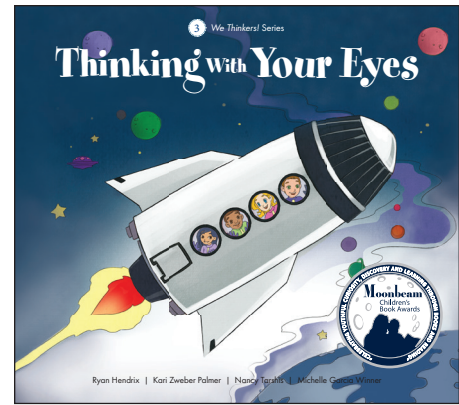


Thinking With Your Eyes



Family Letter and At Home Activities

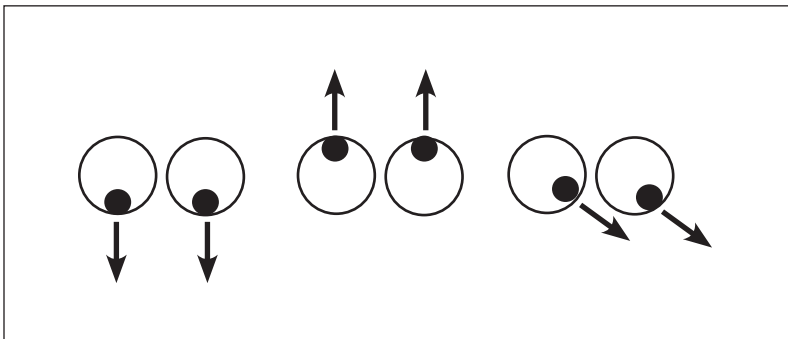
In our Social Thinking group today we talked about **thinking with your eyes**. Expressively we use our eyes to show others what we are thinking about. We look at people to let them know we are thinking about *them*, listening to *them*, talking to *them*, and/or sharing an experience with *them*. Receptively we use our eyes to gather information about what other people are thinking about, what is happening around us and what might be someone else's plan.

In the story we read, Evan, Ellie, Jesse and Molly take a trip in a rocket ship to outer space. They meet curious aliens. As the story unfolds, the aliens and children try to communicate but don't speak the same language. The children have to learn to think with their eyes to figure out what the aliens are looking at, how that connects to what they are thinking about and therefore, what they are planning to do next.

We will be using the term thinking with your eyes instead of behavioral directives such as "look at me" or "use eye contact." When children are taught to think with their eyes they begin to understand that there is a purpose for observing others and the environment. When you think with your eyes you are engaging in an active process that helps you determine what others are thinking, how they are feeling, and subsequently how to respond. It is more than just "looking" at something. Thinking is involved!

What a person is looking at is often what he or she is thinking about. We can use what others are looking at to make a smart guess about what or whom they are thinking about. For example, if you are talking with a friend and he is looking at you this means he is thinking about you and what you are saying to him. If we are looking at something other than the person talking to us, like a picture on the wall, we are sending the message that we are thinking about the picture and not the person who is talking, since looking equals thinking.

Eyes are like arrows, they point to what someone is looking at and most likely thinking about!



Activities to try at home

Activity 1 Cook something together and only use your eyes to think about the items you want or the ingredients you want to add. Make a cake, for example, and place all the ingredients out on the counter. Tell your child, “I am going to look and think about the ingredient I need.” When it is time to add the eggs, look at your child and then look at the eggs. Verbally prompt your child, “Think with your eyes: what am I looking at, what am I thinking about?” If you’ve got more than one helper in the kitchen you can use your eyes to think about whose turn it is to add the ingredient.

Activity 2 Use everyday opportunities to ask for something around the room using only your eyes. For example, you might be getting ready to leave home and notice your car keys on a table. Tell your child “I need help before I leave! Think with your eyes. Can you figure out what I’m looking at and thinking about?” Maintain your gaze on the keys rather than shifting it back and forth between the child and the object so as not to confuse them.

Activity 3 Play a turn-taking game and indicate whose turn it is, based on who you are looking at (to show who you are thinking about).

Activity 4 When giving your child choices, ask him or her to look at the desired object. For example, at the dinner table hold the milk carton in one hand and juice in the other. Ask your child to think with his or her eyes, “Show me the one you want by looking at it.” Then switch roles and have your child guess the drink you would like. Practice with everyone at the dinner table!

Activity 5 When you are reading books with your children, find opportunities to trace eye gaze and talk about what the character is looking at and thinking about. See the attached illustration from the book as an example.



Here, the kids are looking at space rocks and thinking about space rocks!