



Florida School for
the Deaf & the Blind

Do More. Be More. Achieve More.

Supporting Theory of Mind in the Classroom



Overview

- What is Theory of Mind?
- Struggles as a result of a weak Theory of Mind
- Activities to support Theory of Mind Development





Hello!

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Theory of Mind



Let's start with discussing Theory of Mind

Theory of Mind

“ToM is the ability to attribute mental states (e.g., beliefs, desires, knowledge, pretending) to one’s self and to others and to understand that others may have beliefs, desires, and intentions that differ from their own.” (Tucci, Easterbrooks & Lederberg 2016)

Theory of Mind



Theory of Mind

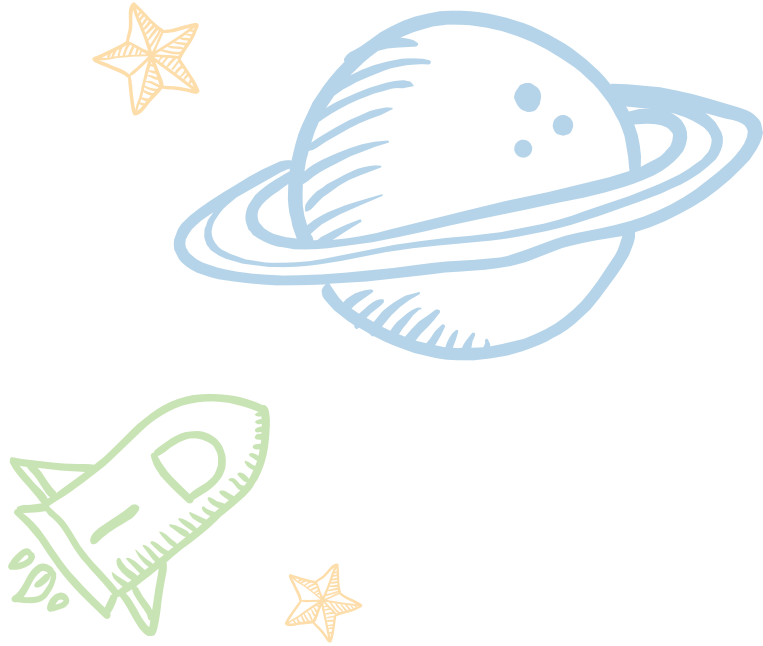
- ToM is beliefs, desires, emotions, knowledge and intentions
- ToM is understanding individuals do not know what you know
- Theory of Mind development is influenced by language and experiences
- Theory of Mind is rapidly developing between 0-5



“

*Keep in mind: Exposure to
language constructs the mind.
Developing brains are always
making connections.*

— • —



Importance of Language Exposure

Deaf and Hard of Hearing
children with limited or delayed
language have a weak or no
Theory of Mind

Struggles from a weak ToM



Let's discuss the struggles that result from a weak ToM

Struggles from a Weak Theory of Mind and/or Late Language Exposure

- Concept of Time
- Cause and Effect
- Emotional Regulations
- Relationships
- Abstract Concepts
- “Acts” feelings out
- Difficulty Learning
- Reduced fund of information



“

*Children must establish internal
rules before they can apply
exceptions*

— • —

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Supporting ToM in the classroom



Let's discuss ways to support ToM in the classroom

Concept of time

- Order of the day
 - Ex: Morning, noon, evening
- Schedule of events
 - Ex: journal work, P.E., math
- past , present, future
 - Ex: “yesterday, I went to...”
- First, second, third



“Concept of Time” Support in the Classroom

Sequencing Activities

- Hands- On Sequence Activity “First, Next, Then, Last.”
- Concrete to Complex
- Read Story about making pizza, sequence how to make a pizza while making a pizza, and write or use manipulatives to show a sequence



“Concept of Time” Support in the Classroom

Sequencing Activities

- sequence of the story. “First, Next, Then, Last.”
- Talk about the day. Add on Yesterday and Tomorrow
- Visual charts
- Velcro timelines
- Grow flowers and track progress

Talking “Out Loud”

- Model internal thought
- Discuss with coworker in front of student
- Discuss with students when situations arises

Exploration and Play

- Act out scenarios
- Play baker or chef. Talk about order of prepping the food
OR make a pizza in class

Cause and Effect

- If this event happens, then this is the result.
 - Ex: “if” and “then” statements
- Consequences
- Problem Solving



“Cause and Effect” Support in the Classroom



STEAM: “Polar Express” -
Build a bridge to the North
Pole



STEAM: “Gingerbread Man”-
Build a trap for the Gingerbread
Man



STEAM: Toothpicks and
Gumdrops

“Cause and Effect” Support in the Classroom

Hands on Activities

- Storybooks
 - If., then...
- Eat ice cream outside on a hot sunny day
- Clothing match for weather: Cold weather needs a jacket

Talking “Out Loud”

- Model internal thought
- Discuss with coworker in front of the student
- Set up situations to “talk through” OR talk through situations as they arise

Exploration and Play

- Role play by acting out popular stories (with or without toys)
- Build a tower of blocks and knock it down
- Play with bubbles
- STEM activities

Emotional Regulations

- Goes through the levels of emotions:
neutral, anxious, scared.
- Able to get back to neutral
- Understands emotions



Emotional Regulations and Acting out

Hands on Activities

- Elf on the Shelf
 - “What would the elf think of the behavior?”
 - Visual to help students think before they do

** discuss with parents prior to using Elf on the Shelf**



Emotional Regulations and Acting out

Classroom Environment

- Adaptable behavior charts based on student need
- Emotions are discussed



Emotional Regulations and Acting out

Hands on Activities

- Emotions charts
“Today, I feel”
- Draw pictures- “I’m happy when” or “_____makes me angry”
- Visual charts
- Safe, calming place to go to in the classroom

Talking “Out Loud”

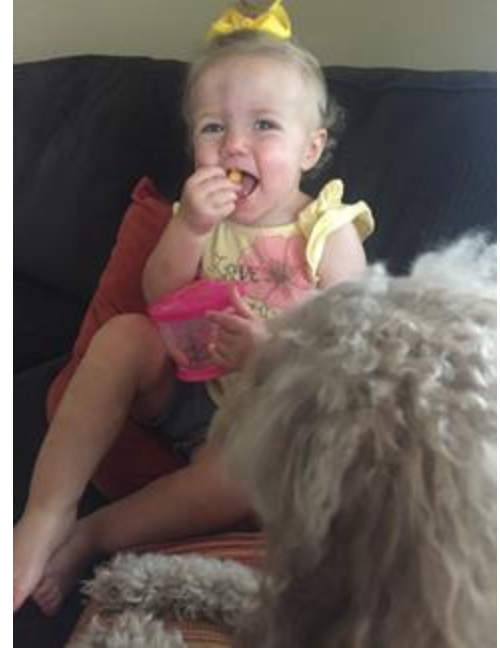
- Talk about emotions
“I feel annoyed because I spilled my water”
- Set up situations to “talk through” by labeling emotions
- Model going to calm down area

Exploration and Play

- Role play by acting out the emotions
- Toys take on emotions based different scenarios
- Toys go to calm down area
- Sensory bottles
- Coke and mentos activity

Relationships

- Able to empathize, negotiate, and problem solve
- Understands social cues
- Supports positive well being



“Relationships” support in the classroom

Classroom Environment and Model

- Take the extra 5 minutes to listen, explain, and provide valuable information.
- Develop rapport and relationships



“Relationships” support in the classroom

Activities and Model

- Group activities
- Show what active listening looks like
- Talk to the child about being friends
- Read stories and discuss relationships in the text

Talking “Out Loud”

- Set up situations to “talk through” with coworker in front of the student
- Use language like “Sally is my friend because she is nice and shares”

Exploration and Play

- Role play relationships between toys: sharing, asking “how are you?”
- Play groups
- Problem solving activities in groups
- Escape rooms

Abstract Concepts Activities

- Teach abstract/complex concepts through hands on activities first.
- Child has to understand concrete concepts before abstract.
- Relatable experiences that are talked to and explored w/ adult
- Developed through play: using objects as something else



“Reduced Fund of Information” Activities

- Experiences to build background knowledge.
- Meaningful language to make the experiences relatable.
- Pull out the previous experience through dialogue or play



Supporting Theory of Mind in the Classroom

	Concept of Time	Cause and Effect	Emotional Regulations	Relationships	Abstract Concepts & Prior Knowledge
Model	Adult “talks” out sequence of the day Make a visual timeline	Model Scenarios: Cold outside- get jacket, spill milk- clean up	Discuss emotions. Go to calm down area.	Show dialogue between peers: negotiating, problem solving, supporting	Provide hands on, concrete experiences
Storytelling	Sequence the story	Discuss situations “if __, then __.”	Ask questions like: “How did the character feel?”	Discuss the characters relationship.	Discuss pictures to increase vocabulary
Play and Exploration	Sequence pictures cards. Bake a cake.	Build a tower and knock it down. Blow bubbles	Talk through child’s emotions with them	Play groups	Sensory bins, “field trips,” mixed toys

Let's review some concepts

Theory of Mind



ToM is beliefs, desires, emotions, knowledge and intentions. ToM is understanding individuals do not know what you know

Language Delay



Deaf and Hard of Hearing children with limited or delayed language have a weak or no Theory of Mind

Struggles



A child with a weak Theory of Mind struggles with concept of time, abstract concepts, relationships, regulating emotions, "acting out,"

Language



Provide meaningful language in every situation! Talk about the world around you, the objects in front of you, and the thoughts in your head.

Experiences



Provide meaningful experiences to help group background knowledge and help children make connections.

Explicit Instruction



Set up situations to formally show your child what emotions look like, visual calendar, and what happens as a result of a situation



Experiences

That are meaningful

Language

exposure

= Theory Of Mind

Development!

How can you adapt these activities for your students?



Your turn! Lets make a plan.

How can you share this with teachers and parents in the district?

Lets make a plan!

ToM Friendly Definition:



Resources Educators may have in the
classroom:

Items Parents may have at home:



Activity Ideas to Share with Educators and Parents.

****fill out table****



Important "take-aways" you want to share:

	Concept of Time	Cause and Effect	Emotional Regulations	Relationships	Abstract Concepts & Prior Knowledge
Model					
Storytelling					
Play and Exploration					



THANKS!

Any questions?

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References

Stacey L. Tucci, Susan R. Easterbrooks, Amy R. Lederberg; The Effects of Theory of Mind Training on the False Belief Understanding of Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing Students in Prekindergarten and Kindergarten, *The Journal of Deaf Studies and Deaf Education*, Volume 21, Issue 3, 1 July 2016, Pages 310–325, <https://doi.org/10.1093/deafed/enw031>

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