Assumed Knowledge: Strengthening the Core of Social Cognition

Anna Vagin, PhD
USU 2022 Summer Session
6/16/2022
Disclosure time!

I am a speech pathologist in private practice in Larkspur, California, working with children & young adults who have social learning challenges.


I am the creator of the *Conversation Paths Pack Expanded Version* (2021) and *Just the Paths* (2022), both available for purchase on my website. I receive royalties from those sales. I am being paid by USU for this presentation.

I have no non-financial disclosures.
Our Time Together

01 Some foundation ideas

02 Those critical mental state verbs

03 Flexibility - building resilience w structured activities & practice time

04 Goals & rubrics
Strengths many of our kids demonstrate

- Enthusiasm
- Sense of humor
- Breadth & depth of knowledge
- Desire to understand the mysteries of social
- Kindness
- Curiosity
- Perseverance
Challenges many of our kids face

• Staying focused & engaged
• Staying regulated
• Controlling impulsivity
• Understanding & doing what’s expected
• Reading non-verbal cues & indirect language
• Demonstrating flexibility
• Managing competitiveness
• Being resilient
For many of our students, life seems.. 

Too risky!
Too uncomfortable!
Too fast!
Too new!
Too full of too many feelings!
What supports resilience?

- Problem solving
- Positive view of self
- Staying regulated
- Being flexible
- Executive function
- Learning from past experiences


©Anna Vagin, PhD 2022
Why movies and video animations?
Using animated videos? Supporting research

Golan, Baron-Cohen, Hill & Golan, 2006 in Social Neuroscience

- “Reading the minds in films task allows quantification of the complex emotion recognition skills which distinguish individuals with ASC from controls...may be useful in intervention research.”

- Typically developing children paid particular attention to human movement very early
- Toddlers with autism did not – authors proposed that they are “missing rich social information imparted by these cues, and this is likely to adversely affect the course of their development.”

- “Atypical visual processing of biological motion contributes to social impairments in ASD.”

Kaiser & Pelphrey, 2012 in Dev Cognitive Neuroscience
- “Disruptions in the visual perception of biological motion are emerging as a hallmark of ASD.”

Ares & Gorrell, 2002 in J of Research in Childhood Education
- Enjoyment is important for increasing motivation, engagement with material & retention of information.

Muller & Kane, 2017 in J of Child & Adolescent Behavior
- “Microanalysis of film may offer a promising means for school mental health providers to support adolescents with ASD to improve their perspective-taking skills through scaffolded practice.”
- Cited Movie Time Social Learning (Vagin, 2013)

©Anna Vagin, PhD 2022
character discussion

self-reflection
So many wonderful animators have created the videos I recommended. I’d have nothing to share without their lovely work. Their stories, characters, and incredible skills are a gift to us and the students with whom we work.
Guidelines for using animated videos

• PREVIEW before showing – not every video is right for everyone – even the ones I recommend!
• Cue up ahead of time to avoid commercials!
• Always err on the conservative side.
• Educate parents & administrators about the reasons you are using animated videos (as well as the relevant research.)
• NEVER allow a student to pull up a video they say “This will be great – you’ll love it” Chances it will be too long, contain something objectionable, etc. Tell them you will “check it out” and maybe show it next week...
Scrambled" by Polder Animation

Sesame Street: Ernie and Bert’s TV chair showdown

“Game Changer” by Aviv Mano

Soar by Alyce Tzue

Float by Mckenna Harris

Lifted - Pixar

The Power of Teamwork By Sam Law

"Packaged" by Luke Snedecor

Scavenger Hunt.mpg edbertha

Partly Cloudy Pixar Short Film

Stuck On An Escalator – Take Action

The Value Of Breakfast" - H Solanki
I have many lists of recommended videos: www.socialtime.org/free-resources
Variables that differentiate videos

• Overall pace – is it a relatively slow unfolding of the story, or does it zip along at a pretty fast pace?
  • **Query**: How fast is my student’s processing?

• Story line – Is it a short, simple story or is it longer, with lots of twists and turns? How much inference is involved?
  • **Query**: How sophisticated is my student’s inferential ability?

• Emotional elements – Are the emotions portrayed earlier developing (e.g. “sad”, “happy”, “scared”) and easy to identify from what is happening, or are the feelings more sophisticated (e.g. “frustrated”, “embarrassed” and subtly portrayed?
  • **Query**: How’s the emotional vocabulary and processing of nonverbal information of my student?

• Relatability – Will your students be able to relate to the story, or is it totally outside of their experience?
  • **Query**: Is my student pretty concrete? To what degree do they need a story to which they can relate to demonstrate their skills at the highest level possible?
More considerations

• Visual elements - is it visually uncluttered, or are there lots of distracting elements in the background. Is it visually calming or visually busy, with lots of colors and stimulation?
  • **Query:** How does my student handle busy visual material? Do they easily become overaroused by lots of stimuli or can they handle lots of distractions pretty well?

• Stop spots – Are there good places to stop and discuss what is happening, or will you struggle to find a time to pause, cutting off what is happening and interrupting the flow of the story?
  • **Query:** How much time will I probably need to spend with this student breaking down the video for discussion and study? Can this video be “chunked” into sections to allow for that easily?

• Enjoyment – Will your students like the video? **Never** show a video you think might upset a student.
  • **Query:** What does my student enjoy? Conversely, does my student have fears or anxieties that I need to keep in mind?
1 YouTube = Many Possibilities

Catch It – ESMA 2015

YouCue Feelings: Using Online Videos for Social Learning contains 50 activities to build emotional understanding. www.socialtime.org
Visuals

• importance of visual supports

• add annotations & take screen shots

• photograph your work
The importance of sketching

• Even in the face of poor fine motor skills.
• Find your flex – lists and narratives are fine.
• Compile group or student work.
Student illustrations give us a window into their minds....
A sense of how they understand their lives....
and into their experiences & hopes....
Or just keep themselves on track!
Annotations support understanding.

"Maca and Roni: Roller Coaster" – Kyungmin Woo
Problem: there is a lot of sand inside
Solution:

- fly
- get the soccer ball
- go on a roller coaster ride
- get away from the sand
- go outside and play soccer

Problem: there is a lot of sand inside
Solution:

- fly
- get the soccer ball
- go on a roller coaster ride
- get away from the sand
- go outside and play soccer
- close the door

Maca and Roni: Roller Coaster – Kyungmin Woo
Think twice before proceed.
Double think

• A student-friendly term that refers to pausing and considering contextual information (linguistic, non-verbal/emotional, situational,) recognizing how one’s world knowledge relates to the current moment, and finally, inferring the social meaning of the moment.

• Double thinking can be applied to curriculum, social interaction, and conversation.

• It represents a mental state, and therefore, can require pause/reflection.

• Often, our first idea or plan is not the best - hence the need to "think again."
Jump cuts:

“The space of movies is fractured, discontinuous; and time does not flow in its usual measured manner... The narrative structure of film is basically the sequencing of distinct and discontinuous spatial viewpoints”.

– (McGinn, 2005)
From young children’s books

A boy, a dog and a frog, by Mercer Mayer

What happened in between?
To history textbooks

Everything changed December 7, 1941. That morning hundreds of Japanese planes attacked and destroyed a US naval base at Pearl Harbor in Hawaii. More than 2,000 Americans were killed.

Congress quickly declared war on Japan. A few days later the United States was at war with Germany as well.

What happened in between?

All content is in the frame...

Scrambled by Polder Animation

Joy & Heron by Passion Pictures

The Other Side: A Detroit: Become Human MAP by candytree

Jump Cuts
What are they thinking about???
Mental State Verbs

notice...
know...
remember...
understand
hope...

foundations for engagement
Mental State Verbs

- abstract cognitive thought processes
- often challenging for students with social cognitive or language challenges to understand because they are invisible
- that does not mean that they aren’t important – in fact, understanding them influences academic and social success

- *We can clearly see when someone is walking, but we can’t see when someone is remembering or wishing.*
Mental state verbs

- know
- think
- learn
- understand
- guess
- notice
- recognize
- realize
- notice
- want
- wish
- hope
- decide
- feel
- remember
- forget
- imagine
- believe
- consider
- dream
- wonder
- plan
- imagine
- analyze
- envision
- look
- agree
I decided...

I hope...

I wish...

I miss...

I changed my mind...
MSV research

- The children of parents who were more in tune with the mental states of their child were more securely attached.

- “Mental state terms, and especially mental verbs, constitute a link between language, social cognition & Theory of Mind” (p.490)

- When children with high functioning autism were given intervention that included MSV, their spontaneous use of MSVs also increased.

- Some participants demonstrated use of MSV that had not been used during the intervention.

- MSV present unique challenges to young language learners
- Acquisition of MSV in part relies on conceptual development
- Part of the challenge also stems from the difficulty of syntactically mapping MSV
What does this research mean?

• We need to understand the importance of mental state verbs in cognitive and communicative functioning.

• We need to target mental state verbs and incorporate that work into every session.

• We need to listen carefully to our students so we notice their growing understanding and use of mental state verbs.
Tips for Teachers & Parents

You’ve got to use those mental state verbs!!!
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Mental State Verbs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Running errands</td>
<td>“I hope we can find parking!”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At home – mealtime prep</td>
<td>“Oh no, I just realized I forgot to take the chicken out of the freezer!”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Announcing a fire drill day</td>
<td>“I wonder what time the alarm will go off!”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning for a field trip</td>
<td>“We need to decide where we want to have lunch!”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Using photos & pictures

Visual information is very important for most of our students, so I like to practice with my photographs and pictures in books, so students have the opportunity to focus on someone else (me) and my activities and interests as well as books they enjoy.

Choosing a photo or picture(s) from a book, support students in working out their double think. Often, I ask students to give me questions and/or comments.

Take advantage of annotation tools – circle what is important that they might not have noticed, draw arrows connecting things, etc. Use stickie notes!

If working in a group, move slowly as you compare double thinks or develop one together. Then discuss everyone’s comments and questions, encouraging cross talk and opinions.
These two people decided to look at the bus go.

They decided to get on it.

They look very excited because they decided to go somewhere on the bus.
I like her pajamas.
I have a lamp like that.

She’s in her bedroom.
She’s getting her boots.
She just woke up and looks grumpy.

Where is she going?
Why is she in a bad mood?
Where’s her bed?

I like her pajamas.
I have a lamp like that.

**Double think**

**Questions**

**Comments**

*Magic Paws: Muddy Puppy*
by Sue Bentley (2008)
That’s a cute dog.
I was 5 years old then!
I’m getting a dog too.

Double think
A dog – wee bit small
Some dog food
Outside a house
He is holding a puppy and dog food outside the house with an ATV.
Probably his puppy.
He just got the dog.

Questions
Is that your son? Yes
Is that a dog?
What kind of dog is it? Black lab
How long ago is this? 7 years

Comments
That’s a cute dog.
I was 5 years old then!
I’m getting a dog too.
The person is looking at the cashier at the restaurant. The cashier is giving the white bag to her. Maybe she will ask the cashier to get a receipt. Maybe there is coffee inside the white bag. Maybe she is asking the cashier if she wants to get a sprinkle cookie.

Sentences with thinking words

I guess maybe it’s Peet’s coffee.
I wonder if there is a bagel inside the bag.
I notice that the tables have one person sitting down.
I think the person is looking outside the window.
I really like the girl’s happy smile.
I remember when it was very busy at Peet’s Coffee in Bon Air.
Using animated videos

Visual information is very important for most of our students, so I like to practice with video animations, so students have the opportunity to focus on someone else (me) and my activities and interests.

Choose an engaging video. FREE lists are available on my website: www.socialtime.org/resources.

Take advantage of pause and rewind as well as annotations, stickie notes, etc.

Again, move slowly and try to figure out WHERE the stuck points are – they will be different for different students. MAKE VISUALS!
A Cloudy Lesson
By Yezi Xue

- Planned to blow some clouds
- Tried to do it
- Wished they could blow a bigger cloud
- Thought about how to help the boy
- Decided to try again
- Realized it was broken
- Wanted to fix it
- Noticed the clouds disappearing
- Wondered about a different shape
- Hoped it would work
- Agreed it was a good idea
- Enjoyed being together
Structure – guided composing

The man just noticed Heron.
Perspective taking is based in MSV.

Heron will take a worm. BUT the worms are the man's. Heron will STEAL the worms from the man.

I see worms - I should feed them to my babies.

Heron is looking at the worms because he wants to feed his babies.

Joy does NOT know about the babies.
Double think about the nest.
Heron lives in the nest with the 3 birds.
The 3 birds are Heron's birds - she is feeding them lunch because they are very hungry. They are her babies and she is their Mother.
Heron’s baby birds look very hungry but they don’t want to eat the fish. Because they hate them.

Joy is thinking about the baby birds. Joy feels sad.
Maca and Roni noticed that the robot has arms with a broom, vacuum, mop, sponge, and other things for cleaning up.

Maca & Roni: Cleaning by Kyungmin Woo
Portraying abstraction

Maca and Roni: Roni can take the spiciness – Kyungmin Woo
The complications of jump cuts

Maca & Roni: Bon Voyage by Kyungmin Woo
Then add MSV…wow - so complicated!

He is imagining that he is in Hawaii. He isn’t really on the beach - he is still in the pizza place but he wishes he was in Hawaii.

Use all the tech at your disposal to create visuals for this abstract work!

Maca & Roni: Bon Voyage by Kyungmin Woo
He still wishes he could go to Hawaii.

Maca & Roni: Bon Voyage by Kyungmin Woo
Maca and Roni: Turn On the Air Conditioning by Kyungmin Woo

thinking words: remember, decided, noticed, know, feeling
cohesive ties: because, and, but, so, if

Maca and Roni were feeling very sad because they are feeling very hot so they decided to run fast together so they could turn on the air conditioning that’s up very high.

Maca and Roni were running fast together because they noticed the air conditioning was coming down from the ceiling and it was very high.

Maca and Roni decided to climb up the ladder together because their plan is to turn off the air conditioning on the ceiling but Maca can’t find the remote control anywhere. Their plan wasn’t working because they can’t reach the ceiling because the ice was coming down from the ceiling.

Roni decided to jump very high on the trampoline because he thought he will reach and turn off the air conditioning that’s on the ceiling but he fell.

Roni decides to jump on the trampoline- it’s very bouncy but he fell down and the trampoline fell apart. Maca is feeling sad because he can’t find the remote anywhere because he lost it. Dr. Albert and Maca plan to climb up the ice so they put on snow boots, backpacks and warm jackets. They decide to take a break and have soup together.
Conversation: sharing our human experience
In conversation

Visual information is very important for most of our students, so I like to practice conversation with lots of visual supports – it gets complicated!

Conversation Paths Pack is available on my website: www.socialtime.org

Different students will need different levels of support, so be ready to think on your feet and be flexible!

Again, move slowly and try to figure out WHERE the stuck points are. Don’t rush – slow & deep learning is better than repeating what you say or agreeing with you!
Conversation Paths Expanded Version

• Conversation Paths are a semi-structured way for students to practice 8 building blocks of conversation and specific Practice Activities – either via teletherapy or in-person.
• While allowing for spontaneity, Conversation Paths give students the chance to practice conversational components they may not typically use.
• Conversation Paths can be used in individual or small group (2-4 student) therapy sessions.
• Appropriate for students who:
  – are in 3rd – 12th grades (depends on abilities & needs.)
  – are able to read the sample conversations (some help ok!)
  – have social learning challenges, speech and language disabilities, or can benefit from support to improve their conversational skills.
1.

2.

CPPEV Practice Activities
Remembers

• Remembers represent what we remember about others we know (whether we like them, don't like them, or don't know them very well.) Such info is often gleaned from small talk, as well as observation and what we notice about people (e.g. wearing a Star Wars t-shirt = probably likes Star Wars.)

• Remembers are important in conversations and social interactions. They keep us from asking the same questions over and over, like asking “What grade are you in?” when you asked them that 2 days ago. When we use our remembers, others have good thoughts about us, because remembers show that we listened AND remembered.
Goal & Materials

**GOAL**

*Work on remembers to:*

- Improve overall conversational competence
- Decrease the tendency to ask the same question across multiple encounters
- Improve the ability to formulate questions & comments based on information already known
- Emphasize the importance of remembering (and using) what we know about others
- Teach and reinforce use of the mental state verb remember, which then supports cognitive growth

**MATERIALS**

*Work on remembers with:*

- Conversation Paths
  - Integrate remembers template slides into Conversation Paths so speakers can easily add to & refer to them.
  - Consolidate the information gleaned through questioning and conversation into remembers slides.
  - Encourage speakers to review remembers cards as needed before conversations begin.
  - Support students to double think to recall what info is on their remembers card.
  - Compliment/reinforce: “You remembered and asked about something from your remembers card about Y.”
What Elliot, Len and Jake remember about Colton:

- 8th grader
- Loves traveling to Europe – might plan one for this summer
- Norway, Sweden, it was light all day
- Likes jokes about killing people
- No electives right now – liked computer, model airplanes, cooking
- He liked electives.
- Not so much into fast food
- Multiple sports, likes watching soccer and ski and row (planning to join rowing team in summer)
Based on your remembrances of Colton, what might be good questions to ask him?

- Any update on your summer trip?
- Are you watching the Tour?
- Did you finish that model airplane you were doing?
- Where are you going to high school?
- What’s your favorite restaurant?
- How’s crew?
Remembers in conversation
Opinions

- Opinions are a form of comment.
- Opinions can be challenging for those with social cognitive and/or language challenges, who may actually be rarely asked about their opinion.
- Expressing an opinion also requires making a decision and taking a risk - and perhaps being wrong, since others can judge us based on our opinions.
- It's important not only to be able to state our opinion appropriately, but also to tolerate differing opinions in socially acceptable ways.
## Goal & Materials

### GOAL

**Work on opinions to:**
- Improve the ability to formulate & express an independent opinion in an appropriate way
- Decrease decision paralysis and inability to take a position
- Practice taking a risk, which builds resilience
- Help speakers stay regulated, be flexible & tolerate uncomfortable feelings that may arise when others have different opinions
- Teach and reinforce use of mental state verbs such as: think, like/don’t like or decide which then supports cognitive growth

### MATERIALS

**Work on opinions with:**
- Conversation Paths
  - Integrate opinions practice template slides into Conversation Paths to easily switch between activities focusing on opinions and activities integrating opinions into conversation.
  - Introduce the idea gently if speakers become anxious – perhaps start with easier topics (e.g. school vacations, popsicles) rather than inquiring about more controversial ideas (e.g. gaming systems, politics.)
  - Discuss the feelings that can arise when we realize others don’t always share our opinions, as well as strategies to help us cope with these situations.
  - Compliment/reinforce: “You thought about it and came up with an opinion - great!” “You were ok that Y had a different opinion.”

©Anna Vagin, PhD 2021
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Video games</th>
<th>McNuggets</th>
<th>Switch</th>
<th>PS5</th>
<th>applesauce</th>
<th>pasta</th>
<th>tennis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Andrew</td>
<td>Meh – don’t like</td>
<td>junk food salty, fat, sugar</td>
<td>expensive</td>
<td>No, Kinect is the best</td>
<td>good</td>
<td>Try not to eat. Depends on sauce</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marcus</td>
<td>Love them</td>
<td>Really good</td>
<td>Good, not the best</td>
<td>Best in world</td>
<td>good</td>
<td>Fav food</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Tell what you think.

Given a thing/activity/place/idea, tell what your opinion is – remember, we can all have different opinions – and that’s ok!
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Beach or woods?</th>
<th>Brownies or ice cream?</th>
<th>In-N-Out or Gott’s?</th>
<th>Pizza or burrito?</th>
<th>TikTok or Discord?</th>
<th>iPhone or Pixel 5?</th>
<th>Tahoe or LA?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Andrew</td>
<td>Beach</td>
<td>Ice cream</td>
<td>Gott’s</td>
<td>burrito</td>
<td>Discord</td>
<td>Pixel 5</td>
<td>Tahoe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marcus</td>
<td>Beach</td>
<td>brownies</td>
<td>Gott’s</td>
<td>pizza</td>
<td>Discord</td>
<td>iPhone</td>
<td>LA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calvin</td>
<td>BEACH</td>
<td>neither</td>
<td>In-N-Out</td>
<td>pizza</td>
<td>Discord</td>
<td>iPhone</td>
<td>Tahoe</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This one or that one?

Given 2 choices, explain why you like one more than the other.

Template available in: Conversation Paths Pack Expanded Version, 2021
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Warriors</th>
<th>Vegan tacos</th>
<th>bowling</th>
<th>SATs</th>
<th>Electric guitar</th>
<th>Nascar</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Court</td>
<td>intro</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charlie</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>intro</td>
<td>uhoh</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>intro</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curtis</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>intro</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Josh</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>intro</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>intro</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Convo practice:**

One person introduces topic & gives/explains their opinion. Each person then takes a turn recognizing the opinion just stated verbally (e.g. “oh ya”, “really?”, etc.) or non-verbally (e.g. head nod, body stays regulated, etc.) and appropriately state their opinion.

*Template available in: Conversation Paths Pack Expanded Version, 2021*
Kayaking

I know
- There was lots of water.
- I saw sea otters.
- I watched a seaplane land.

I think
- The water was pretty.
- The sea otters were cute.
- I think it would be fun to ride the seaplane.

I know into I think

What do you know about something? There are things you know, but also opinions that tell what you think about what you know. Opinions are often more interesting to others, so it’s good to have and share opinions.

Template available in: Conversation Paths Pack Expanded Version, 2021
Opinions in conversation

Anna: I just planted an apple tree in my yard – can’t wait!! (Anna likes apples)
Andy: That’s cool but a little boring. That’s cool not a fan. I like apples. That’s cool, I eat apples. That’s cool, even though I really don’t like apples.

Anna: I just ordered mosquito repellent bracelets from Amazon.
Andy: GENIUS IDEA!!!!!!!!!!!! Genius idea! Mosquitos will never get past that. Those annoying bugs will never hurt you.

Anna: I just bought outdoor furniture.
Andy: That’s stupid and boring. That sounds cool. What furniture was it?
Inflexibility is a powerful force

• Discomfort with change & the feelings that accompany change
• Desire to know what’s coming up – comfort with what’s expected
• Attempts to be in control of events, people & feelings

• Challenges to inflexibility can result in feelings
  • Anger
  • Sadness
  • Anxiety

• Challenges to inflexibility can result in behavior
  • Meltdowns/big reactions
  • Confrontation
  • Removing oneself from the situation
I didn’t notice I did that

I didn’t do/say that

I didn’t notice I did that

I didn’t understand why that’s so bad

It’s not my problem if they don’t like it

People do that to me

No one ever tells me

Well I think it’s funny

But it was funny

They need to deal with it

It’s a free country

I think it’s okay

It’s not my problem if they don’t like it

People do that to me

No one ever tells me

Well I think it’s funny

But it was funny

They need to deal with it

It’s a free country

I think it’s okay
Flexibility is a powerful tool that allows us to...

• Adapt to new situations, ambiguity & change
• Tolerate uncomfortable feelings
• Understand that different perspectives are okay
• Let go of an old way of doing something & use a new way
• Turn control & leadership over to others
• Consider alternatives rather than looking at things with “blinders on”
• Not be paralyzed by failure
• Move beyond cooperation to collaboration
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Foundation Activities</th>
<th>Slide #</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Let’s define flex</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alone &amp; flex</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flex feelings &amp; thoughts</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sketch flex</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sketch my flex</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sketch more of my flex</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Let’s define stuck</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sketch stuck</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sketch my stuck</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sketch more of my stuck</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The continuum of flex &amp; stuck</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stuck &amp; flex – hot &amp; cool thoughts</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stuck &amp; flex – my hot &amp; cool thoughts</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key:
- Watch & Learn Activity
- Self-reflective Activity
Activity slide format

• **Steps 1-3**
  • Suggested sequence & prompt for activity

• **Mental Note**
  • Tips to remember as you work

• **Quick Top 3** (not included in self-reflection activities)
  • In a rush? 3 choices for animated videos to use
  • **NEVER** show a video unless you have previewed it in its entirety!
Let’s define flex

**Step 1:** Before watching an animated video with 2 or more characters, ask the students what they think it means to be flexible, and what it can feel and look like. Use whatever vocabulary/terminology is familiar or developmentally appropriate (e.g. “flexibility”, “go with the flow”, “flex.”) Make sketches or a list of their thoughts.

**Step 2:** Watch the video and talk about how/if their initial ideas were portrayed in the video. I love having students sketch examples of when characters find their flex – great material to fuel discussions. Ask the students if their initial list left anything out. If so, add to the list. Discuss.

**Step 3:** Repeating this activity with different animated videos will make the understanding of the concept deeper – so spend some time watching and discussing 3-5 videos. Remember, you want to build understanding, and that can take time – don’t rush through this first step.

**Mental Note:** There are many different “kinds” of flexibility: coming up with and trying multiple solutions to a problem, going along with the ideas of others, changing our mind based on new information, changing our behavior based on what we notice is happening around us (e.g. “reading the room”), understanding that there are multiple ways of doing things, recognizing that many rules are fluid and dependent on context, etc.

**Quick Top 3:** *Catch It, Sesame Street Happy/Sad Cookie, Air Travel in Real Life*
Sample student work

Every group/student you ask will have a different answer!
Step 1: At first glance, it may seem as if flexibility is only called on when we are with others. However, it can be just as important to be able to think and act flexibly when we are alone. Start this discussion by asking students if flex can be important (even) when we are alone. OR Start by watching an animated video with only 1 character and then “wonder” if that character was flexible, even with no one else around.

Step 2: Encourage sketching – you can compare these sketches with those made in the previous activity to fuel the discussion. Or watch more than 1 video!

Step 3: Possible prompts: Did flexibility help the character attain their goal? How difficult did it seem for the character to maintain their flex? Do you think there are personal traits or tendencies that make it easier to find flex? How is flexibility when characters are alone different from when they are with others? How is it similar?

Mental Note: As you move through these activities, remind students that flexibility is often important whether or not we are with others.

Quick Top 3: Ormie the Pig, Scavengerhunt, Game Changer
Two students from the same 4th grade group illustrating Raccoon’s flexibility in *Scavengerhunt*. They identified comfortable & uncomfortable feelings. Being flexible isn’t always easy!
Flex feelings & thoughts

Step 1: This activity works well with animations that students have already watched and enjoyed. Watch, stopping the video at moments when the character is being flexible.

Step 2: Ask students to write (or help you write) thought bubbles reflecting what the character might be thinking. Put on sticky notes you can affix to the screen or just hold them up. Include feelings, remembering that when we are flexible we can experience both comfortable and uncomfortable feelings. If any thought bubbles reflect positive self-talk or promote flexibility, point that out, e.g. what we think in our heads can change what we do and how we feel. There will be more work on thoughts further on in Bit by Bit, but start setting up that work here.

Step 3: You can repeat this activity with multiple animations.

Mental Note: Flexibility is usually supported by self-regulation and the ability to manage impulsive/uncomfortable emotions, so watch for strategies the characters use (e.g. in Ernie Counts Fruit, Bert takes a deep breath, asks for clarification, and finally removes himself from the frustrating situation.)

Quick Top 3: Verstaubt, Long Story Shortz: Fairness, Maca & Roni: Cleaning
Just because you’re alone doesn’t mean you don’t have thoughts and feelings! *Verstaubt*

5th graders enjoyed re-watching *Ruppee Run* and calling out thoughts for me to write – everybody was engaged!
Sketch flex

**Step 1:** View a video. Then, ask students to illustrate a time when the character showed their flex. Encourage details like talk or thought bubbles and feelings. You can also encourage them to make 2 sketches, one showing the character when they weren’t flex (you can introduce the idea of stuck) and another one showing them being flex.

**Step 2:** Have students share their illustrations and discuss as a group. If at any time a student says something like “that kind of happened to me”, let the conversation go in that direction – that spontaneous self-reflection is great material for everyone!

**Step 3:** If your students particularly enjoy these sketching activities, feel free to do more with other animations. Choose videos that show different forms of flexibility and a range of contexts and characters. Then compare the various illustrations.

**Mental Note:** Student sketches give lots of information about how facial expression reflects feelings (e.g. mad eyebrows) as well as what contextual details are most relevant. Sketches with multiple characters show how the student sees the relationship. Even students with fine motor challenges should be asked to sketch – remember, dry erase boards are the best – easy to erase!

**Quick Top 3:** *Mariza, Power of Teamwork, Broken Wand*
Sample student work

Two students’ illustrations of thoughts and feelings in Soar. Great inclusion of contextual information and feelings.
Sketch my flex

Step 1: Since this is the first self-reflection activity, I often start with an example of my own, sketching relevant details, feeling labels, and thought/talk bubbles. I draw a pretty basic picture. When you talk about your example, make connections to the animations you’ve watched (e.g. “I didn’t want to carry in all the heavy groceries, but I was flexible just like Mariza and just did it”.)

Step 2: Ask students to sketch a time when they were flexible. Encourage them to add feelings and thought/talk bubbles. Share and discuss sketches as a group. These discussions are a great time to encourage conversation and empathy, as well as recognition of how hard it can be to find flex.

Step 3: If a student’s drawing doesn’t really show flexibility (e.g. maybe the other person modified their request because the student was actually inflexible) focus on feelings to draw out more information. Try to find some degree of flexibility, or just leave it for another day. I often look for examples of student flexibility in our sessions, and point them out, such as “Wow, you let James have the blue piece in the game – I know that blue’s your favorite – thanks for being so flexible, I bet James really appreciates it!”

Mental Note: If a student says they can’t remember a time they were flex, encourage them to make one up or sketch someone else they know being flex. There will usually be some of their truth in their illustrations, and will show their level of conceptual understanding.
Sample student work

In this illustration, a sixth grade boy shows how he’s learned to just say “OK” when told to do his work.

This fourth grade boy proudly illustrated how he’s learned to be flex and tolerate his little sister’s crying.
Sketch more of my flex

**Step 1:** It’s important to elicit more than one example of flex from students, so it’s good to revisit sketching flexibility from time to time. Those sketches will give you an idea of how they are (hopefully) becoming more flexible, as well as more aware of their responses. We want them convinced that they can succeed at being flex!

**Step 2:** It’s important to feather in other social learning concepts & programs that you may be working on and using, such as problem size, Zones of Regulation™*, spirals of success and failure, etc. Putting curriculum ideas together results in deeper learning!

**Step 3:** Flexibility is not an “all or nothing” phenomenon. A later activity introduces the idea of a continuum of flexibility/inflexibility. If students give examples for which you think that visual would be helpful, feel free to hop ahead! Bit by Bit isn’t a strictly linear program.

**Mental Note:** As you work through these activities, it’s not unusual for students to comment on the work you’ve been doing, such as, “I was stuck but then I remembered how (character/peer) got flexible and it worked.” Also, focus on pointing out flex that you spot in sessions (e.g. “Hmmm, looks like you are being flex and a new idea just like Ormie did!”)

*The Zones of Regulation™, a curriculum by Leah Kuypers. Copyright © 2011 Think Social Publishing, Inc. All Rights Reserved. www.socialthinking.com
Sample student work

In an engaging games like Minecraft, students are motivated to keep trying new ideas to get what they want.

This group talked about the different situations that call for flexibility at home and in group.
Let’s define stuck

**Step 1:** Before watching an animated video with 2 or more characters, ask the students what they think it means to be inflexible, and what it can feel and look like. Use whatever vocabulary or terminology is familiar or developmentally appropriate (e.g. stuck, Rock Brain*, etc.) Make a list or sketches of their thoughts.

**Step 2:** After watching, talk about how/if their initial ideas were portrayed in the video. Ask the students if their list left anything out. If so, add to the list. Discuss. Remember, stuck doesn’t always look BIG – sometimes it’s a calmer lack of change or quiet dedication to doing what one wants (like Bert in *Ernie and Bert in a Pyramid* – he keeps going back to explore even though his friend is worried.)

**Step 3:** Repeating this activity with different animated videos will make the understanding of the concept deeper – so spend some time watching and discussing 3-5 videos. Remember, you want to build understanding, and that can take time – don’t rush through this activity.

**Mental Note:** There are many “kinds” of inflexibility: inability to come up with or try different solutions to a problem or go along with someone else’s idea, wanting what we want no matter what, black/white thinking, rigid approach to task, not managing impulsive/uncomfortable emotions, a response when being told we have to do something we avoid or don’t like, etc.

**Quick Top 3:** *Ernie & Bert in a Pyramid, Finders Keepers, La Luna*

---

*Rock Brain is an Unthinkables® character (Superflex Curriculum, Think Social Publishing, ©2008)*
Sample student work

This group decided to illustrate the problem in *Finders Keepers*. Their illustrations don’t show a lot of inflexible feelings or behavior, so we spent time watching more videos and repeating this activity.
**Sketch stuck**

**Step 1:** View an animated video and ask students to illustrate a time when the character was stuck. Encourage them to add details, talk or thought bubbles and feelings. Have students share their illustrations and discuss as a group.

**Step 2:** Since by now students will have watched several animated videos about stuck, you can ask them to each draw examples from a different videos. That will give you material demonstrating the many “flavors” of inflexibility for your discussions.

**Step 3:** If your students particularly enjoy these sketching activities, feel free to do more with other animations. Be sure to choose videos that show different forms of inflexibility and a range of contexts and characters.

**Mental Note:** Again, if a student says something like “that kind of happened to me”, let the conversation go in that direction – that spontaneous self-reflection is great material for everyone!

**Quick Top 3:** *Sesame Street: Ernie Counts Fruit, Stuck on an Escalator, Carrot Crazy*
Sample student work

Great illustration of Ernie’s stuck fruit counting and emotion as well as Bert’s deep breath, although Bert’s feeling is incorrectly labeled. We reviewed the feelings and made a correction. Then repeated the activity with 2 more animations.

This 3rd grader sketched a character in Game Changer feeling mad and determined. However, the label “muscle man” is confusing, since he wasn’t the one getting tickets. This student would benefit from re-watching & more discussion.
Step 1: Again, I often start with an example of my own, with relevant details, focusing on my uncomfortable feelings as well as how my stuck affected those around me (as appropriate, including their feelings and thoughts.) I talk about why I were stuck (e.g. having a bad day, really focused on what you wanted, etc.) as well as what finally happened. I make connections between my situation and one of the animated videos we’ve watched (e.g. “Just like Ormie I was so focused on getting my printer to work and it just wasn’t! My daughter called and I was pretty grouchy.”)

Step 2: Ask students to sketch a time when they were stuck. Encourage them to add feelings and thought/talk bubbles. If they can’t think of one, encourage them to make one up. If there is a particularly good example, go into more detail as you ask the student what happened before or after. How could things have been different? How big were the feelings? Point out that being stuck is difficult and often uncomfortable.

Step 3: Use sketching not only when working with these activities! When a student comes in with a social situation that didn’t go so well, I always suggest they draw it out. There can be lots of information, so one or more drawings might be needed to support your discussion with important visual information.

Mental Note: Some students may not be ready to expose themselves, but making one up allows you to see how much they understand about the concept. When other students share their sketches, these students will see that everyone has moments of inflexibility. Over time, they will become more ready to look at themselves in this important way.
This student drew a sequence describing an incident at the beach. He did a great job of including thoughts and feelings for everyone. He’s using a 1 to 10 scale for his feeling size.
Often, the social experiences our students talk about are complicated. It can’t all be included in one sketch, so I recommend having multiple dry erase boards available.
Sketch more of my stuck

**Step 1:** It’s helpful to encourage students to keep sketching examples of their own inflexibility. Students who say “I’m never stuck” really benefit from seeing and hearing the examples other group members – over time they will likely begin to come up with their own. In the meantime, continue encouraging them to make one up – it will probably be based on their own experiences.

**Step 2:** Always check illustrations for important social details – like context, feeling labels, thought bubbles, etc. There is often one student who finishes (way) before everyone else! Challenge them to add more information, or work on an additional sketch.

**Step 3:** Problem solving as a group is a great activity. When a student presents their stuck moment, ask for input from the group. Have they ever been in a similar situation? How did they handle it? Were there any strategies that worked? Or didn’t work? Often students will engage in these discussions without much guidance – be ready to step aside (preferred!) or support as needed.

**Mental Note:** Inflexibility is not an “all or nothing” phenomenon. You can always refer to the continuum of flexibility/inflexibility (next activity) in your discussions. Visual supports such as that will help students understand this complex concept.
Typical social situations, like crushes, can be particularly difficult for our students. Their inflexibility can often make these situations all consuming, so helping them understand is a work in progress.
The continuum of flex & stuck

**Step 1:** Continuums are extremely useful for countless social learning concepts (e.g. cooperation, feelings of annoyance, level of contentment with social engagement, etc.!) Allow each group to develop the various points along this continuum (I generally like 5 point scales.)

**Step 2:** Use this visual as you watch various animations and discuss where characters fall/move along the continuum. Adding accompanying feelings and thoughts makes the visual even richer in information. If there are 2 characters, place them both on the continuum and discuss how they influenced each other. Using pictures of the characters makes it more fun.

**Step 3:** As you discuss, remember that flex and stuck fluctuate based on many factors: mood, degree to which we are rested/fed/hydrated, who we are with, how our day has been doing, etc., so toss these ideas into the mix.

**Mental Note:** To support self-awareness, I often ask students to place themselves along the continuum at the start of sessions. Where are you today? How does that compare to where you are usually? What do they see as their “usual” range?

**Quick Top 3:** *Ruppee Run, Bridge, Partly Cloudy*
Students indicated where they felt they were during our session – notice that it’s a range. The arrow indicated where they wanted to be. It’s great to see your goal!
Stuck & flex – hot & cool thoughts

**Step 1:** Cool thoughts are thoughts that lead to decreases in uncomfortable feelings (often anger or worry,) and hot thoughts are thoughts that feed uncomfortable feelings. Often the basis for cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT,) they are a very useful model for our students who often struggle managing their uncomfortable feelings. Watch an animation. Is the character stuck? What hot thoughts might they be thinking? Are they able to become and/or stay flexible? What thoughts might be helping them? Pause to allow students to brainstorm – encourage creativity and not repeating what someone else said. Discuss how thoughts impacted the character’s feelings and what happened.

**Step 2:** Another way to work on cool thoughts (and empathy) is to ask students: “Pretend you are in this video with the character – what could you say to help them feel better?” Make thought bubbles – younger students especially like holding their thoughts up to the screen while you take a photo!

**Step 3:** Hunt for how cool thoughts morph into flexibility and tolerance. For example, in *A Cloudy Lesson*, there is one moment after the cloud blower breaks that the child may be thinking “oh, no, it’s ruined”, but soon afterward we see his expression change as he realizes “wait, I bet I can fix this!” In *Partly Cloudy*, the stork repeatedly is able to conquer his worries about his delivery packages and strategize how to stay safe. In *Air Travel in Real Life*, we see the man with the computer look annoyed “I just CAN’T believe this!!”, but then he takes a deep breath and relaxes “fine, we will land sometime soon…” Hot and cool thoughts in action!

**Mental Note:** I often ask students if these cool thoughts they are generating might actually be helpful to themselves when they think hot thoughts. My Game Playing & Stuck Fixers developed from this activity. Visual information will transfer these cool thoughts into self talk more effectively than telling students verbally (e.g. “remember, it doesn’t need to be perfect”) and you will use them in practice activities.

**Quick Top 3:** *Soar, Game Changer, Maca & Roni: Cleaning*
Sample – hot & cool thoughts

These scenes allow for great contrasts in feelings. Sticky notes on freeze frames in *Soar*.
**Stuck & flex – my hot & cool thoughts**

**Step 1:** Review previous student sketches, or ask them to make new ones. Analyze the thoughts – are they hot or cool? From here on, refer to hot and cool thoughts whenever you discuss that thoughts can change our feelings – for better or worse. Helping students generate cool thoughts to counter hot thoughts is usually on-going work. Using a feeling scale (1-5) is very helpful. For example, if the student’s mad is at a 4, could a cool thought bring it down perhaps to a 3? You can’t always go from an uncomfortable feeling to an 4okay or fine feeling, so even small changes are significant.

**Step 2:** As students share their sketches, probe how difficult it was to change as well as what finally happened. Did their cool thought help resolve the situation and the uncomfortable feelings? Conversely, if you are exploring sketches with hot thoughts, what cool thought might have been helpful?

**Step 3:** Again, I often compile a list of cool thoughts from this activity and write them on foam board to use during sessions when a student might become inflexible or upset. Just having this visual support handy helps students develop that inner voice that makes us more resilient, so this is a very important concept – keep circling back to it.

**Mental Note:** It can take some practice for students to generate cool thoughts. You may want to think in terms of degrees of cool. Thinking “it’s not the end of the world” might be better than thinking “we are all going to die of COVID”, but not as cool as “I know this will end and we will get a vaccine.” A great resource to work more deeply on hot versus cool thoughts is the book *What to Do When Your Temper Flares* by D. Huebner, Magination Press, 2008 (also a great recommendation for parents.) The cool thoughts your students generate can be compiled into visual supports distributed to teachers, little league coaches, parents, etc.
Sample student work

This student illustrated how they changed a 2-3 sad to 0, and a 4 mad to 1. Nice work!

I made this visual for a group discussing how they can use positive, cool thoughts to overcome their negative, hot thoughts. Decreased anxiety often leads to greater social success.
From here, it gets EVEN MORE complicated!

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Benefits of flex &amp; stuck</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Downsides of flex &amp; stuck</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Downsides of stuck for others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flex – not always a good choice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stuck – sometimes a good choice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extreme stuck</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feeding stuck – competitiveness, grudges &amp; revenge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flex – tolerating opinions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flex together - collaboration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My disappointments with flex</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Needing to flex “forever”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Practicing flex & building resilience

• Start feathering in practice situations early on – just take your time and remember:
  • Change happens bit by bit
  • Realize how difficult being flexible can be
  • Watch for even small concessions/changes
  • Remember your visual supports
  • Point out instances of flex, especially when students are starting practice activities. (e.g. “You were flexible when you were able to play with the green piece instead of blue for 3 turns— I know blue’s your favorite. I could tell you were annoyed but you really handled it!”)
  • Practice patience on your part!
The Basics

- Use visual supports
- Preview activities
- Engage in retrospective review
Tracking the “trifecta” of discomfort

Feeling Trackers available on www.socialtime.org/shop
Tracking changes in feelings

Shameless plug: Maryellen Rooney Moreau (of Story Grammar fame!!) & I are presenting at ASHA: Play. Pause. Think! Animations for Social Learning, Narrative Language & Thought

©Anna Vagin, PhD 2022
I know that my dad will bring my pink phone over to the Raymond house in San Anselmo when I get there.
Back to those animations!

1. What’s the character thinking? These are hot thoughts.

   I’m a moron

   I’m stupid

2. What could you say to help him? These are cool thoughts.

   You’re not stupid, you’re not a moron. You just need to try your best. And never give up.
Moving from the external to the internal

Remember to model using these fixers yourself...

Feeling Trackers & Fixers available on www.socialtime.org/shop
Just prop them up nearby!

Make sure you keep modeling these yourself!
Changing thoughts...changing feelings
Sometimes you just need some painter’s tape!
Previewing to support success

“hot” vs “cool” thoughts are from *What To Do When Your Temper Flares*, Magination Press

*Molerats in Space* by Peaceable Kingdom
Be honest & plan ahead for success

Even fun games can be tricky with feelings. We plan ahead:

**Possible feelings**
- mad
- sad
- anxious
- suspenseful
- nervous

**Our strategies**
- be mindful/meditate
- calm down
- breathe
- check this board
- read the room - check how others are managing their feelings/help others
Strategize!

Escape Zombie City
TheRealQueenGames
https://youtu.be/lPTyEe7DL3Y
“I won’t play if I can’t be blue”

IceCool & IceCool2
Brain Games
Retrospective review

• With younger children you can use a term like “after check-in” or whatever term you make up.

• Go back to your preview boards with students and consider how effective they were in identifying trouble spots and possible solutions. What got left off the list? How were problems that hadn’t been previewed handled? What do they think they did well? What could they have done better? Were they able to replace hot thoughts with cool thoughts?

• Have everyone sketch one success and one not-so-much, then share and discuss as a group. Remember those thought bubbles and feelings – they are very much a part of practicing flexibility!
Games – big feelings ahead!
- Feel ok being uncomfortable
- Apologize when needed
- Do what’s expected
- Tolerate opinions
- Take more risks
- Be more flexible
- Have casual conversation
- Agree & negotiate
- Stay regulated
- Accept mistakes
- Stay engaged
Cooperative Tabletop Games

Cauldron Quest
Mole Rats in Space
Outfoxed
Forbidden Island & Desert
Escape Zombie City
Castle Panic
Magic Maze
Cities Skylines the Board Game

Competitive Tabletop Games

Taco vs Burrito
Pyramid of the Pengqueen
Trapdoor checkers
Ice Cool & Ice Cool 2
Eureka!
Blokus
Dragonwood & Dragonrealm
Prime Climb
Number Rings
Learning about Others Games

Loaded Questions Jr
Apples to Apples
Whoonu
This or That?

Role Playing Games (RPG)
Dungeons & Dragons
TryDice
Critical Core (Therapeutic RPG)

Dice Games
Farkle
Yamslam
Qwixx

Card Games
Hanabi
Monopoly Deal
Saboteur
Zigity
Chomp!
Sushi Go & Sushi Go Party

Find my favorite games under “FREE RESOURCES” www.socialtime.org
Taco vs Burrito

Yamslam
• I love using Rube Goldberg machine building – these are based in using materials in ways that are different than what they are meant for, so it’s perfect for work on flexibility. Show these for inspiration:

OK Go - This Too Shall Pass  
The Lemonade Machine-  
Sprice Machines
            The Quarantine Machine :  
a toilet paper chain reaction

How to Make a SIMPLE Rube Goldberg Machine - Become a Beginner
Rube Goldberg built by 3 students in group.

Rube Goldberg build by 3 students in teletherapy – they worked together to tell me how to build this.
Make a zoo with or without rotation – 4 students, 4 assignments: reptiles, wild cats, sea creatures, and visitors.

4th grade collaborative project: marble run.
Kapla

Gravitrax
Blue is often a favorite color. Students needed to rotate around these 3 color building options for 3-5 minutes time periods.

A harder selection – one set is clearly more interesting than the other 2 in terms of both color and number!
Being flexible means:
- be ok with a change of plan
- switching
- not being crazy being calm
- not giving up
- trying again
- keep trying until you succeed
- change your mind
Writing goals is very personal...

It’s very easy to criticize the goals that other people write. You probably won’t like all the goal suggestions I give here. The goals I’ve written are just suggestions – feel free to change them so they work for you and your students.
Where are Social Cognition & MSV in this process?

They are everywhere!!
Challenges & questions

• Standardized tests of conversation is antithetical to true conversation, which is spontaneity in the moment
• We often talk about “peer group”. Who represents the student’s peer group?
  • Chronological age peer?
  • Developmental age peer?
  • Peer with similar S&L profile, diagnosis?
• How can we (with our preconceptions & intersectionality) explore our collection of data and impressions of something that varies so much across cultures and abilities?
• How can our work in conversation counter and challenge ableism?
• How can we move away from imposing our judgments on the conversations of others and support them in having conversations that they find fulfilling?
### Example: 5th grader, DX: ADHD & Social Pragmatic Disorder (mainstreamed, receives resource support & social group)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TEACHER INFO FROM CONVERSATION CHECKLIST</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Alex usually doesn’t remember what others have told him about project plans. He typically ends up doing the group project alone and his own way. With friends, the teacher noted that classmates often say Alex “never remembers what we tell him – he just does what he wants.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PARENT INFO FROM CONVERSATION CHECKLIST</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Parents described that it’s “hard to have a conversation with Alex – he just goes back to what he wants to talk about, so we end up just listening and blankly nodding – he doesn’t notice that we aren’t really interested.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ALEX’S IMPRESSIONS OF HIS SKILLS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Alex agrees that it’s important to know about what your friends like, but that he doesn’t know how to do that, and that, “anyway, I always forget what they say.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SLP CLINICAL OBSERVATIONS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Alex monopolizes conversation, talks over others, and interrupts to bring topic back to his particular interest. He tends not to attend to facial/emotional and nonverbal signals from peers. When he asks a question, it’s often based on his interests, and he doesn’t always listen to the answer.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.5.1.C

- Pose and respond to specific questions by making comments that contribute to the discussion and elaborate on the remarks of others.

- BASELINE: During group projects, Alex struggles to remember what others say or plan to do relative to the project. He asks repetitive questions but doesn’t seem to pay attention to what other students say.

- GOAL: By May 2020, Alex will attend to and remember student input in classroom-based school projects, with a rating of 3 on the attached rubric measured over 2 consecutive opportunities.
Excerpt from Practice Activities Rubric, CPPEV, Vagin (2021)
# Goal Attainment Scaling (GAS) Rubric

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PERFORMANCE SCORE</th>
<th>PERFORMANCE RATING</th>
<th>GOAL 1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Much more than expected (far exceeds annual goal)</td>
<td>At least six times in a three minute conversation over 3 observations with 2 peers in speech group, recalls what he remembers about others and asks questions and followup questions. Significant decrease in repetitive questioning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Somewhat more than expected (exceeds annual goal)</td>
<td>At least 4 times in a 3 minute conversation with a peer in speech group, spontaneously brings up, via comment or question, something he remembers about other person. When asked, can recall 2 items on a remembers card about peer in speech group without needing to review it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>Expected level of outcome (meets annual goal)</td>
<td>When reminded, reviews what he knows about a person prior to starting conversation with them, and then able to make 2 interesting &amp; relevant questions or comments about 1 fact he remembers about their interests.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-1</td>
<td>Somewhat less than expected (benchmark)</td>
<td>Can give 2 reasons why remembering what he knows about others is important. Has compiled at least 2 remembers cards about peers in speech group with accurate information about them that he has found out via questions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-2</td>
<td>Much less than expected (present level of performance)</td>
<td>Argues about the relevance &amp; importance of remembering what he knows about others. Frequently asks uninteresting &amp; repetitive questions that have already been answered (e.g. “Why don't you like Fortnite?”)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Excerpt from GAS Rubric, CPPEV, Vagin (2021)
Example: 4th grader, DX: Anxiety & Social Pragmatic Disorder (mainstreamed, receives school counselor support & social group)

**TEACHER INFO FROM CONVERSATION CHECKLIST**

- Daniel’s anxiety shows itself in class quite a bit. He typically doesn’t participate in group discussions, and when he is asked about his opinion he gets a feel for “how the tide is running” and then agrees, even when I know that isn’t what he really thinks. Students used to ask him questions, but he often tears up so they have basically stopped. He often looks so lonely, but it’s hard to know how to help.

**PARENT INFO FROM CONVERSATION CHECKLIST**

- Parents described that Daniel is pretty chatty at home when it’s just them, but when even family members come over he gets really quiet. He recently started meds for his anxiety, and they see some improvement. He asks lots of questions about sports, and loves to talk about his favorite teams.

**DANIEL’S IMPRESSIONS OF HIS SKILLS**

- Daniel agrees that he gets really nervous when kids talk to him. He has several friends who are quiet like him, and he likes that. He wants to learn how to be less nervous when he talks, and how to make decisions about things faster.

**SLP CLINICAL OBSERVATIONS**

- When he feels comfortable in a situation, Daniel can have lots to say. He is much more comfortable with adults, and often appears overwhelmed in groups and certainly in classroom discussions. He has done well in social group with one other student this year, and is ready for a slightly larger group.
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.5.1.C

• Pose and respond to specific questions by making comments that contribute to the discussion and elaborate on the remarks of others.

• BASELINE: During conversation in his social group, Daniel does not respond to questions asking his opinion - he replies “I don’t know.” When others give their opinion, Daniel consistently says “Me too - I like/don’t like that.”, agreeing with what others say.

• GOAL: By May 2020, Daniel will express his opinion during small talk practice in social group with 3 other students, and will provide one detail to support his opinion, scoring a rating of 3 on the attached rubric measured over 2 consecutive opportunities.
### Excerpt from Practice Activities Rubric, Vagin CPPEV (2021)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conversation Paths Practice Activities</th>
<th>Date &amp; Score</th>
<th>Rubric</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sept</td>
<td>Dec</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>opinions</strong></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opinions can be challenging for students with social cognitive and/or language challenges. They require taking a risk - perhaps their opinion will be judged to be wrong, or they may not be used to being asked what they think. Opinions are a form of comment. It's important not only to be able to state our opinion appropriately, but also to tolerate differing opinions in socially acceptable ways.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**See CPPEV intro guide and practice activities guide for more info about using the practice activities.**

©2021 Anna Vagin, PhD
Example: 6th grader, DX: ADHD & Multiple Learning Disabilities (mainstreamed, receives resource support & social group)

**TEACHER INFO FROM CONVERSATION CHECKLIST**
- Marcus can take up a lot of air in the room. He can be impulsive and has trouble modulating his volume. He is quick to speak up and criticize others, especially if he feels their opinion has no basis, or is different from his. However, he has many friends who admire his quick wit and humor.

**PARENT INFO FROM CONVERSATION CHECKLIST**
- Parents agree that Marcus likes to argue, and often seems to take a position different from their own. He can be inflexible, and it’s often hard to get him to understand another person’s perspective. He gives way too much information about what he thinks.

**MARCUS’ IMPRESSIONS OF HIS SKILLS**
- Marcus feels that he has lots of good ideas and other students should listen to his opinion more because he’s “usually right, they just don’t want to admit it.”

**SLP CLINICAL OBSERVATIONS**
- Marcus’ inflexibility makes it hard for him listen to and respect the opinions of others. While he does have lots of good ideas, he will be more successful at getting them heard if he can soften his delivery, and appreciated differences more. Marcus has shown significant improvement in using friendly words, but he still has a bit to go.
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.5.1.C

• Pose and respond to specific questions by making comments that contribute to the discussion and elaborate on the remarks of others.

• BASELINE: During conversation in his social group, Marcus struggles to tolerate differing opinions. He argues for his position, and can use unkind words when others have a different idea.

• GOAL: By May 2020, Marcus will tolerate differing opinions by staying well regulated and not arguing loudly or using unfriendly words during small talk practice in social group with 3 other students, scoring a rating of 3 on the attached rubric measured over 2 consecutive opportunities.
**Conversation Paths Practice Activities**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>E</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>G</th>
<th>H</th>
<th>I</th>
<th>J</th>
<th>K</th>
<th>L</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>O</th>
<th>P</th>
<th>Q</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Date &amp; Score</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Rubric</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept</td>
<td>Dec</td>
<td>Mar</td>
<td>Jun</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**opinions**
- 1: Frequently berates or strongly argues with people when they have an opinion different from his.
- 2: Needs high support and multiple cues to stay regulated and maintain friendly language when others have a different opinion.
- 3: Needs low (<3x/5min) support to stay friendly and regulated when faced with different opinions.
- 4: Independently able to tolerate differing opinions consistent with peer group.

**NAME:** Marcus K  
**PLACEMENT:**  
**DATE:** 08/25/2029

**GOAL #1:** CCSS: E/Literacy SL.5.1.C 
Pose and respond to specific questions by making comments that contribute to the discussion and elaborate on the remarks of others. **BASELINE:** During conversation in his social group, Marcus struggles to tolerate differing opinions. He argues for his position, and can use unkind words when others have a different idea. **GOAL:** By May 2020, Marcus will tolerate differing opinions by staying well regulated and not arguing loudly or using unkind words during small talk practice in social group with 3 other students, scoring a rating of 3 on the attached rubric measured over 2 consecutive opportunities. **GOAL MET**

**opinions**
- Opinions can be challenging for students with social cognitive and/or language challenges. They require taking a risk - perhaps their opinion will be judged to be wrong, or they may not be used to being asked what they think. Opinions are a form of comment. It's important not only to be able to state our opinion appropriately, but also to tolerate differing opinions in socially acceptable ways.

---

**see CPPEV intro guide and practice activities guide for more info about using the practice activities**

©2021 Anna Vagin, PhD
CONTACT INFORMATION

Email: annavagin@gmail.com
Web: www.socialtime.org
YouTube: Anna Vagin PhD
Twitter: @anna_vagin
Instagram: Anna Vagin

Join my mailing list! Sign up on www.socialtime.org
Bibliography


Bibliography


- Hammon, M., Sneddon, S., Williams, M., Crotty, & Crotty, B. (2015) Improving the Use of Mental State Verbs by Children With Autism Spectrum Disorders In Two Narrative Production Tasks: Story Retelling And Spontaneous Story Generation. Proceedings of the National Conference on Undergraduate Research, Eastern Washington University, Cheney, WA.


Bibliography


