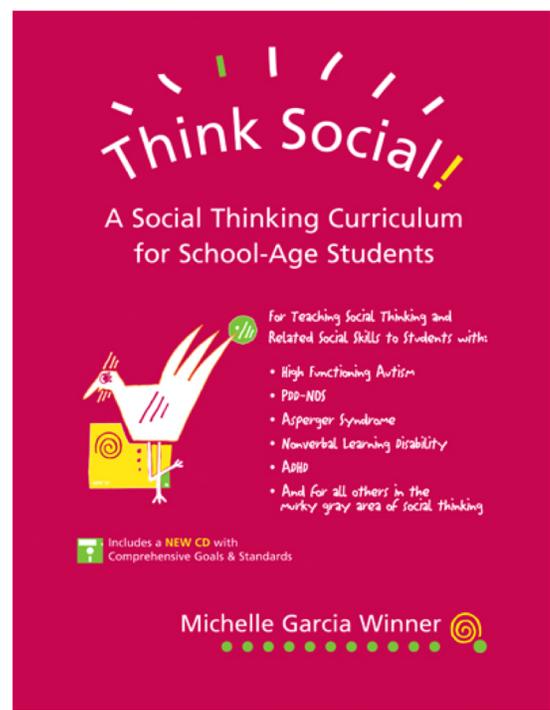
## Thinking about YOU Thinking about ME

Core book for parents and professionals. Explains many foundational concepts for teaching the Social Thinking Methodology.



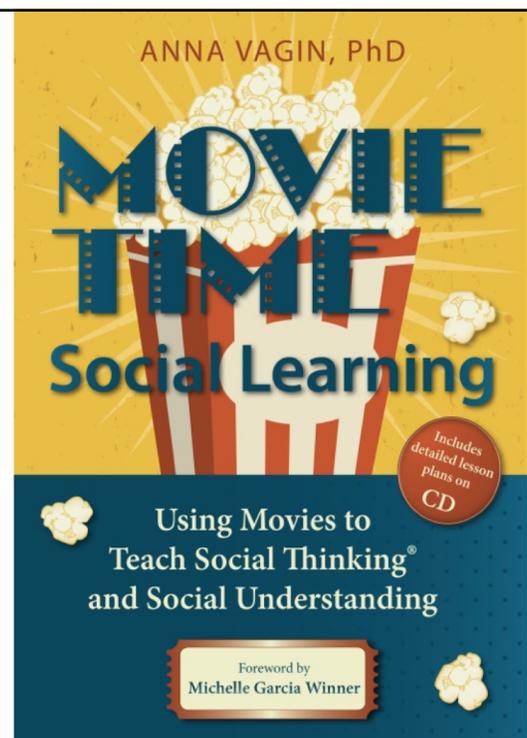
## Think Social! A Social Thinking Curriculum for School-Age Students

Lesson plans for over 30 concepts.



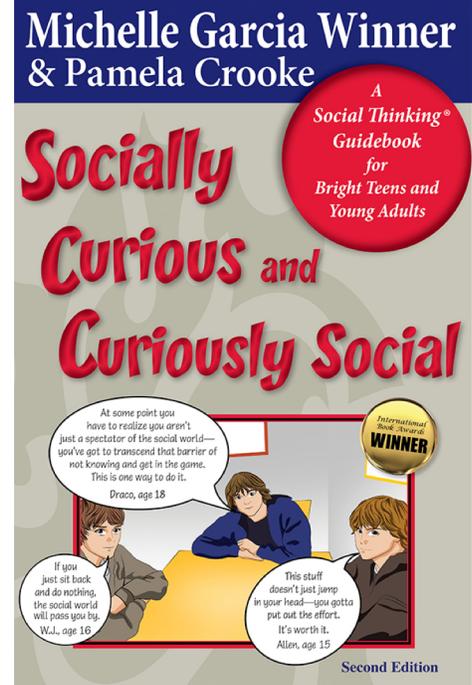
## Movie Time Social Learning (for ages 4-18)

Detective Head Activities



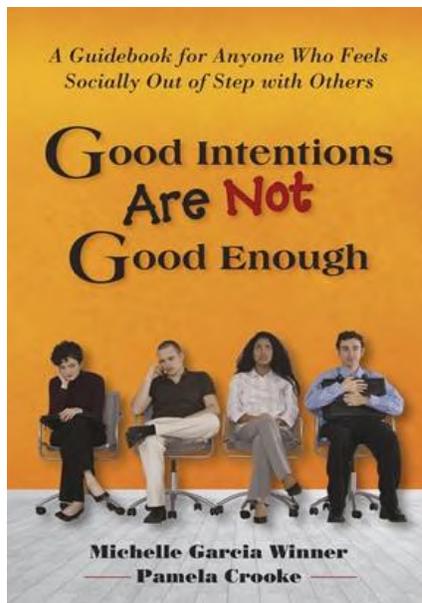
## Socially Curious and Curiously Social (for ages 14-22)

Why do we do what we do socially?



How people read our intentions is not necessarily in agreement with what we know our intentions to be. For example, a student who corrects a teacher's information in front of the class, may have good intentions. However, they are perceived as "rude" since they are not reading the hidden rules of the group.

## Exploring intentions across adolescence and into adulthood...



Consider the gap between your own intentions and how people “read” your intentions!

For example: Have you ever had a conversation where conflict is emerging. A person describes how they interpret your intentions.

You then say - “That’s not what I meant!”,  
They respond with, “but, it’s what you said!”

**We always make sense to ourselves.**

Social communication is the process through which we seek to have others interpret us in the manner we had hoped!

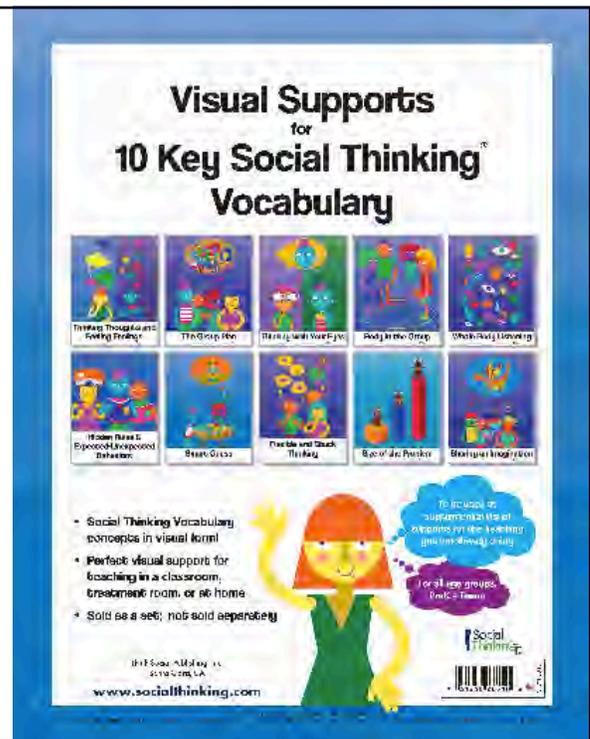
Social Thinking's methodology helps in this process.

**Check out eLearning:** explore our many courses regarding a large range of topics!

From the social–academic connection, to learning more about Superflex, working with teenagers, teaching executive functioning, etc.

## New! Visual Supports for 10 Key Social Thinking Vocabulary (for all ages)

Includes an 11x14" visual  
support for each of the 10  
concepts in this webinar  
series.



The topic of the first  
webinar in the series  
exploring 10 concepts  
in 10 months.



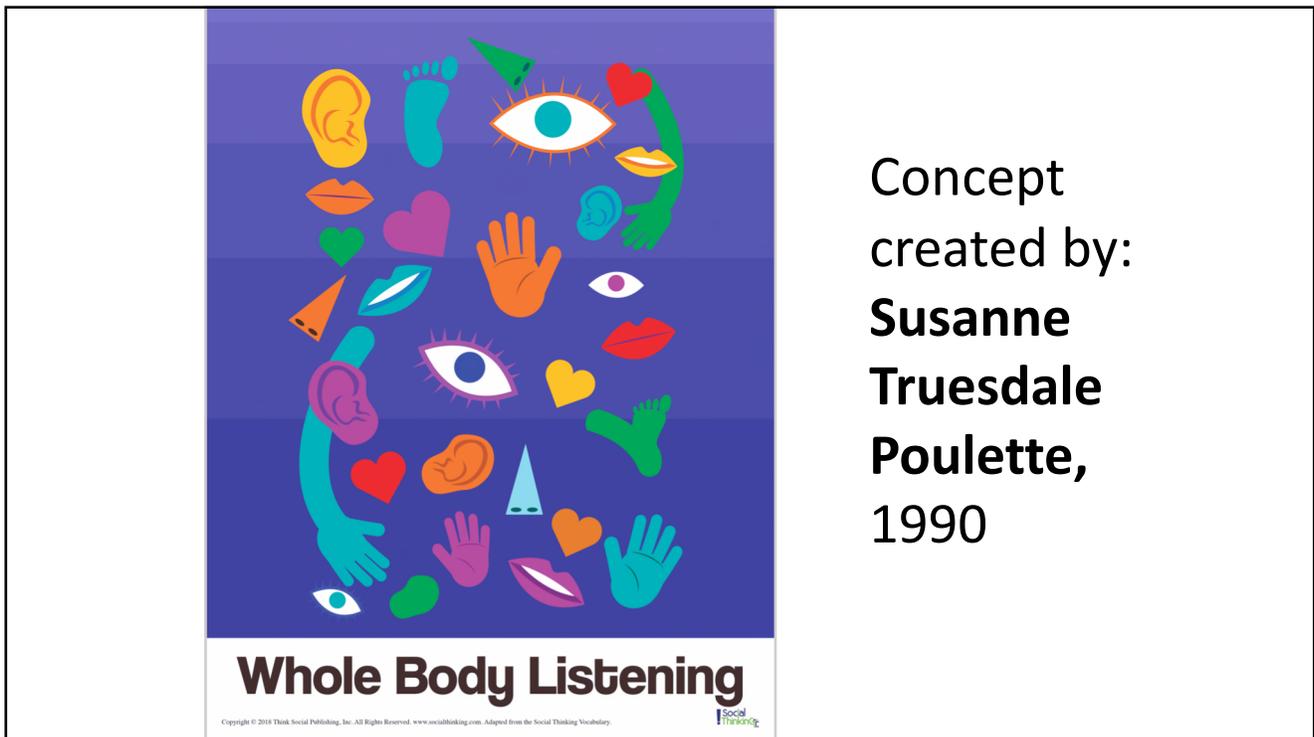
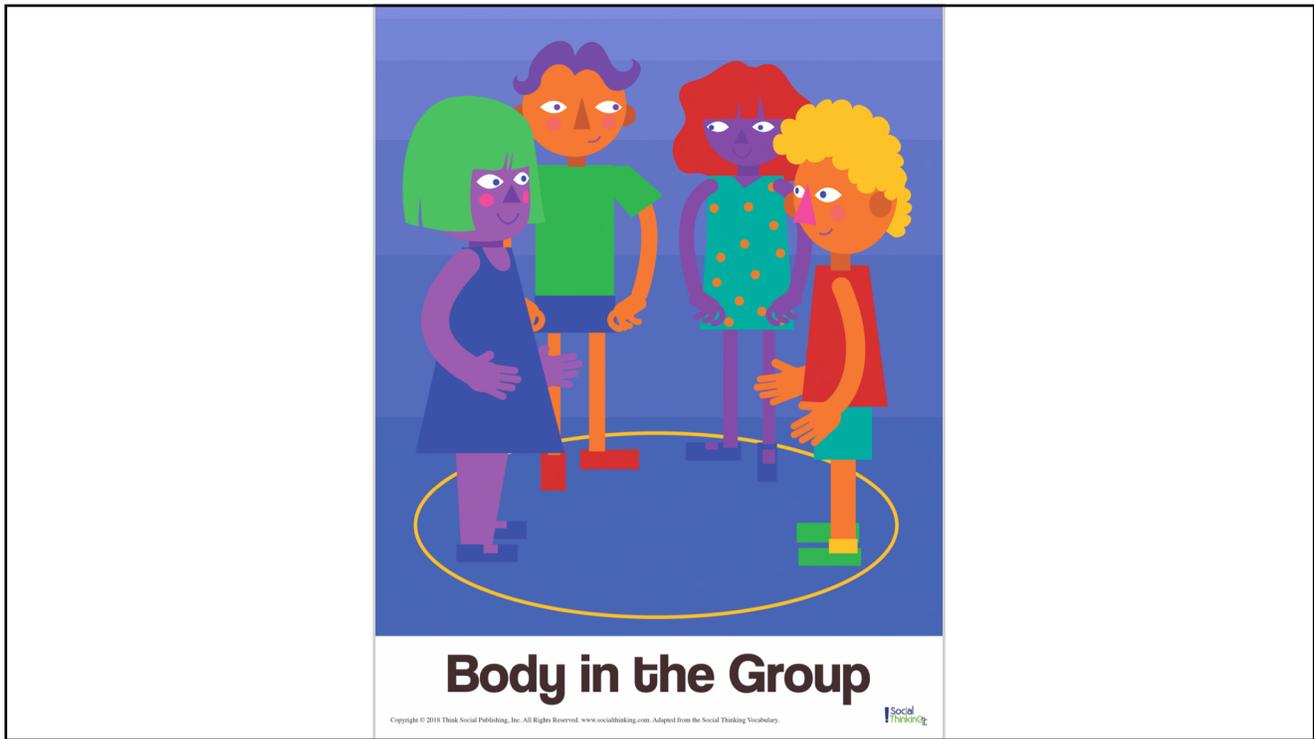
2<sup>nd</sup> webinar series  
topic



Today's webinar series  
topic

Here are the rest of  
the visual supports  
and future webinar  
topics...





Concept  
created by:  
**Susanne  
Truesdale  
Poulette,**  
1990

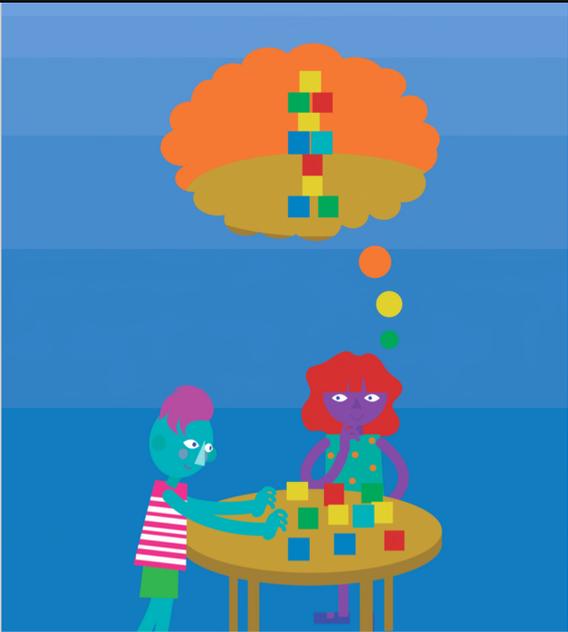


**Hidden Rules and  
Expected-Unexpected**

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This illustration depicts three stylized children against a blue background. On the left, a yellow child with dark curly hair wears a purple dress and has an orange book balanced on their head. In the center, a teal child with short hair holds an open blue book. On the right, an orange child with short hair holds an open pink book. The children are smiling and appear to be engaged in a reading or learning activity.

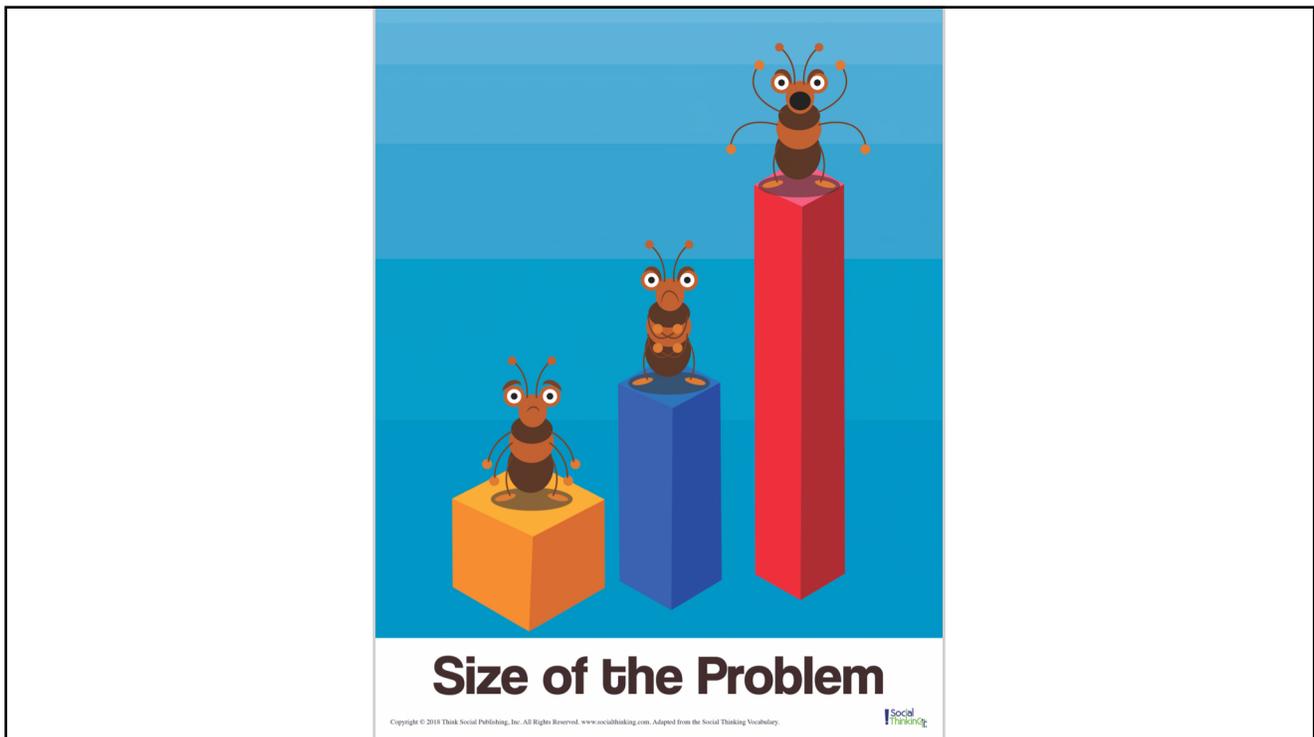
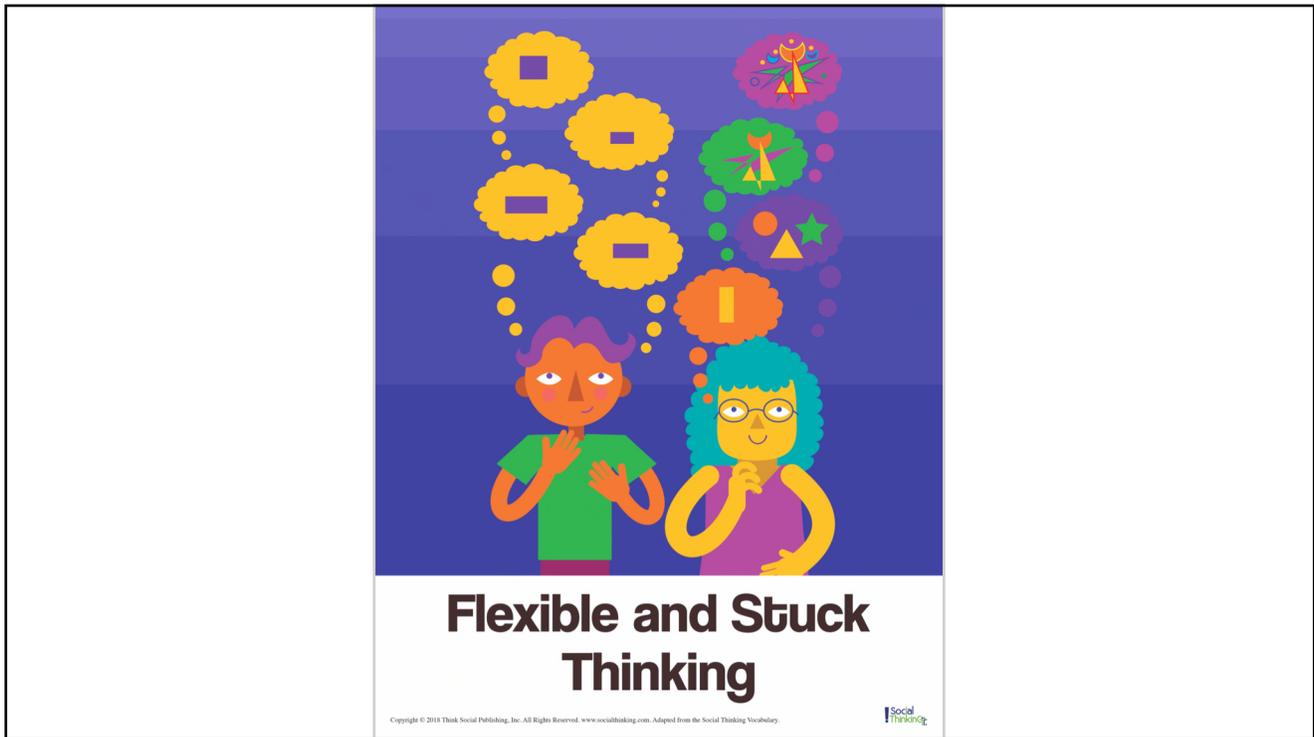


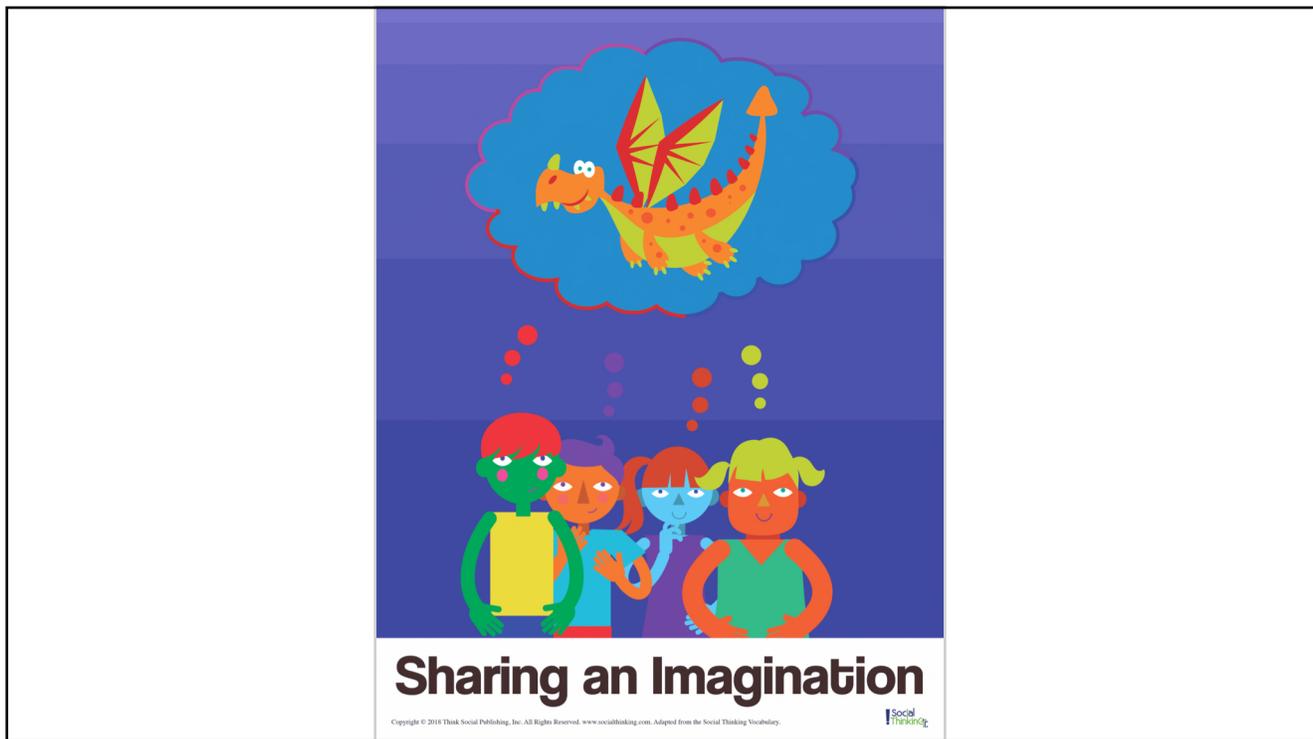
**Smart Guess**

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Social Thinking

This illustration shows two stylized children sitting at a round wooden table. They are playing with colorful blocks (red, yellow, green, blue). Above them is a large, orange, cloud-like thought bubble containing a vertical stack of the same colorful blocks. Three small colored circles (orange, yellow, green) trail from the bottom of the thought bubble down towards the table, suggesting a connection between the children's play and their thoughts.





Our next webinar in the series is  
on concept #4:

**Is Your Body in the  
Group?**

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[www.socialthinking.com/Body-In-Group](http://www.socialthinking.com/Body-In-Group)

Monday, Nov 12  
10am Pacific Time



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