




**Concept #8:
Flexible & Stuck Thinking**
Presented by: Michelle Garcia Winner, SLP, MA-CCC
Moderated by: Pamela Crooke, SLP, PhD-CCC

Enjoy our *10 Concepts* webinar series:

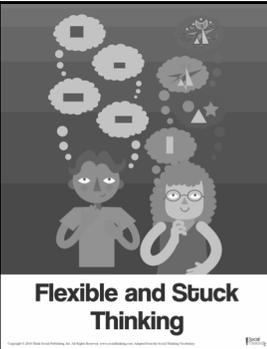
- 10 webinars
- 10 months
- 10 Social Thinking concepts

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www.socialthinking.com/webinars



Today's webinar topic:



Flexible thinking influences everything!

- Choice making
- Problem solving
- Decision making
- Academic proficiency

Flexible thinking is part of one's executive functions.

Latzman, R.D., Elkovitch, N., Young, J. & Clark, L.A.; (2010) ***The contribution of executive functioning to academic achievement among male adolescents.*** Journal of Clinical and Experimental Neuropsychology, Vol 32, Issue 5, Pages 455-462

Research from Latzman et al. discussed, in part, how conceptual flexibility predicted specific types of academic achievement beyond what would be predicted by IQ tests.

Executive Functioning
The executive functions are a set of processes that have to do with managing oneself and one's resources in order to achieve a goal. It is an umbrella term for the neurologically based skills involving mental control and self-regulation.
Drs. Gerard A. Gioia, Peter K. Isquith, Steven C. Guy, and Lauren Kenworthy (2000)

The executive functions serve a "command and control" function; they can be viewed as the "conductor" of all cognitive skills.

Joyce Cooper-Kahn and Laurie Dietzel (2008) *What Is Executive Functioning?* Retrieved from: www.idonline.org/article/29122

Strang, J.F., Anthony, L.G., Yerys, B.E., Hardy, K.K., Wallace, G.L., Armour, A.C., Dudley, K., Kenworthy, L. (2017) *The Flexibility Scale: Development and Preliminary Validation of a Cognitive Flexibility Measure in Children with Autism Spectrum Disorders*. Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders, Aug;47(8):2502-2518. doi: 10.1007/s10803-017-3152-y.

Research from Strang et al. explored five factors of flexibility:

1. Routines/rituals
2. Transitions/change
3. Special interests
4. Social flexibility
5. Generativity

The results of their research suggest that the scale described may be a helpful tool in everyday settings.

The Social Thinking Methodology teaches aspects of flexibility throughout all of its treatment frameworks and strategies.

We teach students about their executive functioning in this way...

Executive functions are tied to personal goals of all types. They help you manage life tasks. For example, executive functions let you organize a trip, do a research project, maintain a friendship.

Often, when we think of problems with executive functioning, we think of disorganization. However, organization is only one of these important skills.

Executive Functions: 4 Parts for Treatment

1. Have a **goal: something you think about.**
2. Have a **series of sequenced or parallel action plans.**
3. Self-regulate your behavior and emotions in order to carry out the action plans to accomplish your goal.
4. Maintain cognitive flexibility throughout all the steps!

Flexible Thinking is Social Thinking



Social-cognitive flexibility is required to develop one's social competencies.

Social competencies: Relating to one's ability to socially attend, interpret, and problem solve to figure out how to respond.

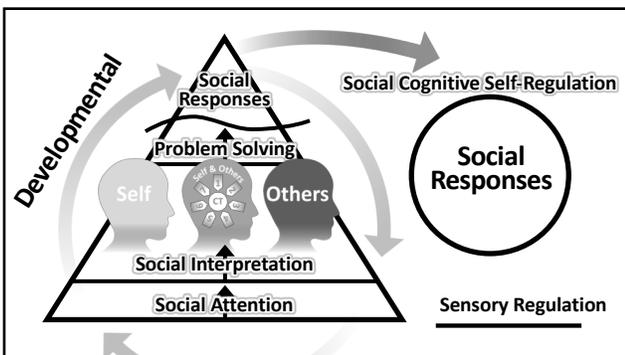
During an Informal Dynamic Assessment of a 10-year-old academically gifted girl, when asked "What does your brain make easy for you?" she responded that she is "flexible."

Pam Crooke asked her to describe her stated "flexibility" and the girl demonstrated that she was flexible in her fingers and hands.



**Social Thinking's
Social Competency Model**

What's the role of smart guesses in
developing social competencies?





Social Interpretation

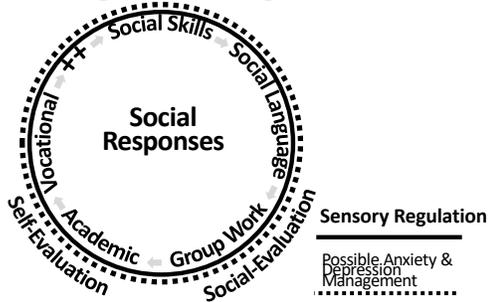
1. What is the situation?
2. Who are the people?
3. World knowledge
4. Basic emotions
5. Self-conscious emotions
6. Basic theory of mind
7. Advanced, applied, spontaneous theory of mind

CT = Critical thinking

To socially engage or share space effectively requires shifting:

- attention
- mindset
- context
- emotions
- perspectives
- topics, etc.

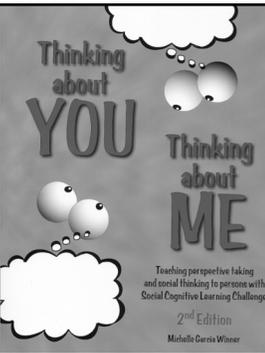
Social Cognitive Self-Regulation

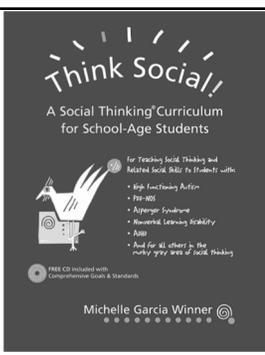


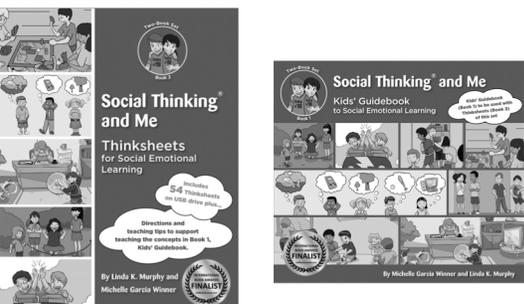
To encourage the growth of social competencies is to encourage exploration of different perspectives, opinions, etc.

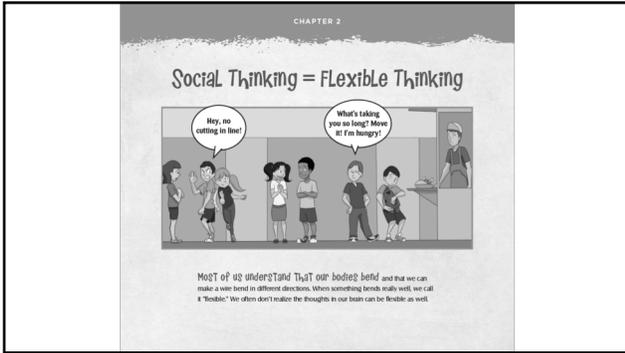
This book teaches core ideas in the Social Thinking Methodology.

It introduces treatment frameworks and strategies and describes ideas for informal assessment.

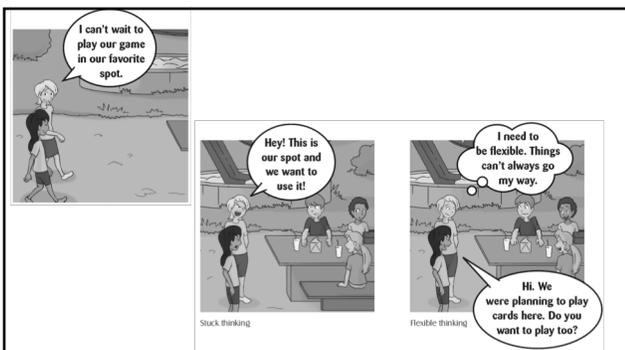


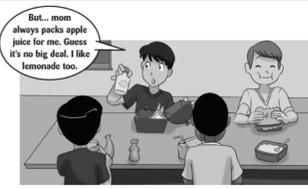








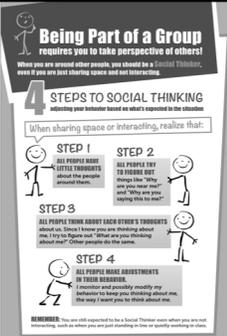




BEING A FLEXIBLE THINKER	
Flexible Thinking	Stuck Thinking
Thinking of Others Person	Just Me person
People feel good	People feel tense, frustrated, mad, or sad
We get things done	Situation is difficult, we don't get things done
Expected behavior	Unexpected behavior

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!



Being Part of a Group
 requires you to take perspective of others!

When you are around other people, you should be a **Flexible Thinker**, even if you are just sharing space and not interacting.

4 STEPS TO SOCIAL THINKING
 adjusting your behavior based on what's expected in the situation

When sharing space or interacting, realize that:

- STEP 1**
 ALL PEOPLE WANT TO FEEL GOOD ABOUT THEMSELVES.
 ALL PEOPLE WANT TO FEEL GOOD ABOUT OTHERS.
 ALL PEOPLE WANT TO FEEL GOOD ABOUT THE SITUATION.
- STEP 2**
 ALL PEOPLE WANT TO FEEL GOOD ABOUT OTHERS.
 They like "hey, are you real?" and "hey are you saying this to me?"
- STEP 3**
 ALL PEOPLE THINK ABOUT EACH OTHER'S THOUGHTS.
 What do I say to figure out "What are you thinking about me?" Other people do the same.
- STEP 4**
 ALL PEOPLE MAKE ADJUSTMENTS TO THEIR BEHAVIOR.
 Adjustments are possibly modify my behavior to keep you thinking about me the way I want you to think about me.

REMEMBER: You are still expected to be a Social Thinker even when you are not interacting, such as when you are just standing in line or quietly working at class.

Social-Emotional Chain Reaction

Situation and people _____

Expected behaviors  Unexpected behaviors 

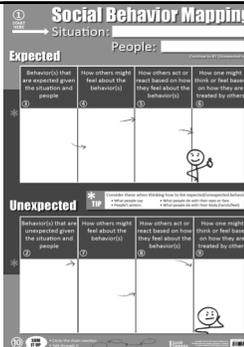
- How the doer behaves affects how others feel and think
- Which affects how they react and respond to the doer
- Which affects how the doer feels, thinks, and responds

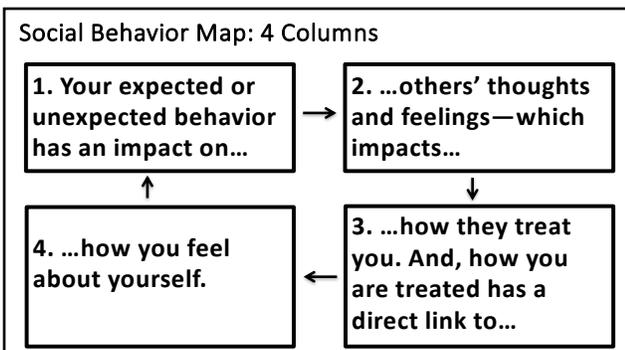
Context: Situation and People

Four columns across each row

First row:
 Expected behavior and the social-emotional chain reaction

Second row:
 Unexpected behavior and the social-emotional chain reaction

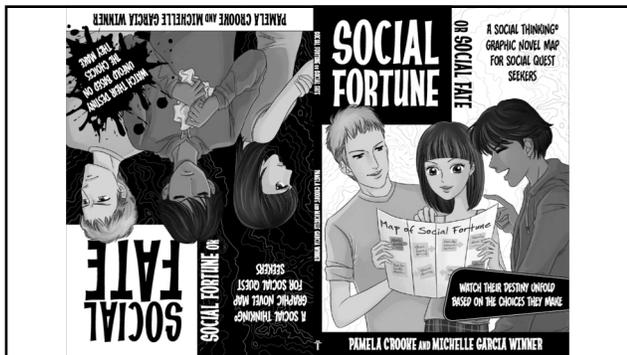




Shift happens

(a fun way to talk about flexible thinking to teens)

Helping people develop awareness of *stuck thinking* versus *flexible thinking* is part of the Social Thinking Methodology.



Social Fortune: Bored Outta My Brain!



KIKO'S STRATEGY CODES:

- 1. SF (Social Fake).** Legend has it that humans have done the Social Fake for centuries. We just didn't always have the words to describe this very important strategy. It's simply a way to survive a moment that may be boring by acting like you're attending with your eyes and body. The reality is that your brain may wander for a split second or two but then "check back" with the other person. In that way, you don't seem like you're bored outta your brains, and the other person feels like you're part of the group.
- 2. FOTO (Filter Opinions and Thoughts Often).** Kiko was able to use his brain filter to catch his thought that he was really bored. Thoughts in your head shouldn't always come out of your mouth. You need to know that everyone in the world has thoughts that need to run through their brain filter and get stopped from proceeding to their mouths. It's a part of being a person. This is something that takes a lot of practice.
- 3. TAC (Think About Choices).** Kiko certainly had choices here. He could have plopped his head down on the desk, pulled out a book from his backpack and read, played with his pencil or just checked out. BUT - he didn't do any of those things. Instead, he thought about his choices and decided to use the Social FAKE. Good choice.

OPTION: Keep going forward or flip the book upside down and read from the back to see what happens when Kiko makes a different choice. What road would you take in this example?

**Social Fate:
Bored Outta My Brain!**

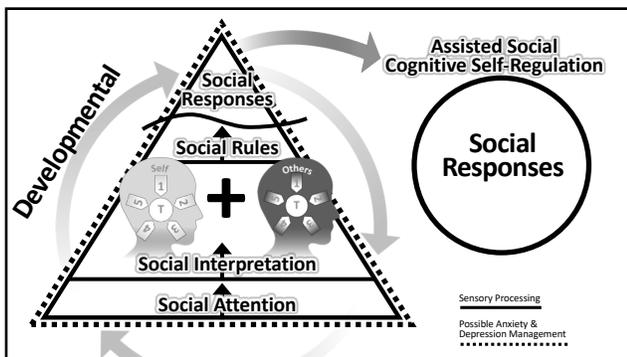


There's a growing body of evidence for helping individuals who experience "an intolerance to uncertainty."

Rodgers, J., Hodgson, A., Shields, K., Wright, C., Honey, E., Freeston, M. (2017) *Towards a Treatment for Intolerance of Uncertainty in Young People with Autism Spectrum Disorder: Development of the Coping with Uncertainty in Everyday Situations (CUES®) Programme*. Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders. December 2017, Volume 47, Issue 12, pp 3959–3966]

Adapted Social Competency Model for less flexible thinkers who we describe as *Challenged Social Communicators*.

From our experience, the less flexibly one interprets social information, the more literal their interpretations of language and non-verbal social cues. This makes problem solving difficult.

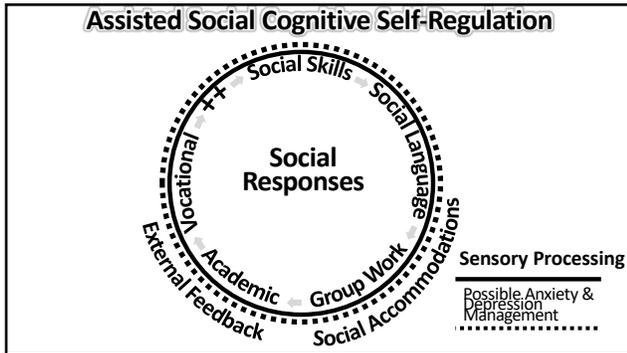


Assisted Social Cognitive Self-Regulation

Evolving Social Interpretation

1. What is the situation?
2. Who are the people?
3. World knowledge
4. Very basic emotions
5. Basic theory of mind

T = thinking



To learn more about our **Social Thinking–Social Communication Profile:**

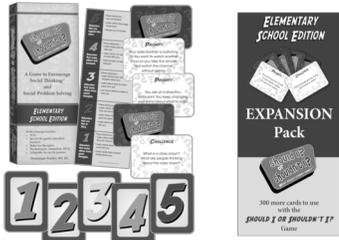
- The best information is found in our book *Why Teach Social Thinking?*
- Also, check out our free article at www.socialthinking.com/profile



Game series by Dominique Baudry to encourage discussion of perspectives with regard to social expectations:

Should I or Shouldn't I?
What Would Others Think?

Elementary School Edition & Expansion Pack
(ages 7-10)



Middle and High School Edition & Expansion Pack
(ages 11-18)



We Thinkers Volume 1 and 2
early learners curriculum series

All concepts from both volumes
are reviewed in our *10 Concepts*
webinar series.



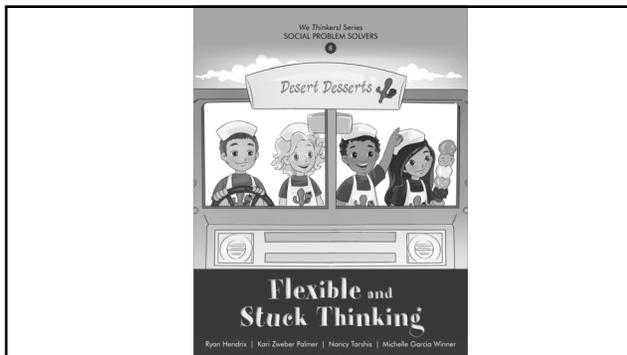
We Thinkers! Volume 1

Volume 2 concepts teach aspects of executive functioning:

- Hidden Rules: Expected-Unexpected Behavior
- Smart Guess
- Flexible and Stuck Thinking
- Size of the Problem
- Sharing an Imagination



We Thinkers! Volume 2



Teaching Flexible Thinking

1. Think of Ideas

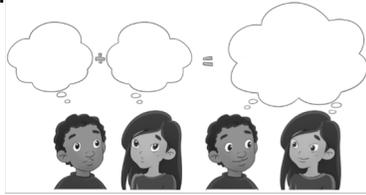
Being flexible starts with understanding there are choices, options, and different ways to look at a situation. You can only be flexible when you see you have choices.



Teaching Flexible Thinking

2. Add Ideas Together

Sometimes being flexible means compromising with others; this is an abstract term. We teach children to: "add ideas together."



Teaching Flexible Thinking

3. Let It Go

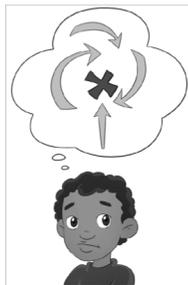
Sometimes being flexible means giving up your idea or plan. When we teach the strategy of "let it go" we help students visualize an idea floating away like a balloon up in the sky. This strategy is a tough one to teach but an important concept to introduce.



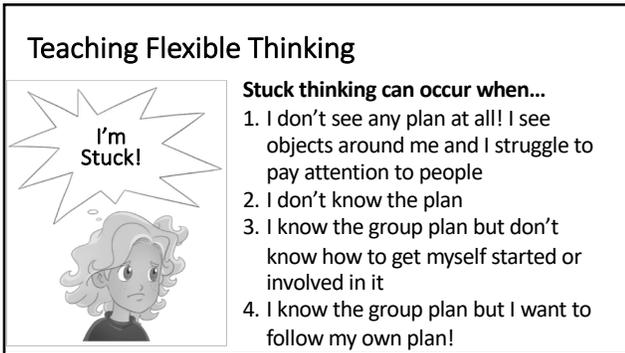
Teaching Flexible Thinking

4. Try Another Way

Part of being a flexible thinker is recognizing when we are stuck or our thinking is preventing us from being able to stop, change our plan, and try another way.



Teaching Flexible Thinking

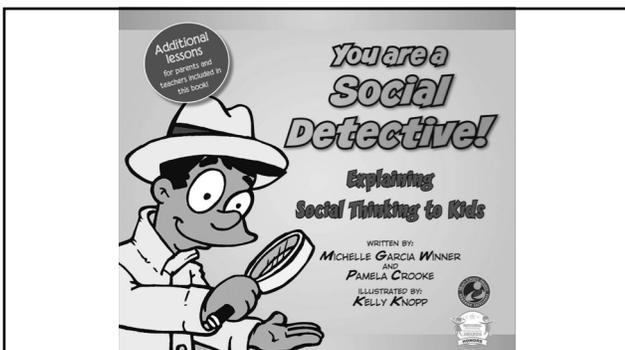


I'm Stuck!

Stuck thinking can occur when...

1. I don't see any plan at all! I see objects around me and I struggle to pay attention to people
2. I don't know the plan
3. I know the group plan but don't know how to get myself started or involved in it
4. I know the group plan but I want to follow my own plan!

Teaching children to become more aware of all the different factors in the social world is the job of our Social Detective!



Kids also enjoy learning about their own flexible thinking through Superflex!



...and stuck thinking through Rock Brain.





The goal of the *Superflex* curriculum:
To help students learn about the power of their flexible thinking, and strategies to promote expected behavior by defeating the invading Team of Unthinkables!





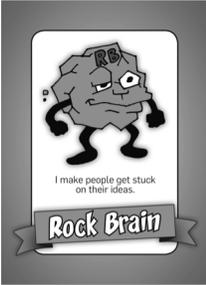


Superflex is YOU!



The image shows a character card for Superflex. At the top, the word "YOU" is written inside a circle. Below it is a drawing of a superhero character with a starburst behind his head. The text reads: "I encourage Superflexible thinking to help with social problem solving and behavior control." At the bottom, the name "Superflex" is written on a banner.

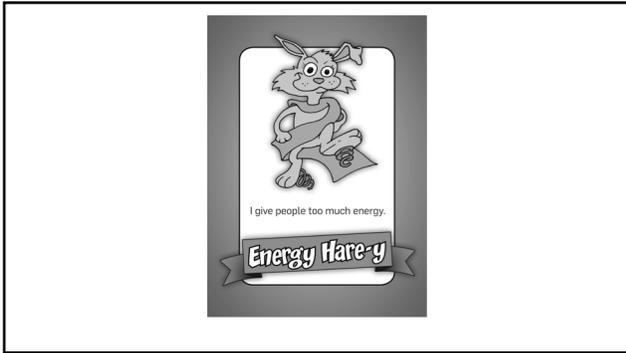
The Team of Unthinkables

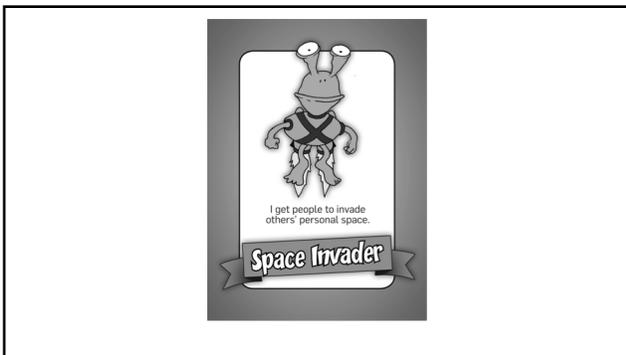


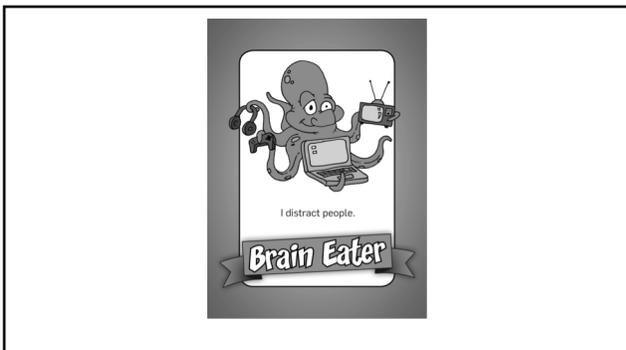
The image shows a character card for Rock Brain. It features a drawing of a rock character with a brain on its head. The text reads: "I make people get stuck on their ideas." At the bottom, the name "Rock Brain" is written on a banner.



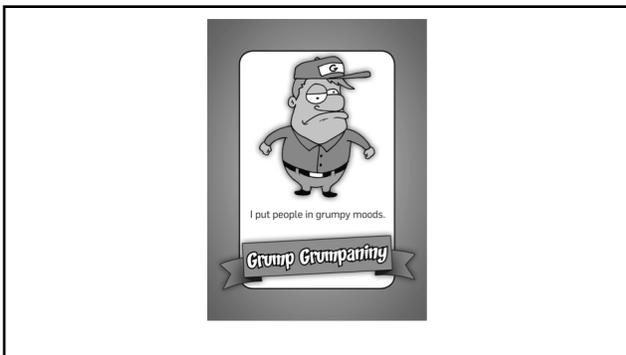
The image shows a character card for Worry Wall. It features a drawing of a character that looks like a wall with a face and arms. The text reads: "I make people worry too much." At the bottom, the name "Worry Wall" is written on a banner.

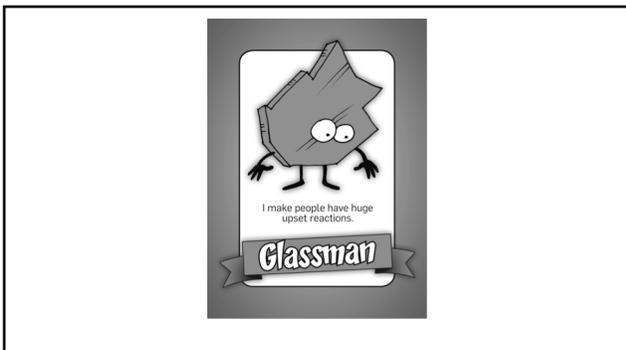








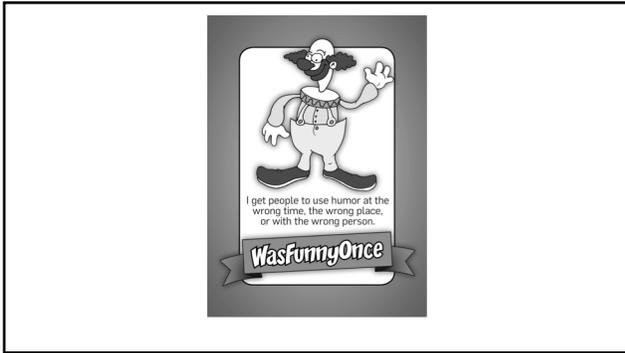


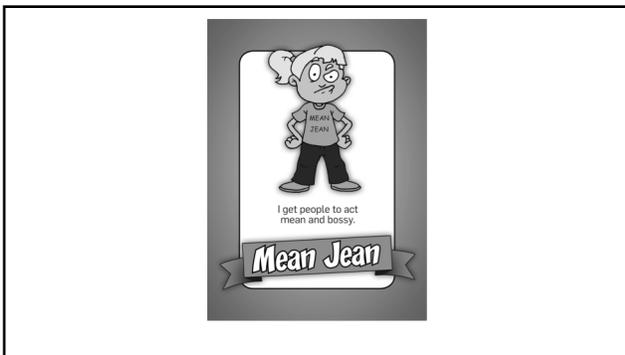


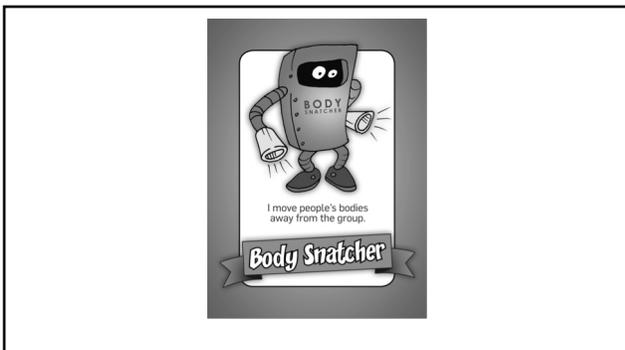




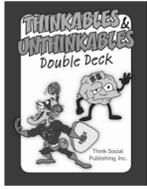








Superflex Character Cards found in these products:



Thinkables & Unthinkables
Double Deck



Superflex Superdecks

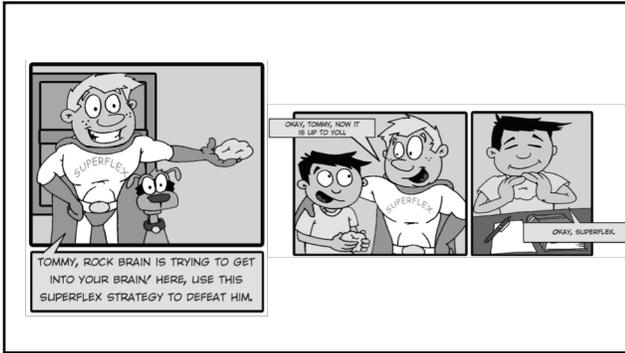
Poster of Superflex and
the Team of Unthinkables

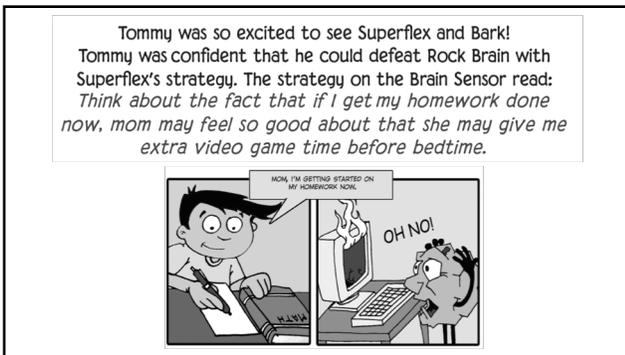


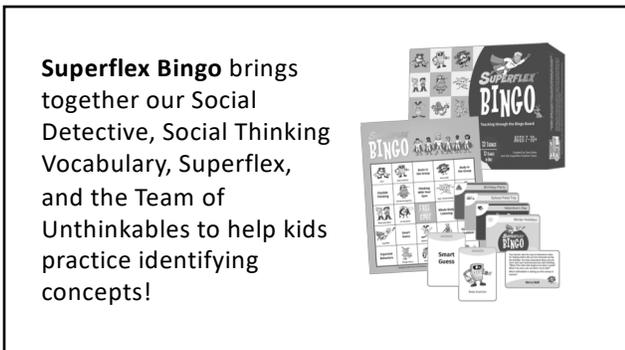
Superflex: My Hero Inside (music CD)

Music by Patty and Michael
Silversher. They came to our
clinic and attended
conferences to study the
Social Thinking Methodology
and Superflex to get
inspiration for this music!







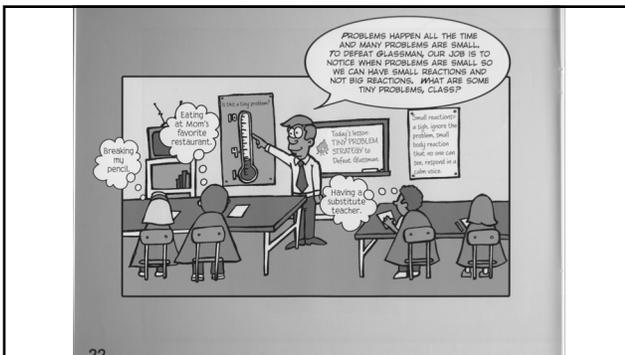






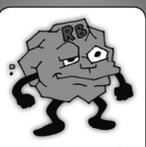






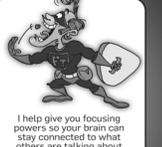
We also think flexibly based on ideas from the public.

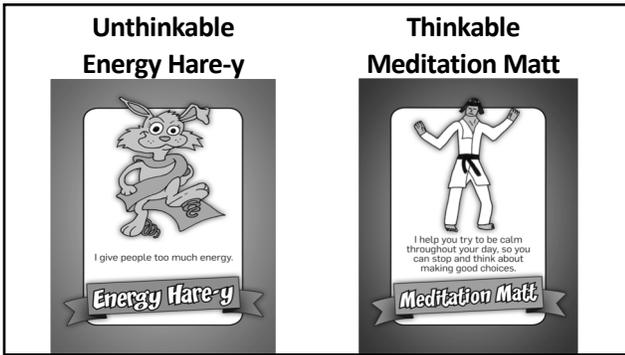
The **Thinkables** link up with **Superflex** to defeat the **Unthinkables**.

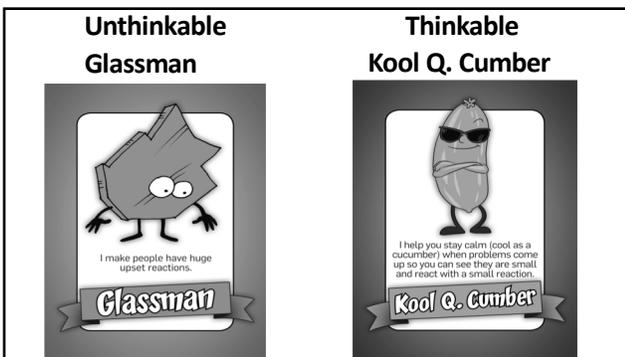
<p>Unthinkable Rock Brain</p>  <p>I make people get stuck on their ideas.</p> <p>Rock Brain</p>	<p>Thinkable Rex Flexinator</p>  <p>I help you be a flexible thinker so you don't get stuck on your own thoughts or plans.</p> <p>Rex Flexinator</p>
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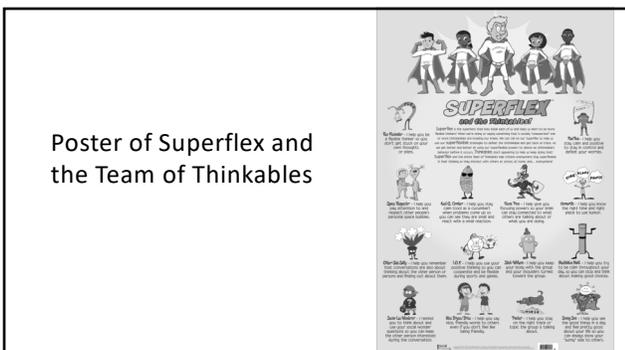
Flexible Thinking

<p>Unthinkable Body Snatcher</p>  <p>I move people's bodies away from the group.</p> <p>Body Snatcher</p>	<p>Thinkable Stick-Withem</p>  <p>I help you keep your body with the group and your shoulders turned toward the group.</p> <p>Stick-Withem</p>
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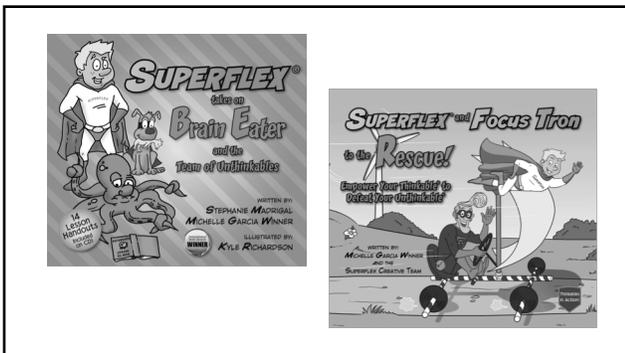
<p>Unthinkable Brain Eater</p>  <p>I distract people.</p> <p>Brain Eater</p>	<p>Thinkable Focus Tron</p>  <p>I help give you focusing powers so your brain can stay connected to what others are talking about or what you are doing.</p> <p>Focus Tron</p>
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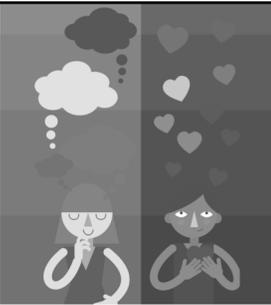




What happens when children outgrow Superflex?
Move toward coaching inside our mind:

Inner Coach Voice	Self-Defeater Voice
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Children: Superflex & Thinkables• Teens and Adults: Telling ourselves positive, affirming statements to motivate and encourage us	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Children: Unthinkables• Teens and Adults: Discouraging comments we say to ourselves that make us feel bad and reduce motivation

1st webinar topic



Thoughts and Feelings

2nd webinar topic



Thinking with Your Eyes

3rd webinar topic



The Group Plan

4th webinar topic



Body in the Group

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5th webinar topic



Whole Body Listening

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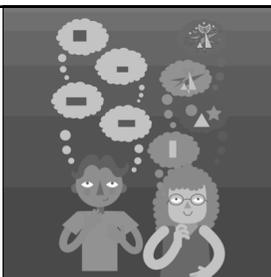
6th webinar topic

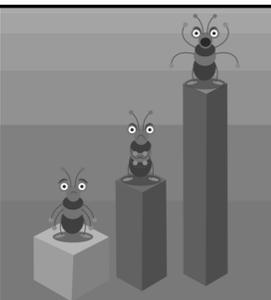


**Hidden Rules and
Expected-Unexpected**

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<p>7th webinar topic</p>	 <p>Smart Guess</p>
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<p>Current topic</p>	 <p>Flexible and Stuck Thinking</p>
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<p>Next topic</p>	 <p>Size of the Problem</p>
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Size of the Problem Webinar

We will explore:

- How problems come in different sizes
- How one's own and others' emotions are part of the problem solving process
- How determining the size of the problem relates to self-regulation and executive functions

10th webinar topic



Learn more with eLearning



Flexible Thinking: Virtually all of our eLearning modules address flexible thinking as they teach about and assess social competencies, perspective taking and executive functions.

Superflex:

[Series: Superflex & Social Detective – A Might Duo!](#)
[Best Teaching Practices](#)

Register for the series' next webinar

Register now for the ninth webinar in the series and get strategies to navigate the *Size of the Problem*.

www.socialthinking.com/Size-of-Problem



Teaching Social Competencies—More Than Social Skills
