


**Social Thinking Vocabulary  
 and Concepts Drive Social  
 Attention**

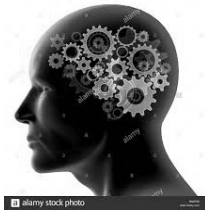
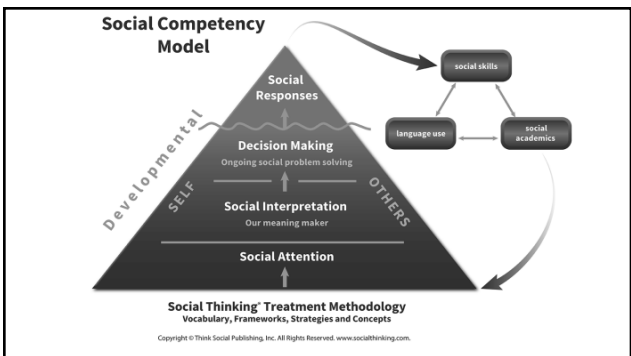


**Michelle Garcia Winner, MA-CCC &  
 Speech Language Pathologist**

**We often teach social skills by telling people  
 what we expect, without helping them to  
 make sense of our expectations.**

- Negotiate
- Cooperate
- Show respect
- Pay attention
- Be polite
- Be friendly, etc.

**Social Thinking's  
 Methodology seeks to  
 unpack the social  
 experience while also  
 seeking to explain how  
 many parts move  
 together.**

**SELF and OTHERS**

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**Social Attention**

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**Social Interpretation** Making meaning

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**Social Problem solving** to decide

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**Social Response(s)**

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**What have we learned about  
 social attention?**

By 14 months, if a child  
attends to geometric shapes  
69% or more of their time,  
100% are autistic.

Pierce, K., Conant, D., Hazin, R., Desmond, J., & Stone  
A preference for geometric patterns early in life as a risk  
factor for autism. Archives of General Psychiatry. 68  
(1):101-9, 2011

People with strong social attention can't help  
but attend to it all.



People with strong attention to geometric  
shapes, are likely to focus on non-social  
aspects of a scene.



Assessment of 28 year old diagnosed with  
social anxiety but not ASD (yet).

“Where was this taken and what is that?”



Traditionally, when teaching social skills, we  
teach students to use “eye-contact”. Many  
students seem to learn that the entire  
social experience is about eye-contact.

How does a more literally minded person  
make sense of the social world when their  
primary cue is to use eye-contact?

I noticed that if I taught my students a  
different way to conceptualize the social  
world, I could better help them respond  
socially.

I also have learned to assume my students  
may not attend to or understand core social  
concepts most of us, including the social skills  
teacher, take for granted.

With clients (kids and adults) who have solid language skills, using language to distinguish between different aspects of the social experience helps them attend to social information differently.

It also seems to help with motivation during treatment.

A teenager said to me, upon complaining about a different therapist, "you make me feel smart, she makes me feel stupid"

For example, through Social Thinking's Methodology we teach Think With Your Eyes as the dynamic action we each do to rally social attention and related social interpretation.

First, we assess one's capacity for social attention (basic joint attention) in a highly structured environment.....

We also ask them to guess what a person might be thinking about, based on what they are looking at.

*"I wouldn't presume to guess what you were thinking about!"*

We then encourage students to practice noticing what others are doing, planning, possibly thinking as part of our many frameworks, strategies and activities.

If not born to strong social attention, language can help students to focus on (attend to) social information once it is explained to them through language.

There are over 50 different Social Thinking Vocabulary concepts.

For example, students in a classroom and adults in team meetings are expected to notice:

- *People have thoughts and feelings*
- *Read the group plan*
- *Body in the group*
- *Brain in the group*
- *In each situation there are expected and unexpected behaviors, etc.*

This type of language, once learned by both interventionists and students/clients can be used in teachable moments.

**To teach: *Read the group plan***

Think with your eyes to see the group of students in the room and try to figure out what they are doing together.

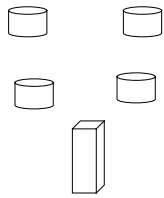
- Circle time
- Maths
- Language arts
- Standing in line
- Listening to the teacher's announcement

Is my body in or out of the group?

Is my brain in or out of the group?

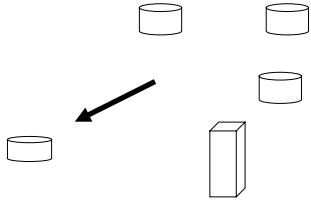
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Activity to teach physical presence:  
Is your body in the group?



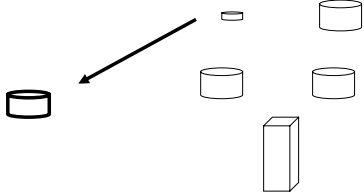
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Is your body out of the group?



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Is your brain *in* the group or *Out* of the group?

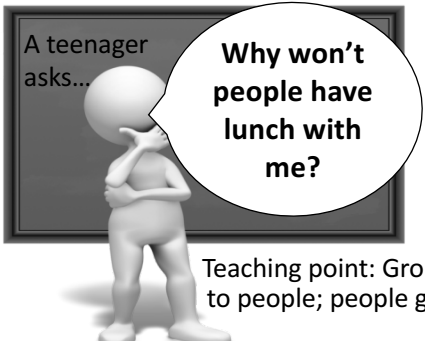


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Many of our students are detail focused and may have to practice figuring out what is going on in the room.

Treatment starts with observing situations, people, group plans prior to expecting students to modify their behavioral responses in those contexts.

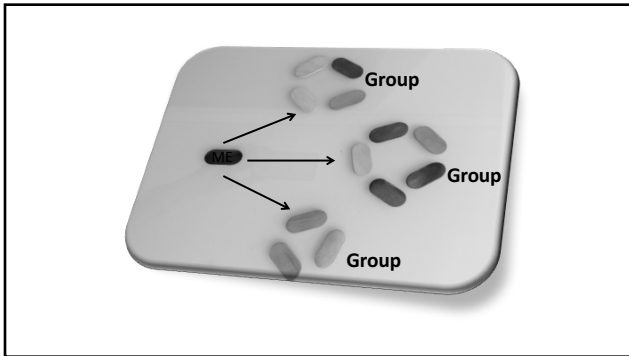
As you, the interventionist, notices the finer points of our social expectations in context, we can also help our students problem solve...



A teenager asks...

**Why won't people have lunch with me?**

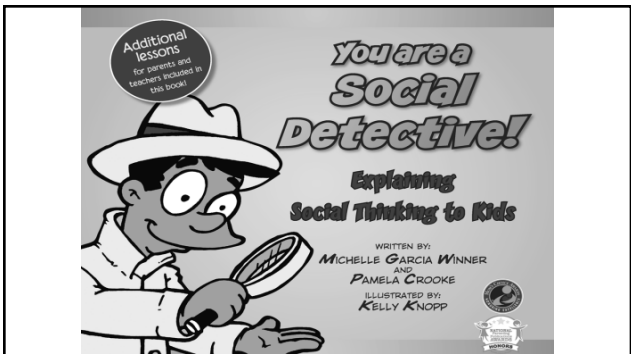
Teaching point: Groups don't go to people; people go to groups.



We have materials that help to explain this information to different age groups.

For example, when using our book *You Are a Social Detective*, we teach core aspects of social competencies:

- Social attention (be a detective)
- Making smart guesses to interpret by figuring out basic social expectations
- Problem solving the social-emotional-chain-reaction



**You Are A Social Detective**

SELF and OTHERS ↓

Social Attention	
Observation	
Social Interpretation	
Smart guesses & hidden rules	
Social Problem solving	
Consider response based on other's thoughts & feelings	

Ultimately, this book leads students to learn a core treatment framework:

The Social Emotional Chain Reaction

### Social Emotional Chain Reaction

Situation \_\_\_\_\_

**Expected behaviors**



**Unexpected behaviors**



How someone behaves affects how others feel & think  
Which likely affects how these others react & respond  
Which can affect how that someone feels about others and them self

Social Thinking's  
*Treatment Frameworks*  
help teach individuals of all ages  
to learn more about complex  
social concepts.

### 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 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.

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...the *Friendship Pyramid* and  
more....

Which ultimately help them develop  
social competencies for moving towards  
a lifetime of well-being.

We have many free articles  
on our website.

