

In-the-Moment Teaching

of the Important Ideas from *Talking about Thinking*

Talking about Thinking reflects our belief that being an active thinker will help a child build communication capabilities when it comes to expressing wants, needs, feelings, and opinions. In turn, by increasing active thinking and communication capabilities, a child is better able to problem-solve, cope, and be social.

Talking about Thinking covers concepts in a general way. Therefore, in-the-moment teaching during the course of daily life is how a parent makes these concepts relevant and useful to her or his child. Here you will find additional examples of parents or other adults using some combination of our favorite in-the-moment teaching strategies:

- **Describe** when and how the child or someone else communicates/doesn't communicate along with the effects of communicating/not communicating
- **Compare** what people are thinking and saying (or not saying)
- **Respond** when a child communicates.

Prompting is a very important piece of the process of helping kiddos build expressive communication skills. This is true for children of all communication ability levels including those who do not use spoken language to communicate. Talk to your child's SLP and other team members about how to prompt your child during in-the-moment teaching. For basic information on prompting check out our [Tips & Topics, Spotlight: Prompting](#).

Tip: Keep handy a blank thinking bubble and talking balloon at the dinner table. Hold the thinking bubble next to someone who is being quiet and describe how the person is thinking but not talking. Hold up the talking balloon next to your child as a way of encouraging her or him to say a thought (want, need, choice, opinion, etc.). Use yourself as a model. For example, Mom holds a talking balloon visual next to her head and says, "Yum, I love this spaghetti. Hey, I just said out loud what I am thinking. [Mom passes the talking balloon to the child] Your turn! Can you say what you are thinking?" If you are able to have multiple copies, you could in-the-moment fill them in with what people are thinking and saying.

Additional examples of in-the-moment teaching on *Talking about Thinking*

While waiting at the doctor's office, Mom shows Sophia video on her phone of dogs doing silly things.

Sophia: “*Funny dogs!*”

Mom: “*The dogs are funny! Sophia, you think the dogs are funny. So does Mommy, I think the dogs are funny, too!*”

→ Mom immediately responds to Sophia's social communication and describes and compares what she and Sophia are both thinking. While speaking to a child this way might sound odd or awkward, we believe this type of interaction will help her/him develop an understanding of thinking and to get better at sharing thoughts and feelings.

Jordan and Trey are working on a math worksheet at school.

Jordan to Trey: “*You are so bad at math.*”

Teacher: “*Trey, how do you feel about what Jordan just said? [Trey says he feels mad, he thinks Jordan is mean.] Jordan, because you told Trey he is bad at math, Trey feels mad and thinks you are mean. Did you want to be mean when you said that? [Jordan says no.] Jordan, if you think someone is bad at something, that is a thought you do not say out loud. What can you say to Trey? [Jordan says he's sorry.] Next time will you say it out loud if you think someone is bad at something?*” [Jordan says no.]

→ Note how the teacher neutrally helps Jordan understand the negative effect of saying out loud his thought. This situation is ideal for after-the-moment teaching using a cartoon-style graphic organizer. A visual description of Trey's reaction to Jordan's words could make a huge difference in Jordan learning for “next time.”

Kristie and Emma are coloring.

Kristie assumes Ethan is done with his blue crayon and starts coloring with it. Ethan gets mad and yells: “Hey! I’m not done with that!”

Dad: “Hey Ethan, Kristie was thinking you were done with the blue crayon because you are using the red one. Sometimes people guess wrong what you are thinking and that’s okay. How about you two start over. Let’s see if both of you can ‘be green’ as you talk about the blue crayon.”

→ “Being green” is a MooBoo **color rule** about saying or asking for what you want using words, tone of voice, and other actions that are positive or friendly. In *Talking about Thinking* we have a mini lesson about why and how to be green.

Dad and Lindy are in the car.

Lindy: “Daddy music!”

Dad turns on the radio: “Okay, here’s music! Lindy thinks she wants music, so Lindy says, ‘Daddy music.’ Lindy says, ‘Daddy music,’ so I turned on the radio!”

→ Dad uses a real-time interaction to help Lindy understand both concepts of **think then say** and **causation**. Active thinkers can use these to communicate, problem-solve, and cope.

Mom pretends not to see Noah and blocks his way. He says, “Move please.”

Mom immediately moves: “Yes, I’ll move! Because I know what Noah is thinking, I can move. Thanks, Noah, for saying ‘please!’”

→ Again, here is a real-time effort by an adult to connect a child’s communication to a positive result. We love it when parents set-up learning situations by being a sneaky-trouble maker, like Mom did here.

During circle time sing-along, when the teacher rings a bell Brandon puts his hands over his ears and shuts his eyes. He doesn't speak, but makes an unhappy noise.

Teacher keeps ringing the bell: "*Brandon is thinking something. I do not know what Brandon is thinking, so I cannot help Brandon. Brandon, can you say what you want?*"

→ A judgment call is involved in situations where a child is distressed by sound, sight, smell or touch, especially for children who have a significant sensory aversion. Here, the teacher knows she will not cause excessive distress by continuing to ring the bell.

Justin – who uses a PECS for communication -- is pulling on Dad's clothes. Dad knows Justin wants to go outside, but holds off to motivate communication.

Chloe (Justin's sister): "*Daddy, let's go outside!*"

Dad: "*Chloe is thinking about going outside. Hmm, Justin is pulling on my shirt. I do not know what Justin is thinking. It would be a good idea for Justin to tell me what he is thinking.*" [Dad points to Justin's PECS book as a prompt.]

→ Rather than getting the kids ready to go outside, Dad holds off, sets up a situation for Justin to communicate what he wants, and prompts as necessary. Your child's SLP and other team members can help you learn to prompt your child to help her/him make progress communicating. It is critical to help a child acquire expressive communication skills regardless of whether that child communicates by speaking.

Sadie and Emma are sitting at the table eating pizza.

Mom asks, "*Who wants more pizza?*"

Sadie says, "*I do,*" and Emma says nothing. Mom gives Sadie a piece of pizza but holds off on giving one to Emma. Emma starts crying.

Mom: "*Emma, Sadie got more pizza because she said, 'I do.' But you did not say anything. You did not say what you were thinking so I guessed you did not want more pizza. I guessed wrong. Here's the 'MooBoo for Me!' It says, 'People might guess wrong what I am thinking if I do not say out loud my thought.' That's me! I guessed wrong! Let's try again... 'Who wants more pizza?'*"

→ Mealtime is a really great opportunity for some quick in-the-moment teaching!

Tip: Keep the visual, “MooBoo for Me” (*Printables*) in a handy location, such as where your child eats. As you do in-the-moment teaching of the important ideas from *Talking about Thinking*, point out on the visual the important idea(s) that in that moment apply to your child.

Grandpa and Michael are at the playground.

Michael is on the swing and obviously wants Grandpa to push him. Grandpa pretends to guess wrong that Michael wants a push.

With a big smile and playful tone of voice, Grandpa: *“I think Michael is all done with swinging today! I think I will just go sit down on this bench for a while.”*

[Humming, Grandpa begins to walk away.]

Michael: *“More push please!”*

Grandpa immediately starts pushing: *“Michael says, ‘push please!’ Okay! I’ll push you more, Michael! I’m so happy you told me you want to keep swinging!”*

→ For kiddos who respond well to humor, being playful while doing in-the-moment teaching keeps things light and fun, but still productive!

