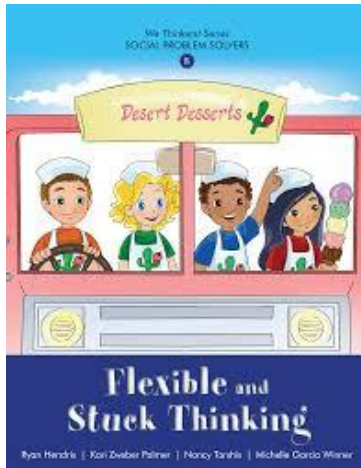


Social Thinking Concept 8: Flexible and Stuck Thinking



Why do We Teach this Concept?

In our social world, shifts and changes happen constantly. Even as adults, we are constantly learning how to be flexible and adjust our plan and behavior accordingly. A high level of flexibility is needed to consider and adapt to each situation. When students have rigid moments, most of the time they are not being oppositional, but they just don't know what to do instead.

Teaching students to have "flexible thinking" and not to have "stuck thinking" will help them adapt to situations and people and be a good team player.

Materials:

- Book 8: Flexible and Stuck Thinking and Unit 8 Plan
- Family Letter and At Home Activities
- Optional Music Activity: Music CD Track 9 "The Incredible Flexible You"
- Visuals: Flexible thinking bubble, Stuck thought bubble, "let it go", "try another way" pictures

Activities:

- Read Book 8 Flexible and Stuck Thinking:
 - See Unit Plan handout for ideas on what to discuss at "stop and notice" icons.
 - Introduce "Think of Ideas", "Add Ideas Together", "Stuck thoughts" and "Flexible thinking" bubbles.
- Incredible Flexible Ice Cream Sundae Activity:

Part 1: The Me Sundae

- After reading the book, students will make ice cream cones using different colored paper as different ice cream flavors.
- Students will learn to use their imagination to create their own ice cream sundae in individual containers using paper, pom poms, pipe cleaners, buttons etc.
- Through this activity, students will demonstrate flexible thinking by using their imagination to "think of ideas" (i.e. paper representing ice cream, imagining the cold temperature of the paper, using pom poms as sprinkles etc.).
- Flexibility means not being rigid on your ideas; pretend play is being flexible!

Part 2: The We Sundae

- In this activity, students will make a group sundae where they will have to share their ideas and plans. This content focuses on the Group Plan.
- Students are divided into small groups. Each group has one bowl and students take two turns adding the ingredients.
- Through this activity, students will learn to be flexible and “add ideas together”.

Part 3: The Mixed up Ice Cream Order

- In this activity, students will learn a strategy to help them be flexible, i.e. “let it go.”
 - Students are divided into small groups where one student is designated to be the ice cream orderer and the other students are the ice cream makers. The ice cream orderer is allowed to change their order up to three times. One student in the group will be in charge of the sprinkles, and the other will be in charge of the ice cream.
 - When the orderer changes his/her mind, the other students are to demonstrate flexibility. If they are stuck, then a “let it go” visual can be explained.
- “We can do things in different ways” activity:
 - Students will be asked to create a specific shape/letter/number using 1 given material at a time (e.g. playdoh, popsicle sticks, blocks etc.). They will learn to try to create the shape using preferred and non-preferred materials. For example, a student may prefer to use playdoh to make a shape, however, he needs to combine his flexible thinking to “let it go” and “try another way” to finish the activity.
 - Change the Rules: We spend a lot of time telling kids that they must play games by following the rules. But if everyone agrees, games can be really fun when you change a rule or two. Pick a common game, like Connect Four™ and make a new rule or a new way to play. Maybe you change the game to connect six. Try it and discuss. Was the game still fun?

Language to Reinforce the Concept

After teaching the concept, use these words in everyday activities:

- During activities:
 - “I like how you are using a different way to build the tower. That’s being flexible.”
 - “Everyone in the group wants to take the first turn. Who can be flexible and wait?”
 - “Nina, I know you really want to keep playing cars, but you can let that thought go and be flexible.”
- During transitions:
 - “Everyone wants to be the first in line. Can you show me how to be flexible?”

- “Ali, I know you want to finish your work, but the group plan is to go to music right now. Let’s think of an idea. What’s another time you can work on this? That’s right, after music is over. How flexible!”
- At the carpet:
 - “Wow Megan, you are such a flexible thinker. I see you wanted to sit beside Joey, but that spot was taken and you found a new spot.”

Teachable Moments

- Note when someone is being inflexible and in a “**stuck moment**”, talk about how to “**let it go**” or “**try another way**” to become flexible thinkers.
- Offer alternative to how to do things, say things, or use things as often as possible. This will help children to see how to be flexible and to see the value in thinking flexibly.
- If you are trying to present a lesson on the white board and you want a red marker, but only have black, be flexible and use the black....but tell the kids what you are doing. This is very simple but is a great and very easy opportunity to model flexible thinking.

Books

- During book reading, ask students to determine which characters are showing flexible thinking. This can be done with most books, but try:
 - Scaredy Squirrel – Melanie Watt
 - Beautiful Oops – Barney Saltzberg
 - Don’t let the Pigeon Drive the Bus – Mo Willems