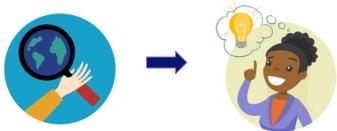




Teaching Social Competencies—More Than Social Skills

Social Anxiety: Breaking it down to build up social competencies



Presented by: Michelle Garcia Winner, MA, CCC-SLP
Moderated by: Pamela Crooke, PhD, CCC-SLP

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Today's webinar topic:
Unpacking social anxiety by breaking down social information to build up competencies and anxiety management strategies, step by step.



Why is this important?

- All of us with social self-awareness experience social anxiety at times. Those with more chronic, compelling anxiety may be diagnosed with social anxiety disorder (SAD).
- Today, we are discussing typical (not compelling) social anxiety that we encounter as a part of life, across our life.
- An important life skill is to learn to manage one's anxieties.

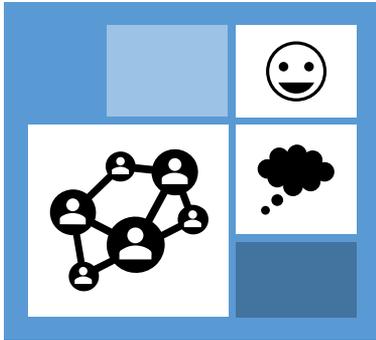
Why wait to teach students
anxiety management strategies?



Top 10 skills CEOs want from employees

2018 World Economic Forum

1. Complex problem solving
2. Critical thinking
3. Creativity
4. People management
5. Coordinating with others
6. Emotional intelligence
7. Judgment and decision making
8. Service orientation
9. Negotiation skills
10. Cognitive flexibility



As we share space and interact with others, it is expected that we care about how *others* feel and think, how *we* feel and think and how people feel and think *about us*.

It is through this social-emotional loop that we can work, live, learn, and play together.

No matter our role, (e.g. teacher, family member, specialist) we all need to understand basic information about social anxiety and what we can do to help students learn to manage it.



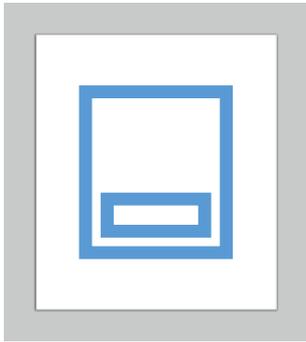
To understand social anxiety is to also understand what it isn't!

There are many different types of anxiety.

Each social learner may have any number of these.

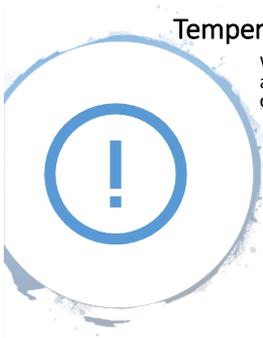
Some of many types of anxieties:

	World-based anxiety (dealing with change or transition)
	Social-sensory anxiety (people are overwhelming)
	Performance anxiety (anxiety about the work that needs to be done or has been done)
	Curriculum-based anxiety (aspects of the curriculum are beyond a student's comprehension)
	Anxiety related to trauma (emotions & physical reactions triggered from painful past experiences)
	Compelling social anxiety (worried about how people feel and think about oneself)



Each type of anxiety needs a specific type of treatment.

For example: Management of *Curriculum-Based Anxiety* begins with interventionists exploring the social learner's academic and executive functioning abilities.



Temperament and anxiety

When experiencing stressors that result in anxiety, how we manifest our anxiety may depend, in large part, on our personality:

- **Exploders:** disruptive, impulsive, attention grabbing, sidetracking focus on group goals (e.g., may crack jokes constantly, may be mean).
- **Imploders:** implode within themselves. Pull back from participation, retreat from receiving attention as stress is internalized. They may look calm to others while being quietly miserable and stressed.

What's the difference between stress and anxiety?

These two terms often overlap, but...

- ...the cause of stress and anxiety are usually different.
- Stress is the result of mainly external pressures on us with which we're finding it hard to cope.
- When we are stressed, we usually know what we're stressed about, and the symptoms of stress typically disappear after the stressful situation is over.
- Anxiety, on the other hand, isn't always as easy to figure out. Anxiety focuses on worries or fears about things that could threaten us, as well as anxiety about the anxiety itself.

<https://www.heretohelp.bc.ca/q-and-a/whats-the-difference-between-anxiety-and-stress>



Every person with social self-awareness over the age of 4 may experience episodes of social anxiety.

Individuals who are not aware of how they are perceived and evaluated by others, are likely to have **social-sensory anxiety**.

- May be overwhelmed by the unpredictability of people.
- May become sensory overwhelmed in the presence of a lot of people.

Dr. Michael Tomasello on the development of *joint intentionality* (2014). *A Natural History of Human Thinking*, Harvard University Press, pp. 37

“Humans, as they evolved...had to worry, when compared to their earlier ancestors, both about evaluating others and about how others were evaluating them as potential collaborative partners (e.g., concern for their self-image)”

Social anxiety exists due to personal comparison to others.



- Sharing space or interacting with others triggers our self-conscious emotions
- Self-conscious emotions are emotions of comparison



Self-conscious emotions



From my experience:
How we experience and manage our self-conscious emotions may be complicated by cognitive inflexibility and weak ability to take perspective of others.

For some, perfectionism may be bundled into all of this.

Social anxiety can result in isolationist thinking.

“Everyone else can do that. I can’t do that. I am not like them. I can only be by myself. I am not interesting enough to have anyone want to talk to me.”

By adolescence, many have given up on even trying to join in with people and may say,

“I am happy going to the library alone,” or “I don’t want a friend.”

People with social anxiety are not always socially anxious.

They have relationships with some people with whom they are not anxious (family, close friends, etc.).



Individuals with social anxiety may initially express:

I don’t think people want to be with me. They look happy without me talking to them; what do I have to offer?

I can’t do it. I am happy by myself. Being with others is for everyone else. Don’t even try to get me to be with people!

I don’t care. People are jerks!

Yikes!
How can we help to unbundle
some of these very human
complications?

A few tips on what NOT TO DO with those with social anxiety:	Don't say	everyone wants to be with them if only they weren't anxious.
	Don't focus on	not being anxious; that makes one anxious!
	Don't use	the Social Emotional Chain Reaction to say their behavior is "unexpected" and people feel uncomfortable with them.
	Don't assure	them they "can socialize" and that they should just go try!

Make sure to read our free article to help kids manage anxieties:

[14 Tips to Help All Kids Manage Anxiety](#)



Social anxiety is not the result of a lack of social motivation. It is the result of having social motivation without the tools to feel competent when socially engaging with others.

What's the newest information?

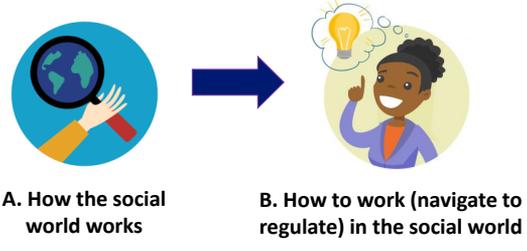


The mental health community is now suggesting that those with SAD (social anxiety disorder) need to incorporate *learning about social skills* (social competencies) as part of learning to manage social anxiety.

This generation of students are often more comfortable with digital communication rather than face-to-face communication.

All students benefit from being taught social competencies in the face-to-face world as a part of social anxiety management strategies.

Everyone Benefits from Learning:



How the social world works



No one is taught this information!
Don't assume people know it.

Our job is to explain it while helping
social learners visualize it.

A big picture view of how the social world works:



- We are all in this together. The typical brain has neurology to read each other's intentions, as well as have thoughts and feelings about ourselves and others.
- At our most basic, we each need to remain safe by trying to figure out who is around us, how they might feel, and what we think they are planning to do.

A big picture view of how the social world works from the perspective of anthropology:

- Most people acquire an understanding that people have **"collective" and "cooperative" goals** when we are together in groups (small and large).
 - One example of a collective goal is that each participant seeks to keep others comfortable, or at least not make them feel uncomfortable.
 - The typically developing mind is evolving into this mindset by 3 years old. (Not coincidentally, that's when we start putting children in preschool programs.)
- Keep in mind, any goal-directed activity involves **executive functioning**.

Should I or Shouldn't I Games

Kids discuss and explore their collective expectations about how others should respond in specific situations.



Elementary School Edition



Middle & High School Edition

A big picture view of how the social world works:



- Each person, in his or her quest to maintain social comfort, **wants the other to succeed!**
- When trying to share space or engage with another person, if we collectively are not succeeding, then we all are failing.

A big picture view of how the social world works:

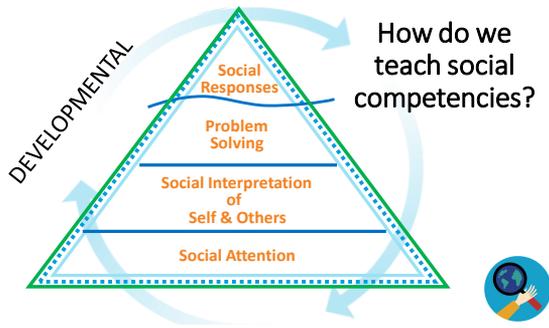


- If an individual seems socially inattentive and is not relating to others non-verbally or verbally, we are likely to interpret that as "he wants to be by himself."
- Then we don't risk being with them, which perpetuates a cycle of loneliness.
- Teachers and administrators tend to talk to the kids who show they want to talk to them!



AVOID ASSUMPTIONS!
Keep in mind:

- Our own biases/beliefs get in the way of our teaching
- To teach those with social struggles is to let go of your own perspective of why this person is struggling!
- Teach basic information about how the social world works to learn what a person knows or doesn't know



Check out this free article:

[The Updated and Expanded Social Thinking-Social Competency Model: Exploring Sensory Processing, Anxiety Management and Screen Time Overload!](#)

BREAK DOWN THE SOCIAL WORLD

BREAK IT DOWN
BREAK IT DOWN



The following are some examples of scaffolded teaching within the Social Thinking Methodology.

The goal is to help social learners explore aspects of the social world rather than assume they understand.

Teach from treatment frameworks and concepts



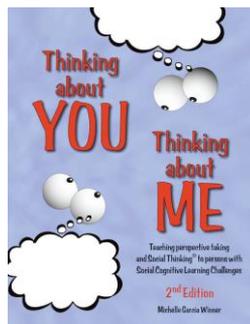
Four Steps of Face-to-Face Communication

1. **Think** about where I am and who I may want to be with and possibly talk with.
2. Establish a **physical presence** to show intention to be part of group and/or communicate.
3. Use **eyes to think** about others.
4. Use **language** to relate to others.



Thinking About You Thinking About Me

- Four Steps of Communication
- Four Steps of Perspective Taking



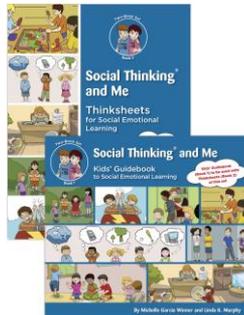
Remember:
Social learning
evolves with age as
do anxieties and
depression!



Our teaching must morph and evolve based on the social learner's ability to process and respond to socially based information.

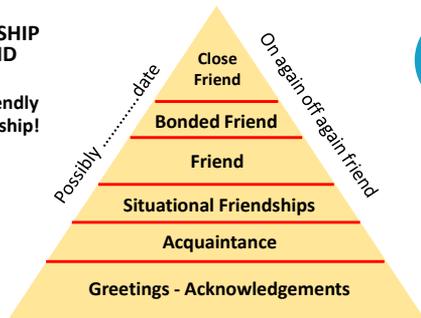
Social Thinking & Me

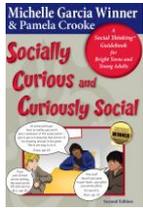
- Explains and teaches how the social world works for ages 9 to 12.



THE FRIENDSHIP PYRAMID

From friendly to friendship!



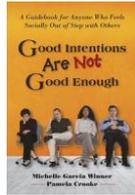


Socially Curious and Curiously Social

- Friendship Pyramid

Good Intentions Are Not Good Enough

- Helps individuals read others' intentions

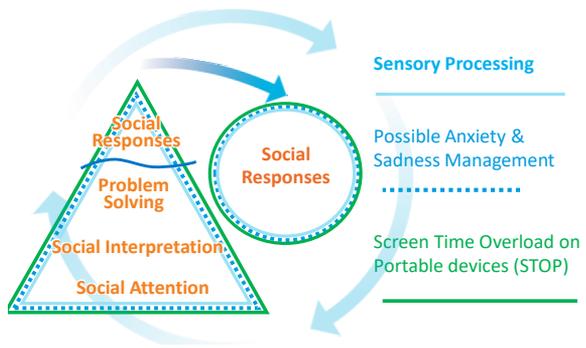


What do people need to learn to help them work (navigate to regulate) in the social world?



Keep in mind social learners may not be able to access social competencies if experiencing:

- Sensory processing challenges
- Compelling anxiety and sadness
- Screen time overload



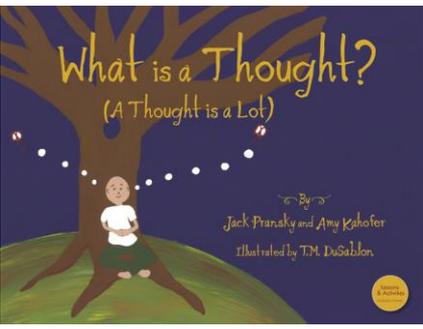
Build understanding of oneself as a member of the social world



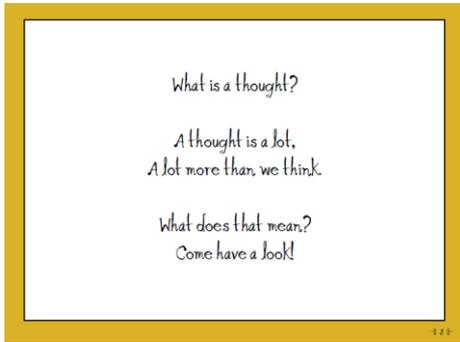
Stress and anxiety can take us out of the green zone!

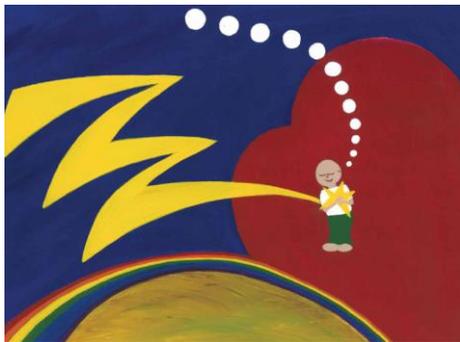
Use your inner coach to remind yourself of what you have been learning and practicing (e.g. When I enter into the group and acknowledge others, people will include me).

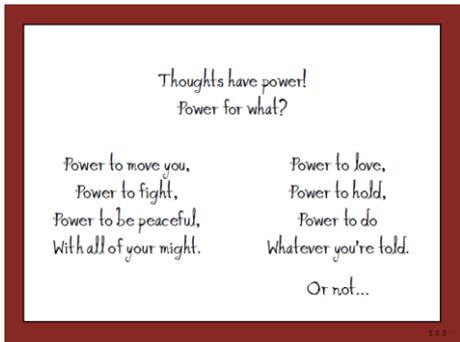






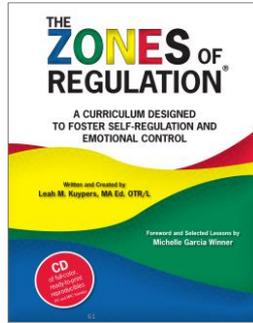


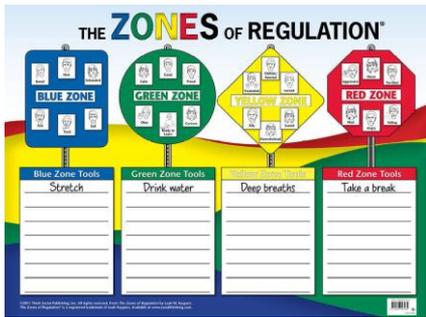




The Zones of Regulation by Leah Kuypers, OT

[Check out the Zones apps](#)





The Zones of Regulation board games: Zones Pathway introduced



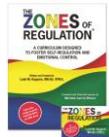
Navigating The Zones, ages 8+

+



Advanced Pack, ages 10+

Help others learn about their own
and others' feelings/emotions and
internal energy levels



Even teachers may avoid a student who does
not look approachable!

We are all just human.

Sometimes our students need to bridge the
gap and appear more approachable through
email, because they can't yet do it in person.

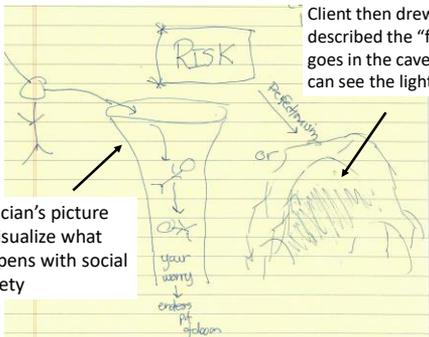
Email addressed to teachers from a 15-year-old:

"Hi, I wanted to let you know that I think you are a good teacher. I have social anxiety and it makes it difficult for me to get your attention, ask for help or talk in class. When I attend your class or tutorial, could you approach me to ask if I need anything or just say "hi"? I am working on developing strategies to approach you but I still need more time to learn how to do this."

Learn to observe self and others in different contexts/situations

Observe people in the social world rather than observe one's own anxiety.





Clinician's picture to visualize what happens with social anxiety

Client then drew her cave—she described the “farther back she goes in the cave the less she can see the light”

Be comfortable with discomfort

Remember, people want you to succeed!

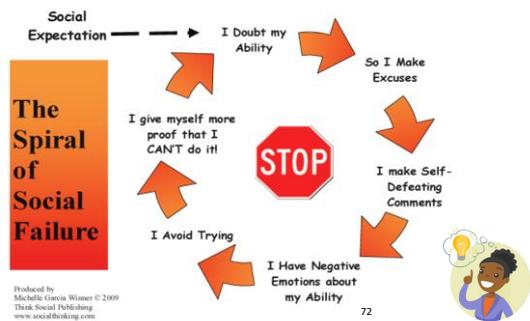


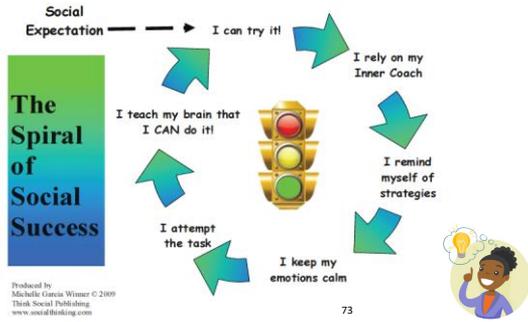
Practice, practice, practice:
Attend, interpret, problem solve, and respond to
develop your social competencies.

Step by step—as you learn concepts and
practice strategies—
you become increasingly competent!



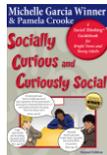
We always take risks in the social world (because we are always interpreting the situation).
The risks we are ready to take are the ones we know how to handle.





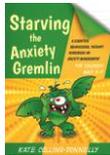
More Social Anxiety Resources

- Free article: [Anxiety and Social Competencies \(The Spirals\)](#)
- A chapter in the book, *Socially Curious and Curiously Social*

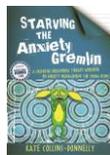


Fun workbooks for anxiety

If you work with kids or young adults with more generalized anxiety, these are fun, engaging workbooks to check out.



Starving the Anxiety Gremlin for Children, ages 5-9



Starving the Anxiety Gremlin, ages 12+

eLearning modules on learning to manage compelling social anxiety:

- ✓ [Exploring Treatment for Social Anxiety](#)
- ✓ [To Infinity & Beyond: Preparing Adolescents to Launch into the Real World](#)
- ✓ [Managing Public Relations & Self-Management Campaigns](#)

Future think:
Imagine your success prior to attempting to achieve success



We offer two conference courses on the topic of self-regulating emotions, and how we use emotions in academic curricula, daily activities, and workplaces!

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[Observe therapy and an assessment!](#)

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