HOW BIG IS MY PROBLEM?

TEACHING STUDENTS TO USE LANGUAGE SKILLS FOR EFFECTIVE PROBLEM SOLVING

Christiana Krimitsos
M.S., CCC-SLP
Speech Language Pathologist

Atara Stern
M.S., CCC-SLP, PC
Speech Language Pathologist
Pragmatic Language is the use of language in social contexts. It encompasses social interaction, social cognition, pragmatics, and language processing.
Pragmatic language, spoken language, and written language have an intricate relationship. Social communication skills are needed for language expression and comprehension in both spoken and written modalities. Spoken and written language skills allow for effective communication in a variety of social contexts and for a variety of purposes.
WHY TEACH PROBLEM SOLVING SKILLS?

• Most social misunderstandings or conflict stem from not understanding another person’s intentions or motivations for doing or saying something.
• Children face a variety of problems ranging from academic difficulties to problems with peers, yet few of them have the tools for solving those problems.
• Many children who lack the skills necessary for problem-solving, fall behind in school or struggle to maintain friendships.
• Other children who lack problem-solving skills react quickly without recognizing their choices. A child may hit a peer who cuts in front of him in line because he's not sure what else to do. Or a child may become avoidant by walking out of class when he's being teased because he can't think of any other ways to make it stop.
COMMON MISCONCEPTIONS

Students with social challenges and especially those on the autism spectrum don’t really care about forming friendships. They really don’t want friends.
THE TRUTH IS.....

STUDENTS WITH PRAGMATIC LANGUAGE DEFICITS:

➢ Don’t understand HOW to develop relationships
➢ Have difficulties recognizing expectations
➢ Struggle with social problem solving
➢ Are unaware that others do not share their same thoughts and feelings
➢ Benefit from direct, step by step teaching and modeling with many opportunities to practice
SO NOW WHAT?

Rather than teach children a set of social codes, actions, and patterns of response... social thinking involves teaching students about the thinking process itself and how thinking affects behavior (Michelle Garcia Winner, 2008)

The process of figuring out what another person is thinking or feeling

Set of socially acceptable behaviors that help us share space with others

The Why

The How
★ Intervention should focus on the student’s strengths and meet their needs for skills to develop.

★ When working with students we look at the child holistically to use their strengths to target a relative weakness they may have.

★ Intervention should encompass a multi-sensory approach. Visuals are used to breakdown abstract concepts. Find out how each student responds best.

★ For example, if a child has strong cognitive skills, we would use his or her cognitive abilities to teach a task. Conversely, if a child had a strength in the area of life experiences or ‘world knowledge,’ we would use their own prior knowledge to strengthen their understanding of the concept being taught.
TEACHING PROBLEM SOLVING

3 Step Process:

1. Identify the Problem - what is the problem?

2. What are the possible causes?

3. Find a Solution
For our students who have difficulty with self regulation and impulse control, especially when faced with problematic circumstances, we begin teaching this lesson by giving them scenarios which are matched up with a rating scale to determine the “level” or seriousness of a problem.

The language we use in our sessions may vary, depending on the age and cognitive level of the student. Most of our students benefit from visual representations, so we provide a variety of visuals to assist them to understand and internalize the concept of there being bigger and smaller problems.
Our role as SLP's is not only to teach the skills of problem solving, but also to guide the students to understand the various emotions they may feel and how they react to various problems.

We strive to have our students gain a self awareness of their reaction, so they can determine whether or not their reaction is an appropriate one based on the size of the problem.
What is the size of my problem??

Size of the Problem

Remember the size of your reaction has to match the size of the problem!

How big do others see the problem?
How big should your reaction be?
RELATING EMOTIONS TO SELF REGULATION

- The fact that a student can identify expressions of emotions in pictures, does not mean that he/she can identify emotions in a real life interaction.

- Even if someone can list the steps of problem solving, that does not mean that he/she can independently utilize the steps when face with a challenge.

- First you need to increase the students motivation to keep calm when a problem arises only then will they be able to be motivated to engage in problem solving
How Big is My Problem?

1. Glitch: Not getting called on, someone at the door you know, not getting the supplies you want.
2. Little Problem: Losing a game. Not getting the supply you want, being late.

Levels:
- 0: Glitch
- 1: Little Problem
- 2: Medium Problem
- 3: Big Problem
- 4: Gigantic Problem
- 5: Emergency
TEACHING ZONES OF REGULATION

- The Zones is a behavior approach used to teach self-regulation by categorizing all the different ways we feel and states of alertness we experience into four concrete zones. We provide strategies to teach students to become more aware of, and independent in controlling their emotions and impulses, and improving their ability to problem solve conflicts.

- Social thinking concepts and many visuals are used to teach students to identify their feelings and understand how their behavior impacts those around them, and learn what tools they can use to manage their feelings and states.

  Green Zone- Happy, Content, Ready to Learn
  Blue Zone- Sad, Depressed, Sick
  Yellow Zone- frustration, anxiety, nervous, silly
  Red Zone- Angry, Aggressive,

- Students discuss these feelings/emotions and when they may feel this way and learn strategies on how to cope with these feelings.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ITPUxVQ6UIk
# Zones of Regulation

## What Zone Are You In?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Blue</th>
<th>Green</th>
<th>Yellow</th>
<th>Red</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sick</td>
<td>Happy</td>
<td>Frustrated</td>
<td>Mad/Angry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sad</td>
<td>Calm</td>
<td>Worried</td>
<td>Mean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tired</td>
<td>Feeling Okay</td>
<td>Silly/Wiggly</td>
<td>Yelling/Hitting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bored</td>
<td>Focused</td>
<td>Excited</td>
<td>Out of Control</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Loss of Some Control</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Ready to Learn</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Moving Slowly</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Blue Zone:** Sad, Sick, Bored, Moving Slowly

**Green Zone:** Happy, Calm, Feeling Okay, Focused

**Yellow Zone:** Frustrated, Worried, Silly/Wiggly, Excited, Loss of Some Control

**Red Zone:** Mad/Angry, Bored, Moving Slowly, Out of Control

© 2011 Think Social Publishing, Inc. All rights reserved.
From The Zones of Regulation® by Linda M. Rupprecht • Available at www.socialthinking.com
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Blue Zone</th>
<th>Green Zone</th>
<th>Yellow Zone</th>
<th>Red Zone</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>When this happens...</strong></td>
<td><strong>When this happens...</strong></td>
<td><strong>When this happens...</strong></td>
<td><strong>When this happens...</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I don’t get enough sleep</td>
<td>Sitting in my desk for a long time</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I might feel...</th>
<th>I might feel...</th>
<th>I might feel...</th>
<th>I might feel...</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sad</td>
<td>Interested</td>
<td>Frustrated</td>
<td>Mad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tired</td>
<td>Happy</td>
<td>Worried</td>
<td>Angry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sick</td>
<td>Relaxed</td>
<td>Silly</td>
<td>Afraid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bored</td>
<td></td>
<td>Embarrassed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Confused</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I might look/sound like...</th>
<th>I might look/sound like...</th>
<th>I might look/sound like...</th>
<th>I might look/sound like...</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Crying, head on my desk, slow heart beat</td>
<td>I complete my work, I am nice to my friends, I wait my turn, and I use an inside voice.</td>
<td>I break my pencil or shut down. When I get too excited or silly, I cannot focus or I distract others.</td>
<td>I get mad and kick my desk. I yell “HELP!!” I try to leave the classroom and do not want to come back in.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>I can...</strong></th>
<th><strong>I can...</strong></th>
<th><strong>I can...</strong></th>
<th><strong>I can...</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Take a walk, jumping jacks, fidget toy, zones break box activity</td>
<td>Keep working, ask for help if I get stuck</td>
<td>Take deep breaths, ask to talk with Mr. Clayton</td>
<td>Use my zones break box</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Use the Zones to create a personalized toolbox of coping skills.
Behavioral Strategies That Promote Problem Solving

Our Social Filter helps us to monitor our behavior so that we can keep others thinking about us the way we want!
★ The ability to apply the rules of social filter requires perspective taking.

★ The student must understand how their behavior, can impact how other people think about them.

★ When working on problem solving skills with our students, we use the social filter concept to teach appropriate versus inappropriate ways to react or solve a problem.

Remember how Theory of Mind develops!
Is your Social Filter on?

Social Filter is ON
Thinking about other people’s feelings
Using kind, friendly words

Social Filter is OFF
Only thinking about myself
I’m not trying to protect other people’s feelings
I might embarrass myself.
Your SOCIAL FILTER helps you:

- Protect a friend's feelings 😊。
- Saves you from being embarrassed 🗣️.
- Show respect to adults in charge 🚭.
- Stay out of trouble 🚑.

Here is another example:

How do you like my new haircut?

SOCIAL FILTER OFF

That is pretty ugly and messy!

It's actually kind of ugly on you.

SOCIAL FILTER ON

That is pretty ugly and messy!

It's different than your hair was before. It seems like you are happy with it.

The boy put his thoughts through his social filter, so only helpful and friendly words came out. His social filter holds his unkind thoughts in his head.
**EXPECTED VS. UNEXPECTED BEHAVIOR**

**Expected Social Behaviors**

Things kids do or say that other kids think is friendly, helpful and respectful to others.

**Un-expected Social Behaviors**

Things kids do or say that other kids think is not friendly, hurtful, weird & disrespectful to others.
Social Behavior Mapping is a visual support showing the link between a person’s behavior and the consequences they experience.

It outlines a fundamental social concept: how we act in a specific situation affects how others feel, how we make others feel affects how they treat us, and how we are treated affects how we feel about others and, ultimately, about ourselves.

Social Behavior Mapping makes the complicated process of how we affect each other visual and concrete.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expected</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Situation:</strong> Listening to the teacher talk</td>
<td><strong>Others' feelings about my behavior(s)</strong></td>
<td><strong>How others treat me based on how they feel about my behavior(s)</strong></td>
<td><strong>How I feel based on how I am treated in the situation</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>My behavior that is expected in the situation</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quiet voice</td>
<td>Calm</td>
<td>Calm face</td>
<td>Calm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eyes focused and thinking about the teacher</td>
<td>Pleased</td>
<td>Calm voice</td>
<td>Happy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Looking like I am thinking about what the teacher is saying</td>
<td>Happy</td>
<td>Relaxed body</td>
<td>Relaxed body</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hands touching only the materials on my desk</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unexpected</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>My behavior that is unexpected in the situation</strong></td>
<td><strong>Others' feelings about my behavior(s)</strong></td>
<td><strong>How others treat me based on how they feel about my behavior(s)</strong></td>
<td><strong>How I feel based on how I am treated in the situation</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telling the teacher about what I did last night</td>
<td>Stressed</td>
<td>Unhappy face</td>
<td>Stressed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading a book I brought from home</td>
<td>Frustrated</td>
<td>Her eyes look right at me</td>
<td>Frustrated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kicking the chair in front of me</td>
<td></td>
<td>Her unhappy sounding voice</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Looking at objects or people around the room or staring out the window</td>
<td></td>
<td>She tells me what I am doing that is unexpected and she asks me to stop in a loud voice</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Copyright © 2013 Think Social Publishing, Inc. www.socialthinking.com
Michelle Garcia Winner - Social Behavior Mapping
A Social Autopsy is a tool used to help individuals understand social mistakes and social successes.

A social Autopsy is used to dissect social incidents so that individuals learn from experiences.

After an event, the student and the therapist analyze the components of a social situation by identifying expected and unexpected actions or language.

If an error was made, together they develop a plan to ensure that it does not reoccur.
Many children need to be directly taught the language needed to respond appropriately when they are experiencing a challenging situation. The goal is to develop effective communication for positive social interactions.

**Strategies That Develop Functional Communication:**

- Video Modeling
- Social Scripts
- Role Play
Video Modeling

❖ Video Modeling is a teaching tool that combines visually-cued instruction with modeling strategies.

❖ Students watch videos depicting the targeted behavior or skill.

❖ After the video is presented the students complete a companion sheet to reinforce comprehension.
Social Skills Videos
by Everyday Speech
EVERYDAY SPEECH

Not Asking for Help

We all need help sometime! If we don’t ask for help, we can make our small problem even bigger. Asking other people allows us to get the help we need!

What was Mike’s problem?

How did he feel when he couldn’t do his work?

How did he make his problem better?

READ EACH SCENARIO & DECIDE IF THEY ARE MAKING THEIR PROBLEM BETTER OR WORSE

Sam’s baking cookies for a bake sale. She doesn’t know how long to cook them. She already burnt some. Instead of asking for help, she just makes them again the same way.

Derrick has to make a big speech in front of his class. He feels really nervous. He knows that his mom makes speeches at work so he asks her for some advice.

Julie needs help getting the computer to print. Her friend Molly is close by. She asks Molly if she knows how to get the computer to print. Molly has done it before and shows her.

Trystan broke his mom’s nice lamp. His brother says, “I can help, I know where the pieces go” but Trystan tries on his own. When he tries to put the pieces together they break into smaller ones.
THINKING ABOUT THE PEOPLE AROUND YOU

When we are around others, it’s important to notice what is going on. Our actions can make others feel positive or negative. We may have to change what we’re doing.

Read and answer each question below.

1. What action did Rachel do at first and how did it make the others around her feel?

2. How did Rachel change her behavior?

3. How did the other students feel after Rachel thought about them and changed her behavior?

REVIEW

Why is it important to think about others? Tell about a time when you were in a situation and you had to change your behavior because of the other people around you.

© Everyday Speech

everdayspeech.com
SOCIAL SCRIPTS

➢ Scripting is the practice of teaching students the language for specific situations. They can involve conversation starters, responses and ideas to connect conversations or change the topic.

➢ Using scripts to role-play provides an organized plan for teaching a variety of social skills.

➢ Social scripts help teach students how to interact and communicate with peers and adults, manage their anxiety, and address behaviors like aggression, fear, and obsessions.

➢ The goal of scripting is to help students transfer the social skills learned using the scripts to other situations.

➢ Scripts need to match the student’s life experiences at home, school, community, and possibly in their workplace.
ROLE-PLAYING

➢ During role-plays, the student is asked to act out the process of solving a problem.
➢ The speech language pathologist acts as a coach to help the student through the skill steps.
➢ Student is encouraged to use “I” messages to tell the other person how he/she feels.
➢ The observers of the role-play are given instructions to see if the process was executed correctly or not.
➢ After each role-play, the speech therapist provides corrective feedback about how each step was enacted.
➢ Observing students are asked to tell what the role-playing student did well.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Resources</th>
<th>Children’s Books about Social Skills</th>
<th>Websites</th>
<th>Books about Social Communication</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Julia Cook: <a href="http://www.juliacookonline.com">www.juliacookonline.com</a></td>
<td>Jill Kuzma: <a href="https://jillkuzma.wordpress.com/about/">https://jillkuzma.wordpress.com/about/</a></td>
<td>Zones of Regulation, Kuypers (2011)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Way I Feel by: Janan Cain</td>
<td></td>
<td>Think Social, Winner (2005)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>The New Social Story Book, Gray (2010)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
PARENT RESOURCES FOR SOCIAL COMMUNICATION