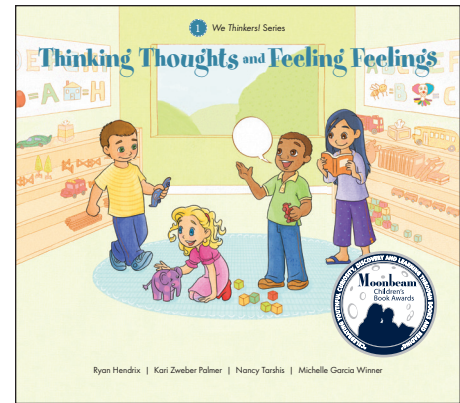
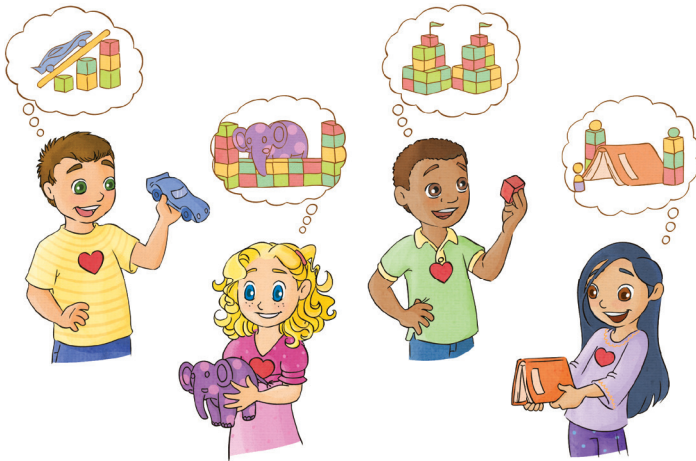


Thinking Thoughts and Feeling Feelings



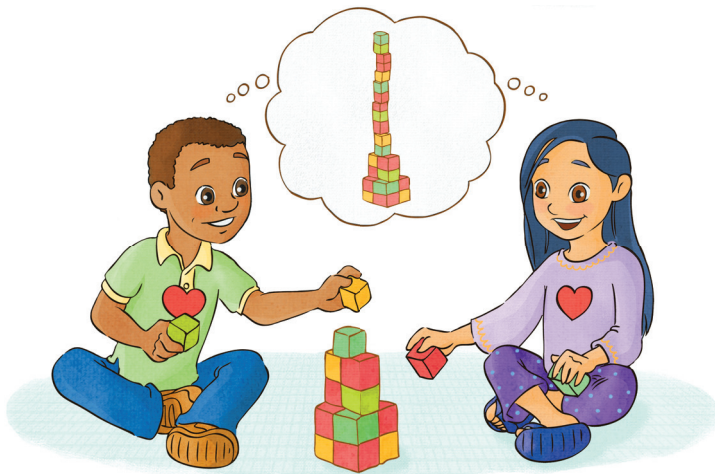
Family Letter and At Home Activities



Social learning is all about **thoughts** and **feelings**. The ability to think about others, play collaboratively and establish friendships is all about thoughts; knowing our own, sharing them with others and taking others' thoughts into account as we act and react. We introduce these concepts first because all subsequent concepts and vocabulary units are tied back to thoughts. (What are you thinking? What am I thinking? What is the group thinking about?) We make the connection to feelings because what we think and what we feel are inseparable.

In exploring thoughts and feelings, we begin by establishing a connection to body parts. Children are familiar with their

bodies and we are able to use what they know: that we all have many body parts and each part has a job to do. In most cases, we can see these parts and watch them do their jobs. For example, we can see hands clap, hold, and touch, and feet tap, jump and run. We then connect that information to the more abstract concepts of thoughts and emotions. That is, there are other parts inside our bodies that have important jobs too. Our brain and heart are two of those parts we use when we are around people. Our brain is our thought maker. We define a thought as an idea, picture, or words you have in your brain. To help us talk about thoughts we use words like *think* and *know*. Our heart is our feelings keeper. A feeling is something we feel in our body. To help us talk about our feelings we use words like *happy*, *sad*, *mad*, and *scared*.



In the first storybook in the *We Thinkers!* series, we meet the main characters, Evan, Ellie, Jesse and Molly. These four children go on many adventures to introduce and explore Social Thinking Vocabulary and concepts. In their first adventure, they learn all about two important concepts: thoughts and feelings.

At home, it is important to raise your child's awareness that s/he is having thoughts. We practiced this by drawing attention to examples that were big and exaggerated. When children saw us do something unexpected (out of the ordinary, silly,

etc.) we labeled the process by saying, “You are having a thought! I’m putting shoes on my hands, that’s silly! You’re having a thought about me.”

You can continue to reinforce this at home by doing anything that’s out of the ordinary or breaks the normal routine and labeling that process by saying “You’re having a thought.” Some suggestions include:

While getting dressed:

- Put socks on your hands. “You’re having a thought. I put socks on my hands. That’s silly. You’re having a thought about me.”
- Put pants on your head.
- Put a shirt on inside out or backwards.
- When leaving the house:
 - Carry something out of the ordinary to the door with you, such as the toaster. “You’re having a thought. I’m taking the toaster to work with me. That’s silly. The toaster stays in the kitchen. You’re having a thought about me.”
 - Put on a robe instead of a jacket, or slippers instead of shoes.

While the above activity exaggerates times your child would have a thought, it’s important to remember we’re always having thoughts, about things big and small. Contrast these over-exaggerated examples with times we’re having thoughts during the day that are not as obvious and more routine.

Some examples of day-to-day thoughts we might have are:

- “I like bananas. I’m thinking about eating my banana.”
- “It’s time for dinner. I’m thinking about cooking.”
- “I’m thinking about putting on my shoes.”
- “I’m thinking about reading you a book.”

Activity 1

Things I Like to Think About...

The following activity is included so your child can relate to this concept on a personal level and explore his/her own thoughts.

Instructions: Use the thought bubble handout at the end of the letter. Have your child draw a picture of himself or herself (or use a photo) and place it under the thought bubble. Then fill the bubble with pictures or drawings of things your child likes to do, play with, eat, etc.

Activity 2

Feelings Book

Begin by stapling four pieces of paper together on the left side, into book form. At the top of each paper, write a feeling word. Start with these feelings: happy, mad, sad, and scared. Either draw a picture or take a photo of your child making that facial expression. Together, talk about times the child has felt and experienced that emotion. Draw a picture, use photos from magazines, or personal photos of these times and add them to the page. Do not expect your child to be able to come up with examples independently. You may decide to make the book and then fill in the examples across time. For example, after a birthday party you might add a picture on the “happy” page.

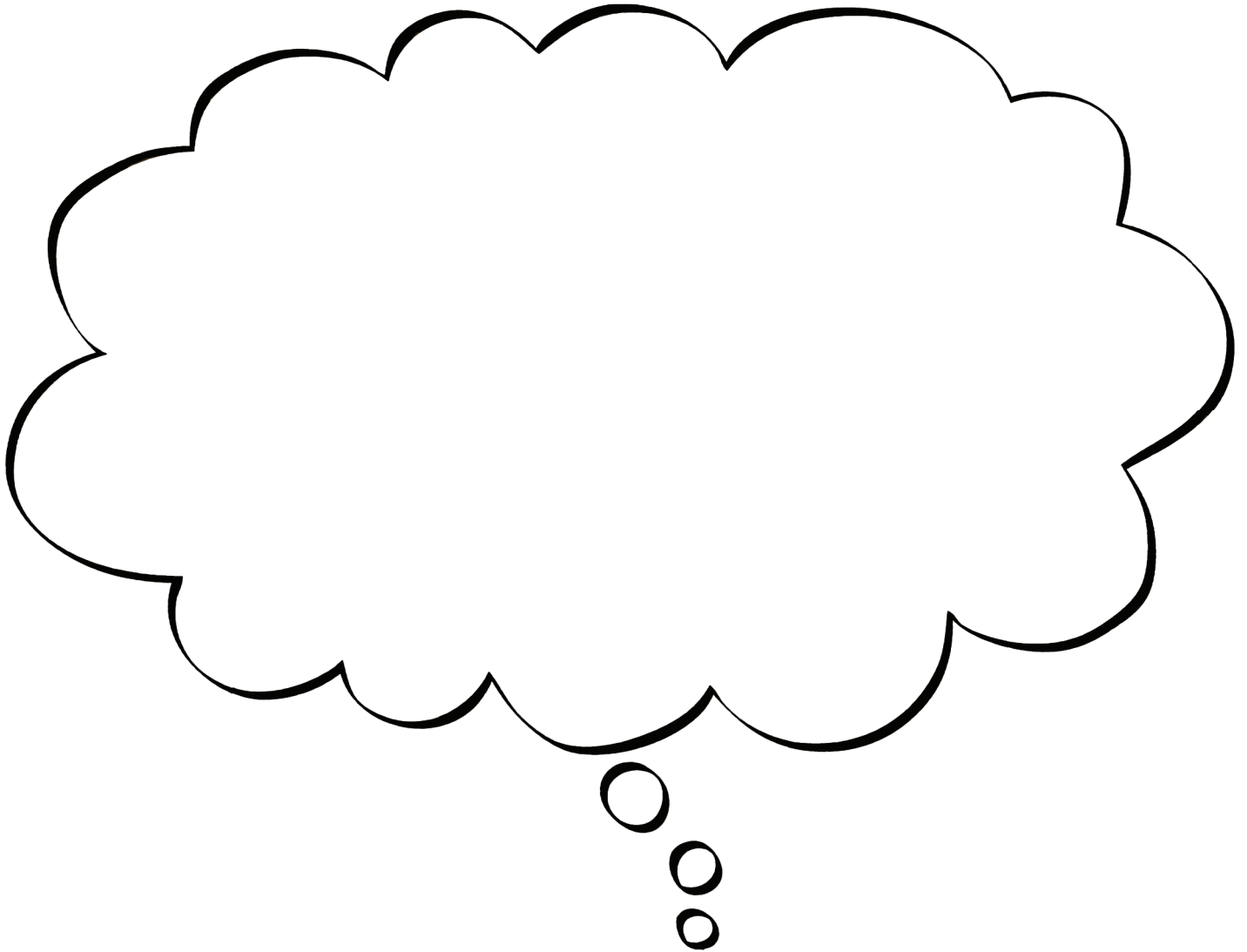
As your child begins to learn and identify more emotions, add pages to increase the child’s emotional vocabulary. Examples may include:

Proud
Disappointed
Frustrated
Excited
Worried

Comfortable
Uncomfortable
Curious
Confused
Calm

Jealous
Tense
Surprised
Grumpy
Silly

Things I Like to Think About...

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for a child to draw or write inside. It is positioned directly below the thought bubble, connected by three small circles.