Social Thinking and Social Competencies
...teaching more than social skills

Financial Disclosure:
I am the founder of the Social Thinking Methodology and own all its intellectual property. I receive revenue from products including books, games, eLearning modules, etc. My company also provides a lot of free information on our website: www.socialthinking.com

The Social Thinking methodology is designed for use with individuals, 4 years old through adulthood, who have solid to high-level expressive and receptive language skills as well as solid to advanced verbal IQ.

Most people don’t about the importance of the social mind in our academic & vocational lives.

Professionals, academic administrators, politicians, and journalists refer to social cognition as “soft skills” and “non-cognitive skills”

The Social Thinking Methodology focuses on teaching social competencies, not just social skills.

We never begin treatment by teaching an individual to change a socially-based behavior.
The Social Thinking methodology fosters meta-cognitive social and emotional awareness and learning strategies to enhance social competencies and motivation for social learning.

Sophisticated social responses are not memorized, they are produced as part of a social problem-solving and anxiety management processes.

Social emotional concepts are embedded in the curriculum and academic standards.

To participate in the academic curriculum, and achieve one’s goals often requires the social mind.

Reading comprehension of literature requires us to engage social competencies:

• Attend
• Interpret self and others
• Problem solve to figure out
• Social response (social self-regulation)

“Here is your breakfast,” said Amelia Bedelia. “I hope you like chocolate frosting.”
“What is this?” said Mr. Rogers.
“I said I wanted pancakes for breakfast.”
“These are pan cakes,” said Amelia Bedelia. “I baked these cakes in a frying pan. Do you want to blow out the candle?”
“They are fine,” said Mrs. Rogers. “I will teach you to make normal pancakes. You just did what you were told!”

I have a problem. A really, really, big problem. I hate doing homework, and I have a report due next week.

Let me tell you about it.
3rd Grade Writing Standard

Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events, using effective technique, descriptive details, and clear event sequences. response of characters to situations

3rd Grade: Reading Literature

Describe characters in a story (e.g., their traits, motivations, or feelings) and explain how their actions contribute to the sequence of events.

Continued...

a) Establish a situation and introduce a narrator and/or characters; organize an event sequence that unfolds naturally

b) Use dialogue and description of actions, thoughts, and feelings to develop experiences and events or show the

The social mind requires executive functions to also be evolving:

• Perspective taking
• Goal setting
• Working memory
• Shifting flexibly
• Organizing
• Prioritizing
• Inhibition
• Self-monitoring (to co-regulate with others)

Interested in helping students learn executive functions in the classroom?

SMARTS
Lynn Meltzer & the SMARTS team
www.smarts-ef.org
Our social mind is required for interpretation of socially abstract concepts that are the focus of reading comprehension of literature, social studies, history, project based learning, math estimation, etc.

What does the research tell us about social learning?

Social Information Processing (SIP) is critical for the development of social competencies.


Considering this information combined with our clinical experience, we developed

Social Thinking’s Social Competency Model to explain the layers of social learning

Using an iceberg as an analogy (in the social world), people tend to focus and fix social behaviors. But there is so much more going on below the surface.

Social Cognitive Self-Regulation

Social Responses

Self

Others

Social Attention

Social Interpretation

Problem Solving

Social Responses

Developmental
Social Interpretation

1. Acquired world knowledge
2. What is the situation?
3. Who are the people?
4. Basic emotions
5. Self-conscious emotions
6. Basic theory of mind
7. Advanced, applied, spontaneous theory of mind

CT = Critical thinking

Social Cognitive Self-Regulation

Social self-awareness to compare myself to others in this context

Evaluation of the social context: situation and what is known about the people

Social Responses

Self-Evaluation

Social Skills

Social Evaluation

Sensory Processing

Possible Anxiety & Depression Management

Social Cognitive Self-Regulation

Overloaded sensory processing and/or experiencing compelling anxiety and/or depression put a stop sign on accessing social cognition to develop or sustain social competencies.

What about screen time overwhelm in the social landscape?

If Frosty isn't attending to the social landscape, then neither are kids on devices.

Social attention in a landscape is harder with a digital device in your hand or on your desk!
Accessing social attention, interpretation, problem solving to decide responses can be blocked by screen time attention! Portable digital devices are impacting the development of social competencies.

Social cognitive self-regulation is more than emotional self-regulation.

Our interpretation involves understanding of SELF and OTHERS as well as differing points of views, beliefs, emotions, anxieties, memories, experiences, etc.

How do we help students become more socially competent?
The Social Thinking Methodology engages Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT)

1. Cognitive behavior affects activity
2. Cognitive activity may be monitored and altered
3. Desired behavior change may be effected through cognitive changes


The Social Thinking Methodology develops tools for Social Cognitive Behavioral Treatments

We explain how the social world works, rather than expect students to simply work in the social world!

We encourage a growth mindset!
We focus on helping individuals develop stronger sets of tools to socially attend, interpret, problem solve and respond in the social world.

The Social Thinking Methodology includes treatment frameworks and vocabulary

Treatment frameworks describe aspects of the social landscape and what we want from each other within that landscape.

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Four Steps of Perspective Taking

1. I think about you and you think about me.
2. I think about your motives and intentions.
3. I think about what you are thinking about me.
4. I monitor my behavior and possibly adapt it to try to keep you thinking and feeling about me the way I want you to think and feel about me!

4 Steps of Face-to-Face (F-2-F) Communication

1. Thinking about where we are and who I may want to talk with
2. Establishing a physical presence to show intention to communicate
3. Use eyes to think about others
4. Language to relate to others

Treatment strategies describe specific elements of social and executive functions to be applied within the social landscape

Also referred to as Social Thinking Vocabulary

Social Thinking Vocabulary

1. Thoughts and feelings
2. The group plan
3. Think with your eyes
4. Body in the group
5. *Whole body listening
   *by Suzanne P Truesdale
6. Expected-unexpected behavior
7. Flexible vs stuck thinking
8. Smart guess
9. Size of the problem
10. Shared imagination

10 free webinars on these 10 strategies!
www.socialthinking.com/webinars
What’s the point of these concepts?

To attend and interpret in the social world is to notice the context:

- Situation and People

Social Thinking’s Social Competency Model:

Free article and webinar on our website www.socialthinking.com

Language helps us to reflect, think and self-direct.

To share space together or interact in a specific context we try to figure out (*social evaluation) what is going on around us to establish the hidden rules (*social norms).

*Terms researchers utilize
Why do this? To encourage people to see us working collaboratively to achieve shared goals.

You Tube Brain Game (conformity)

Social Cognitive Self-Regulation requires:
1. One's ability to attend to the context
2. Interpret the context specific social expectations
3. Problem solve how to align one's own social response (behaviors/language) with these expectations to follow the group plan, if one's goal is to work effectively as part of the group.
4. Produce the social response to participate in the group in the manner the student desires

The Social Thinking Methodology encourages students to become social detectives, spies, social scientists, etc. in order to encourage them to learn to socially attend, interpret and problem solve the social context to produce the social responses that encourage others to perceive them in the manner they desire.

For teens who no longer want to be Social Detectives, they grown into becoming social spies and participate in CSI...

Community Social Investigation

Ultimately, our Social Detective and spies are learning to notice how each of us impacts others’ thoughts and feelings.
Social Emotional Chain Reaction

Context = Situation + People

- Expected behaviors
  - How the Doer behaves affects how people feel & think
  - Which affects how they react & respond
  - Which affects how the Doer feels and thinks about self and others

- Unexpected behaviors

What's up with Expected & Unexpected behavior?
Explaining the best way to teach these concepts...

Hidden Rules and Expected-Unexpected

We encourage students to figure out the social norms/ hidden rules by determining the:

- Expected behavior
- Unexpected behavior

Expected and Unexpected behaviors are categorical terms- encouraging students to notice how specific behaviors, in specific contexts, can be summarized as expected or unexpected.

Context = Situation + People
For example:
Teacher explaining lesson to class

Expected behavior
- Body turned towards the teacher
- Thinking with eyes to look at teacher or what the teacher is referring to
- Keep objects not related to lesson in one’s backpack
- Keep thoughts in your head when they are not helpful to the group

Unexpected behavior
- Body turned away from the teacher
- Looking at one’s cell phone
- Student says “I already know this!”

Situation: Teacher explaining lesson to class
These terms were created to help students better interpret the social world.

These terms were not created to tell students they are doing unexpected behavior!

Ultimately, it come down to helping students figure out what they want for themselves.

We each need to keep listening to our clients to build treatment programs that are meaningful to them.

Taking data that utilizes your student’s narrative language to describe their progress provides evidence of treatment’s validity and generalization.

Developmental social emotional learning requires constant updates in our ability to consider our own and other’s social perspectives.

Based on the context and what we know about the people in that context:
- How do people might people think and feel about me?
- How do I think and feel about you?
- How do we read each other’s intentions?

Self-reflection is critical in the social learning, social communicative process.
Our students language based narratives and portfolio assessments provide data to demonstrate social learning.

How powerful is this data?

“Charles” - a case-study

“Every kid, and I mean every kid, in this school is a jerk”.

Charles

The magic of popsicle stick teaching!

Every stick is a person.
Every person has a brain.
Every brain has a thought.
Every thought is tied to an emotion.

Avoid assumptions

Charles had no experience making friends, being included in groups, or talking to others outside of a structured academic environment.

His perception:

People did things to him.
He did not feel his actions, in any way, contributed to others as “jerks”.

Many adolescents are interested in exploring social psychology as long as the interventionist doesn’t make the lesson be all about the student.

The process of exploring his past learning to motivate future learning was the basis for creating and evolving his: Social Operating System

Social Operating System

1.0: Unaware of others, people assumed to be unfriendly

Administrators were not fond of him.

12/2014

“Anyway, I usually find people not outside, but a large group of people hanging out inside the main building hallways. And, to make things more intense, people that I see daily there at lunchtime, were in those same, almost exact locations along with other people, who probably hang there in the morning.”

Social Operating System

1.0: Unaware of others, people assumed to be unfriendly

2.0: Others might think I am sort of unfriendly
Sept. 2015: In group

“I must be doing something more social because a kid came up to me after class and wanted to walk with me to my next class. I never had a person ask me to do that before and I didn’t know what to do! But you would be proud of me, I did not tell him to go away!”

Charles’ challenges for which he was learning concepts and strategies in the UPSTAIRS of his brain:
- Flexibility with peers and food
- Homework strategies
- Classroom management strategies
- Learning why he would relate to peers
- How to join in with peers
- Enjoying being with peers
- Making time to be with peers
- Desiring to be with peers

Social Operating System updates are basically rubrics you can define with your students, based on their abilities and needs.

For Charles, the numerical part of the system helped him begin to develop reflection of self and others.

“There is a girl in my class who I think is a 1.0”
*At that time Charles was at a 3.0
I asked, “how can a 3.0 help a 1.0?”
He then helped her, which in turn gave him practice in relating to others. Win-win

Social Operating System

1.0: Unaware of others, people assumed to be unfriendly
2.0: Others might think I am sort of unfriendly
3.0: Finding people with similar interests
Social Operating System
1.0: Unaware of others, people assumed to be unfriendly
2.0: Others might think I am sort of unfriendly
3.0: Finding people with similar interests
4.0: Found a group of “friends” to sit with
5.0: I really like being with others
6.0: Learning to talk, hangout & problem solve with peers

Self-reflection is critical in the social communicative process.

Narrative Language builds self reflection


Reflecting on what one is doing well now compared to the past, encourages validation of oneself and while also helping students become motivated to manage their next level of vulnerabilities.

Today has been about broadening how we define an emotional landscape on the road to helping students increase their social competencies.

This work fosters their well-being.

...and perhaps our helping others provides our own lifetime of well being.
Social Thinking’s Social Competency Model 2019

Social Interpretation

1. What is the situation?
2. Who are the people?
3. World knowledge
4. Basic emotions
5. Self-conscious emotions
6. Basic theory of mind
7. Advanced, applied, spontaneous theory of mind

CT = Critical thinking
**ME MAP**

*Derivative of a Social Behavior Mapping:*
Exploring my social expectations and related responses to the behaviors of another person.

The numbers below guide the order in which you should progress working across the map.

**Person I am focusing on** _____________________________ (1)

**Situation:** __________________________________________ (2)

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>The behaviors I expect from this person in this situation</th>
<th>How I feel based on their behavior</th>
<th>How I react: based on how I feel</th>
<th>How the other person might feel, based on how I react to that person.</th>
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<tr>
<th>The behaviors this person may produce which I think are unexpected in this situation.</th>
<th>How I feel based on their behavior</th>
<th>How I react: based on how I feel</th>
<th>How the other person might feel, based on how I react to that person.</th>
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