

# What is Social Thinking?

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Based on the work of Michelle Garcia Winner

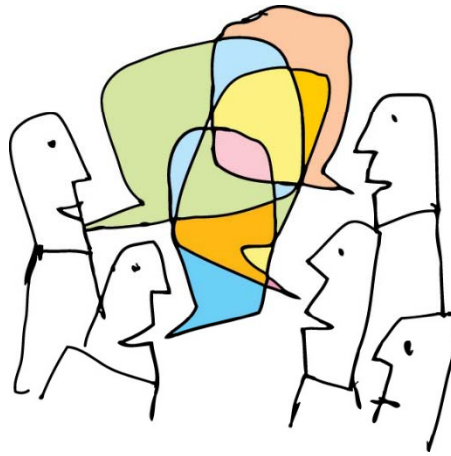
# Agenda

- ▶ What is social?
- ▶ What are social skills?
- ▶ What are social cognitive deficits and who has them?
- ▶ What is Social Thinking?
- ▶ The ILAUGH Model
- ▶ Teaching kids (and adults) with social cognitive deficits
- ▶ Resources
- ▶ Questions



A. King [www.socialthinking.com](http://www.socialthinking.com) 11-21-13

# What is social?



- ▶ Sharing space effectively with others
- ▶ Does not necessarily equate to a “fun” situation

# Why do we use social skills?

To **impact** how we make people feel which then impacts how they **feel** about us.

# Good “social skills” means:

Adapting to an ever-changing landscape while considering:

- ▶ The environment
- ▶ The people in it
- ▶ Their thoughts, beliefs, and needs
- ▶ Collective history of knowledge and experience

# What are Social Cognitive Deficits?

Difficulty synchronizing perspective taking along with language processing, visual interpretation and the ability to formulate a related response (verbal or non-verbal) in a very short period of time (1-3 seconds) across a variety of contexts

# What are Social Cognitive Deficits?

- ▶ Often have nothing to do with conventional measures of intelligence
- ▶ Very difficult to measure with standardized tests
- ▶ Impact academic abilities as well
  - ▶ Written expression
  - ▶ Reading comprehension
  - ▶ Planning and organization

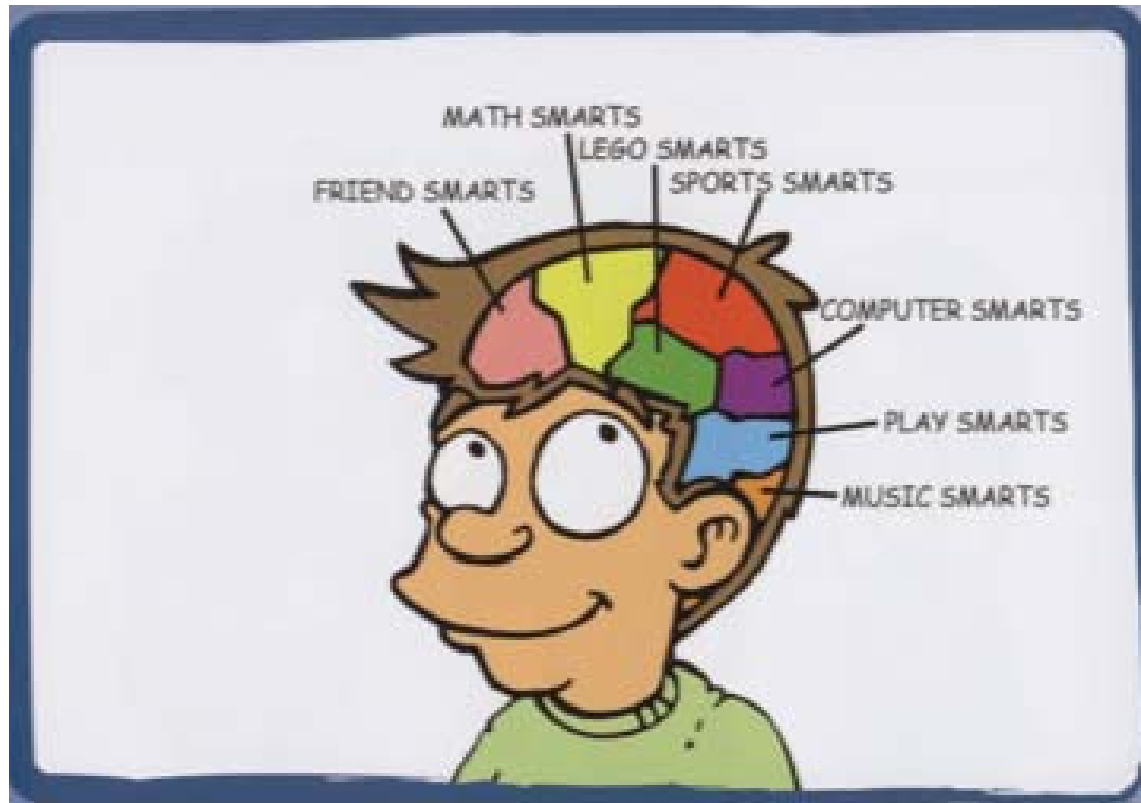


# Who has Social Cognitive Deficits?

- ▶ Commonly experienced by individuals with:
  - ▶ Autism spectrum disorders (ASD)
    - ▶ Social communication disorder (SCD)
    - ▶ Asperger's syndrome (AS)
    - ▶ Pervasive Developmental Disorder - Not Otherwise Specified (PDD-NOS)
  - ▶ Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)
  - ▶ Nonverbal learning disability (NLD)
  - ▶ Hyperlexia
- ▶ No diagnosis but experience social learning difficulties
  - ▶ “smart but quirky kids”

# What is Social Thinking?

- ▶ A treatment framework and curriculum developed by Michelle Garcia Winner
- ▶ Targets what we do when we interact with people:
- ▶ Whether we are with friends, sending an email, in a classroom or at the grocery store, we take in the thoughts, emotions and intentions of the people with whom we are interacting
- ▶ Most of us have developed our communication sense from birth onwards



# Social Learning is INNATE

# When do we use Social Thinking?

- ▶ Watching a TV show or movie
- ▶ Reading a newspaper, book or magazine
- ▶ Email
- ▶ Facebook
- ▶ Thinking about conversations from earlier in the day

# Why do we use Social Thinking?

It's what keeps us connected to others, helps us share space effectively, think flexibly and act collaboratively

# Social Thinking Exercise

- ▶ Scenario: Mark, 25 year old with Asperger's Syndrome, works in an office environment. He has disclosed his disability to his supervisor, but not his colleagues. One day at work, Mark walks in into the men's bathroom and strikes up a conversation with the co-worker at the next urinal. The co-worker, feeling uncomfortable, reports to the supervisor that Mark is "weird."
- ▶ How could we teach Mark the "hidden rules" of the men's restroom? How can he avoid this type of situation in the future?

[http://gamescene.com/The\\_Urinal\\_Game\\_game.html](http://gamescene.com/The_Urinal_Game_game.html)

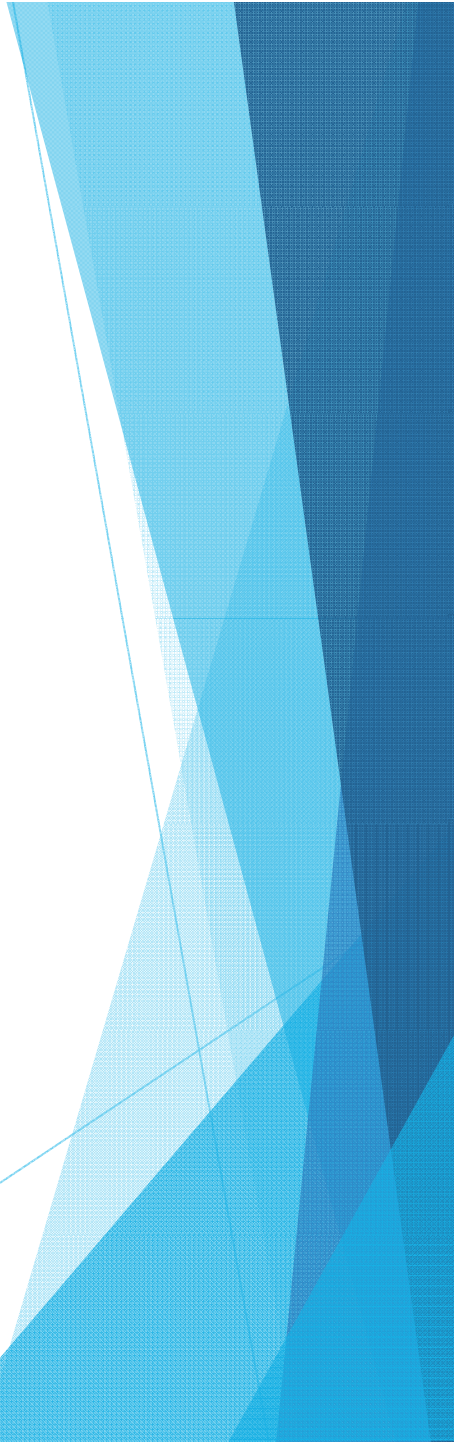
# Teaching skills is different from teaching thinking

- ▶ **Skill = behavior**
- ▶ Basis of traditional pragmatic language therapy
  - ▶ Often rote and rule-based
  - ▶ Doesn't account for the thought process behind the action
- ▶ **Thinking = anticipating another's reaction and choosing the appropriate behavior**

# Teaching the thinking behind the skill

THOUGHT	BEHAVIOR
How do I keep my listener interested? Am I balancing my comments and questions?	Taking turns in conversation
How can I show my listener that I'm thinking about him/her?	Eye contact
Am I making this person uncomfortable by standing too close?	Giving adequate personal space





Social Thinking draws from many different areas of comprehension. These different areas are represented in the “ILAUGH Model”

# ILAUGH Model

Framework that represents the different areas that contribute to communicative, academic, and problem solving success

I = Initiation of Communication

L = Listening with Eyes and Brain

A = Abstract and Inferential Language/Communication

U = Understanding Perspective

G = Gestalt Processing/Getting the Big Picture

H = Humor and Human Relatedness

# (I)nitiation of Communication

- ▶ Difficulty joining a group, starting a conversation, initiating a greeting
- ▶ Struggles to share information
- ▶ Does not ask for help
  - ▶ May struggle with identifying that s/he needs help, differentiating between help vs. clarification, timing, etc.
- ▶ Significant difficulty starting a task independently
  - ▶ Sits and does nothing while others are doing something
- ▶ In group work, may not participate or may only direct others
- ▶ Weak negotiator and advocator
- ▶ May be “big talkers” but still lack this skill

# (I) Teaching Approaches and Strategies

- ▶ Teach the thinking behind and the explicit steps of initiating an interaction
  - ▶ Engage in “prethinking” to help the student identify the expectations before entering the situation
  - ▶ Use Social Behavior Maps to identify what is “expected” and “unexpected” for the situation
- ▶ Teach that asking for help or seeking clarification is expected
  - ▶ Specifically teach WHO asks for help (smart kids)
  - ▶ Specifically teach HOW to get help and WHEN
    - ▶ Examples: Raise your hand, use an “I need help” card
  - ▶ Outline the difference between asking for help and asking for clarification

# I NEED HELP!



On **PART** of it. On **MOST** of it. On **ALL** of it.

# (I) Teaching Approaches and Strategies

- ▶ For group projects, help them decide what job to do
  - ▶ Example: note taker, builder, cleaner upper
- ▶ Use executive function tools to help them organize information
  - ▶ Example: “Get Ready, Do, Done” (Sarah Ward)

# (L)istening with Eyes and Brain

- ▶ Difficulty attending to relevant social information (context and people)
  - ▶ Misses social cues from others
  - ▶ Struggles to gain information from what is happening in the environment
- ▶ Difficulty “paying attention” in a group
  - ▶ Difficult to attend to what you do not understand or struggle to relate to
  - ▶ Distracted by internal drivers
    - ▶ E.g., cartoons, baseball games, etc.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NGVSIKEi3mM>

# (L) Teaching Approaches and Strategies

- ▶ Provide visual structure to support what is presented verbally
- ▶ Check for comprehension frequently
- ▶ Highlight the importance of “showing” you are listening
  - ▶ Whole Body Listening - paying attention to the group with your eyes, hands, feet, etc.
  - ▶ Thinking with Your Eyes - showing people what you thinking about by looking at it
  - ▶ Connectivity - staying connected to the group with your brain, eyes, body, and words
- ▶ Explicitly teach observation skills - what they should be paying attention to



# The Boring Moment!

*We all have them*

## Expected

- ▶ Body and eyes turned toward the presenter
- ▶ Keep comments focused on topic
- ▶ Keep negative thoughts to myself
- ▶ Stay alert so I can jump back into the discussion without looking like I wasn't paying attention

## Unexpected

- ▶ Wandering away from the group
- ▶ Distracting others with my body and words
- ▶ Telling other people what they are doing is wrong
- ▶ Taking trips to the bathroom or pencil sharpener
- ▶ Reading books
- ▶ Announcing "I am bored" or that I already know the information

# (A)bstract and Inferential Language/Communication

- ▶ Difficulty interpreting figurative and nonliteral language
  - ▶ Will often choose most literal meaning
- ▶ Does not infer meaning from social cues or decipher meaning from words
- ▶ Limited in the ability to infer meaning from books, teacher's lectures, and activities
- ▶ Misses indirect messages in classroom
- ▶ Poor understanding of idioms
- ▶ Weak semantic understanding, even if vocabulary scores are high
  - ▶ Concrete learners may have very literal interpretations of semantic concepts

# (A)bstract and Inferential Language/Communication

- ▶ Also affects the individual's ability to respond appropriately in social situations
- ▶ Difficulty adapting spoken language to convey a message
  - ▶ Body language and tone of voice
  - ▶ Timing and reciprocity
  - ▶ Organization and formulation of the message

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V1ZZWhSvOMI&list=PLCAFE8696207E768A>

# (A) Teaching Approaches and Strategies

- ▶ Clearly teach about literal and nonliteral language
- ▶ Provide explicit instruction about how and what to observe in a social setting
  - ▶ Emotions, facial expressions, body language, verbal expression, etc.
- ▶ Outline functional strategies for making an “educated guess”
  - ▶ E.g., the Smart Guess Formula - helps to make the connection between what you know/remember and what you see and hear in a situation
  - ▶ Improves the student’s ability to infer information and make an informed decision about what might happen or what is expected

# (U)nderstanding Perspective

- ▶ Difficulty recognizing that others might have different thoughts about the same situation
  - ▶ Example: may find it hard to understand why teacher is frustrated by joke telling while students are amused
- ▶ May struggle to take someone else's thoughts, emotions, and beliefs into consideration
  - ▶ Often manifests as an inability to regulate his behavior (verbal and nonverbal) according to the needs of others
- ▶ Find reading comprehension and writing tasks that involve taking the point of view of others challenging

# Four Steps of Perspective Taking

- ▶ I think about you
- ▶ I think about why you are near me or talking to me
  - ▶ Intentions/motives
- ▶ I think about what you are thinking about me
- ▶ I monitor and regulate my behavior to keep you thinking about me I way I want you to think about me

# (U) Teaching Approaches and Strategies

- ▶ Use Social Behavior Maps to teach how the student's behaviors affect the thoughts, feelings, and actions of others
- ▶ Give explicit strategies for being a "Thinking of Others" kid vs. a "Just Me" kid
  - ▶ Explain all the things we do to make others want to be around us
  - ▶ In the classroom, stress the importance of thinking of others. Outline what students can do to show others they are thinking about them

# (U) Teaching Approaches and Strategies

- ▶ Employ visuals to show how different approaches can positively or negatively impact a situation
  - ▶ Example: The Likely Scale- when we do things to make others feel comfortable, they are more likely to want to do fun things with us
- ▶ Engage the student in “wondering” activities
  - ▶ What does \_\_\_ like to think about?
  - ▶ Make guesses about what a character might be thinking and feeling
- ▶ Encourage students to “bridge brains”
  - ▶ Use his/her words to convey what s/he is thinking and feeling as opposed to assuming others are already aware of this information



# (G)estalt Processing/Getting the Big Picture

- ▶ Gets stuck on the details rather than focusing on the underlying concepts
  - ▶ Difficulty identifying salient information in order to make sense of the situation
- ▶ Comments may appear off topic or may “miss the point”
  - ▶ Thoughts may be hyper-focused on a small part of the discussion and so may appear unconnected
- ▶ Difficulty picking up on contextual clues and piecing that information together to form a complete view of the situation
- ▶ Will likely manifest as organizational deficits as well

# (G) Teaching Approaches and Strategies

- ▶ Break down information and then help the student see how it all goes back together
- ▶ Employ strategies that help differentiate the “main idea” from the small details
  - ▶ Zooming in/zooming out - show the student what s/he is missing if s/he becomes too focused on small details. Teach him/her how to take all the information into account
  - ▶ The Smart Guess Formula - help the student to differentiate between the “smart” clues and “wacky” clues in the environment
- ▶ Use graphic organizers to break down information into visual, concrete parts

# Smart Guess Formula



Think with your eyes.  
What do you see?



Listen with your ears.  
What are others saying?



What do you KNOW about the person or  
situation? What has happened in the  
past?

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**SMART GUESS**

# (H)umor and Human Relatedness

- ▶ Most likely enjoys humor but may miss subtleties of humor in others
  - ▶ May struggle to relate to others as a result
- ▶ Difficulty identifying the appropriate time and level of humor based on the situation
- ▶ May produce inappropriate humor in order to gain attention (negative or positive) or engage others
- ▶ Struggles to switch thinking from what is funny back to the topic

# (H) Teaching Approaches and Strategies

- ▶ May respond well to teaching methods that incorporate humor and a certain amount of flexibility
- ▶ Provide explicit instruction about the expected amount of humor based on the context
  - ▶ Humor Scale - specifically highlight what level of humor is expected or unexpected
- ▶ Assist the student to identify when s/he needs to switch his/her thinking
  - ▶ Example: Silly Tornado - help to outline how certain behaviors, when they get too “big” and sweep other students into a “silly tornado”
- ▶ Zones of Regulation (Leah Kuypers) is useful for helping the student with emotional regulation

# (H) Teaching Approaches and Strategies

- ▶ Differentiate friendly teasing from “mean spirited teasing”
- ▶ Relate with humanity, understanding their stress often translates into what appears as very selfish behavior
- ▶ Their brains do not make it easy for them to show they are interested, but they really want to have solid relationships with others

# Tips on teaching social

- ▶ Use a consistent vocabulary across environments
- ▶ Make thoughts something that happen out loud
- ▶ Make social a “conversation”
- ▶ Reinforce actions and feeling of others
- ▶ Make the connection to natural consequences and how that makes them feel

# More tips on teaching social

- ▶ Make “the plan” clear
- ▶ Make the expectations clear (chances are they don't know what they are!)
- ▶ Kids would if they could (Ross Greene)
- ▶ Help them see how they can be part of the plan (give them a job)



# Realistic Expectations for Social Learning

- ▶ Social learning difficulties are deep and very real. They truly do not have the same cognitive information as their peers
- ▶ Our goal: Help a child develop more awareness/insight. This will slowly evolve into a better social skills set when compared to how he/she was coping before

# Resources

- ▶ [www.socialthinking.com](http://www.socialthinking.com)
- ▶ Michelle Garcia Winner's conferences, books/products, online learning
  - ▶ South San Francisco Conference December 5<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup>
- ▶ Sarah Ward, MS, CCC-SLP
  - ▶ <http://cognitiveconnectionstherapy.com/>
- ▶ Zones of Regulation®
  - ▶ Leah Kuypers
  - ▶ <http://www.zonesofregulation.com/>

# Thank you!

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**"This concludes my lecture on non-verbal communication. Any comments or questions?"**