

F E B R U A R Y 2 0 1 8

Psych Up Ashford!

Brought to you by your School Psychologist:
Emily Deliberto

The Half-Way Point

As we are halfway through the school year(!), here are some mid-year thoughts to keep in mind

- **Remember to praise for the expected behaviors.** Although the thought may be that if it's expected, they shouldn't receive praise, as students grow, they are continuing to learn what's expected (and this can change with age!) "Reminders" are helpful. For those students who struggle with behavior, it is essential to provide a strong and positive message to constantly reinforce what you like to see!

- **Differentiating for different learning styles.** Make your class an interesting place by using a variety of methods of instruction (hands on, interactive, auditory, visual, etc.) to embrace all types of learning styles in order to reach all your students.

- **Second step lessons** can be used to promote social behavior language and expectations throughout the day. You can connect newsletter concepts (Zones, Unthinkables) while teaching and enforcing Second Step! Read on for more ideas.



Using the Social Thinking concepts and language in your classroom

This month's newsletter is focused on ways to utilize Social Thinking concepts and language into your classroom and your daily interactions with your students. *Social Thinking* is a concept developed by speech language pathologist, Michelle Garcia-Winner. "Social thinking is the process by which we interpret the thoughts, beliefs, intentions, emotions, knowledge and actions of another person along with the context of the situation to understand that person's experience." (Socialthinking.com, 2017).

Save The Date!

Start with Hello Week

February 5th-9th

Part of Sandy Hook Promise targeting social isolation in students. Read the book **The Invisible Boy** by Tracy Ludwig. Have a class discussion about inviting others to join. Give power paws when you notice peers reaching out to others. More information at: <https://www.sandyhookpromise.org/startwithhelloweek>

Random Acts of Kindness Week

February 11th-17th

Our Kindness Heart wall looks fantastic! Keep teaching students to spread the kindness. Make a daily kindness act challenge for your class. Start a "Pay it Forward" compliments game. Do a Bucket Filling activity. Read books such as Wonder, Kindness is Cooler, The Kindness Quilt. More about RAK at <https://www.randomactsofkindness.org/rak-week>



Superflex & Unthinkables

What Is It?

Superflex is a popular Social Skills super-hero themed curriculum that assigns various maladaptive social behaviors as “villains” and teaches strategies to defeat the villains with expected social behaviors. Many students identify closely with the different characters. There are 14 “original” Unthinkables as well as many supplemental characters. In February’s newsletter, we will describe and share **strategies** for the most common Unthinkables. Remaining Unthinkables will be shared in future newsletters.

The UNTHINKABLES!

(An 8.5x11 version is in the February Social Emotional Newsletter on Google Drive)

SUPERFLEX™
takes on the Unthinkables!

Superflex is the superhero that lives inside each of us and helps us learn to be more flexible thinkers and defeat the Unthinkables that may be invading our brains! Unthinkables cause us to do or say things that are unexpected and make others feel uncomfortable around us. We can call on our Superflex to help us learn to use our superflexible thinking to figure out different solutions to a problem. This helps us get better and better at solving our social problems. When we think about the situation and the people in it, we keep others (and ourselves) feeling comfortable being together at school, at home, and in the community. We defeat those sneaky Unthinkables!

Rock Brain - I make people get stuck on their ideas.

Worry Well - I make people worry too much.

Space Invader - I get people to invade others' personal space.

Glassman - I make people have huge upset reactions.

Brain Eater - I distract people.

Was Fongy Once - I get people to use humor at the wrong time, the wrong place or with the wrong person.

One-Sided Sid - I get people to only talk about themselves.

D.O.E - I make people overly competitive.

Body Snatcher - I move people's bodies away from the group.

Energy Hangry - I give people too much energy.

Oh-Wonderer - I don't like people to socially wonder about others.

Mean Jean/Gene - I get people to act mean and bossy.

Topic Twistermeister - I make people jump off topic.

Grouchy Grompaning - I put people in grumpy moods.

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Using Social Thinking Language & Concepts in the Classroom

Whole Body Listening: The idea that the whole body (eyes, ears, mouth, hands, feet, heart & brain) needs to be focused on the group in order to listen *AND to show others that you are listening*.

Hidden Rules: Not all rules are clearly announced! Most rules in our world are rules people figure out *through observation or experience*.

Example: At school, you're supposed to leave your shoes on even if you take them off at home. 😊

Expected: Things we do and say that give people good thoughts and make them feel good too. Doing what is expected is different based on where we are and who we are with. Example: Expected behavior with a teacher vs. with a parent, in the library vs in the cafeteria, etc.

Unexpected: Things we do or say that give people uncomfortable (odd) thoughts and makes them feel icky, mad or bad. Unexpected is differed based on the setting and the people as well.

Body in the Group: Others feel you are part of the group. Examples: standing one arm's length away from others, front of body facing the group, etc.

Brain in the Group: Others feel you are paying attention to what is happening in the group. Thinking and listening to others.

Thinking With Your Eyes: Using eyes to look at a person to show you are thinking about what they are saying or doing.

Smart Guess: Using detective tools (remembering, seeing, hearing, knowing and feeling) to figure things out and make a guess based on what you know.

Good (Okay/Normal) Thoughts: By showing others expected social behavior, they have good/normal thoughts and good feelings about us.

Uncomfortable Thoughts: By showing unexpected social behaviors, people notice in a more negative way, possibly giving others uncomfortable feelings.

Social Fake: Demonstrate interest in someone else's topic that he/she does not find fascinating by looking interested and adding thoughts to conversation.

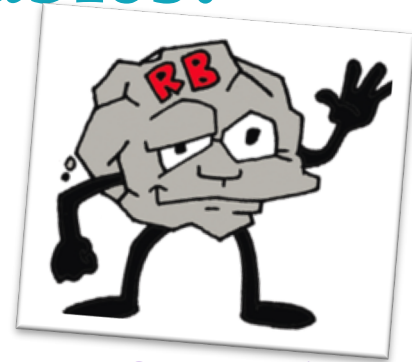
Rules Change with Age: Teach students that rules taught across elementary school change so they must use *flexible thinking*. For example, a second grader may hug their teacher when they are sad but that is much less expected for a sixth grader!



The Unthinkables!

Rock Brain's "Powers"

Rock Brain will get the person to do *only what they have decided they will do*; will not negotiate with other people. Not a good problem solver and tries one solution that is not working over and over again. This person may be very *rule-bound* and *rigid* in their thinking; seeing only one way to a situation.



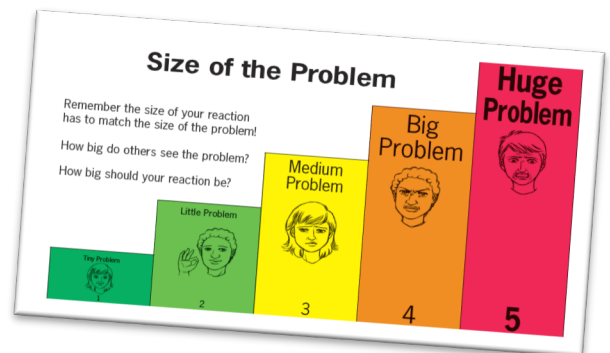
Strategies to Defeat Rock Brain

- **Build Self-Awareness:** Teach students to *Stop & Notice* that what they're doing is not working and try another way to solve the problem.
- **Remind** students: Remember that being part of the group means you cannot always do it your way or have everything you want. Try to think about other's plans and adjust your thinking to match their plans. Assist students in practicing *compromise*.
- Teach & Model **Self-Talk**. "Not a problem. I will get to do this later or maybe another time."



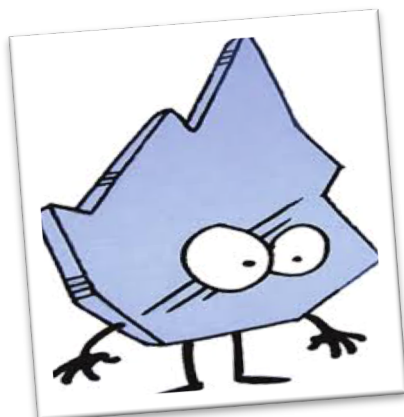
Glass Man's Powers

Glass Man lets a person be flexible to some extent, but then, all of a sudden, just breaks. They don't melt down slowly, they *quickly start getting very upset*. Glass Man usually thinks things "*aren't fair*." Students with Glass Man may have large reactions to small problems.



Strategies to Defeat Glass Man

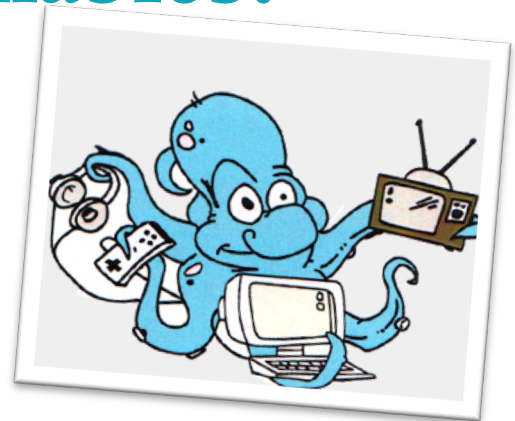
- Practice with students to *identify the size of the problem* and if the reaction size matches. Create visuals for students to reference.
- Teach **Self-Talk**. "I'm starting to get mad. I need to walk away to take a break."
- Encourage students to *ask for help*!
- Teach a **strategy**: Example: Count by 2's while taking deep breaths until you get to the number X.



The Unthinkables!

Brain Eater's "Powers"

Brain Eater makes it hard for the person to focus on what they are doing or focus on others during interactions. Their brain "rolls away." The person may get *easily distracted* with their own thoughts or things around them.



Strategies to Defeat Brain Eater

- Teach students how to *move away from distractors* (such as peers) or *move distractors away* (such as "toys") Teach to turn your body and eyes away from what is distracting you and think about the person who is talking.
- Use a *fidget* so that it keeps your body busy but your brain focused on the group. Teach students the right way to use!
- *Build self-monitoring*: Teach students to try to notice when their brain is thinking about something else and get it to refocus on the group.
- *Build problem solving*: Teach students to look around at what others are doing so they can figure out what they should be doing!

Worry Wall's Powers

Worry Wall makes the person *worry* or feel nervous so much about the people around them or the social situations that he or she "hits a wall" and *stops being able to talk (or focus/problem solve)* at all with the people nearby.



Strategies to Defeat Worry Wall

- Teach *calming strategies*: Close your eyes, take a deep breath, and let it out slowly. Continue to do this until your body feels relaxed **OR** Find a happy thought that can change how you are feeling, such as your favorite foods, animals, or music.
- Encourage students to share their worries with a trusted adult, such as yourself or the school psychologist!

Using Superflex in the Classroom

Practice a strategy as a class!

Such as...***Progressive Muscle Relaxation***: Teaches students how to relax their bodies in two steps. 1.

Tense specified muscle groups 2. Release the tension and notice how your muscles feel after. Example:

Tighten your toes. Count to 5. Relax your toes. How do your toes feel? Tighten your calves. Count, Relax, Prompt, Etc.

Other strategies: Think happy thoughts, use fidgets, asking for help, taking a break, etc.



Use as Prompting Language

Once your classroom has an understanding of Unthinkables' powers, use the character names or vocabulary above, to prompt students to notice their unexpected behaviors as well as the strategies to change these behaviors. Example: "It looks like you have Brain Eater! You're focused on recess. Why don't you borrow a fidget?"



Create "Wanted" Posters

During morning meeting or a classroom meeting, discuss with your students which Unthinkables invade their brains the most. Using this info, create a "Wanted" poster to hang around your classroom that identify what the behaviors look/sound/feel like and create agreed upon strategies to use to defeat the Unthinkable. (Examples in the February Newsletter Google drive folder).



Use Video Clips for Discussion

There are countless examples of video clips that display a character in an Unthinkable moment! Think about the social cues Russell isn't noticing during this scene in the movie Up? What Unthinkable might he have? What hidden rules is he missing? A quick search of the Unthinkables on YouTube provides you with commercials and other movie clips (including those created by teachers) to display Unthinkables in action. Make sure to preview any clips before showing to the class!

RESOURCES

A February Newsletter Resources folder has been shared with you on Google Drive with some full-size Social Thinking resources for you to use or adapt for use in your classroom.

Helpful Websites for Social Thinking information or inspiration!

Social Thinking Website:

<https://www.socialthinking.com/>

Unthinkables Video Clips:

<http://thespeechplace.info/unthinkables-videos/>

Social Thinking YouTube Channel

[https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCtiY3nmLV2fDsh4F04FYi
TQ](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCtiY3nmLV2fDsh4F04FYiTQ)

Books to Read with Your Class:

<u>Rock Brain</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bubble Gum Brain by Julia Cook • Miss Nelson is Missing by Harry Allard • Alexander & the Terrible, No Good, Horrible, Very Bad Day by J. Voist • Berenstain Bears and the Trouble with Friends by Jan & Stan Berenstain
<u>Brain Eater</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Very Noisy Night by Diana Hendry • It's Hard to be a Verb by Julia Cook • Howard B. Wigglebottom Learns to Listen by Howard Binkow
<u>Glass Man</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Soda Pop Head by Julia Cook • The Remarkable Farkle McBride by John Lithgow • When Sophie Gets Angry...Really, Really, Angry by Molly Bang
<u>Worry Wall</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wilma Jean the Worry Machine by Julia Cook • Stress Can Really Get on Your Nerves by E. Verdick and T. Romain • Something Might Happen by Helen Lester • The Worrywarts by Pamela Duncan Edwards

Other Ideas:

- Use comic strips! (Garfield, Calvin, and Peanuts characters have lots of unthinkable moments.
- Challenge your students to notice Unthinkables in the books they are reading!

Thought of the Month:

"How we think about people affects how we behave, which in turn affects how others respond to us, which in turn affects our own emotional internal and external responses. It's an incredibly complex process that most of us take for granted"

-Michelle Garcia-Winner