Teaching Program

Perspective Taking Using Pictures

Objective: Your student will demonstrate beginning perspective-taking skills including social inference and the attribution of thoughts and statements to specific people.

Prerequisite Skills: Your student should be able to answer how and why questions and have generalized usage of a range of vocabulary words labeling private events, including emotions and cognitive processes. Your student should be able to track eye gaze and discriminate between the basic emotional states (happy, sad, angry, scared) based on tone of voice or prosody cues.

Note: The LdA *Emotions Language Cards* (see the Resource Guide, in the Appendix) are appropriate materials for this teaching program. Magazines and catalogues are also a good source of materials. If using picture books, select only picture books that your student has never heard or read before. It is important that he draw inferences from the pictures and not make guesses based on prior knowledge of the story. Depicted scenes may involve one or more persons, but be sure to use clear, uncomplicated pictures. A few samples are provided, but you will need to continually gather materials with which your student is unfamiliar.

Step 1: Matching Statements or Thoughts to Pictures of Specific People

Given a picture of two or more people, your student should be able to answer questions beginning with, "Which person might be thinking or saying . . . ."

Example: Look at the picture below. The mother is holding a baby. The mother and baby are looking at each other, smiling and hugging. Next to the mother stands a small child who is looking up at them with a scowl. Behind the mother is a window looking out into the night sky.
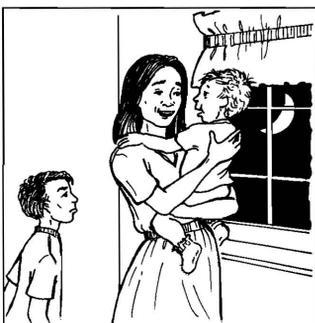
Sample Questions

1. Who is thinking "I *love* Mommy's hugs!" (The statement should be spoken with an emphasis on the word "love" and in a happy tone of voice.) Encourage your student to explain his choice. (As a subtle prompt, preface the statement by stating the emotion that best describes the designated person. For example, "I'm so happy because I *love* Mommy's hugs!")

2. Who is thinking "*I* love Mommy's hugs." (This statement should be spoken with an emphasis on the word "I" and in a dejected tone of voice.) Prompt in this case by presenting a statement such as, "I'm so jealous because *I* love Mommy's hugs, too."

3. Which person might be thinking/saying, "It's really getting dark outside." (Only one person, the little boy, is facing the window, and so he is the best choice.)

Note that you may ask questions regarding either thoughts or statements. These terms may be used interchangeably for the purposes of this teaching program.

Using a picture of a single person, offer two statements from which your student must choose one. For example, refer to the picture below of a young girl, who is alone in a shopping mall, looking frightened.
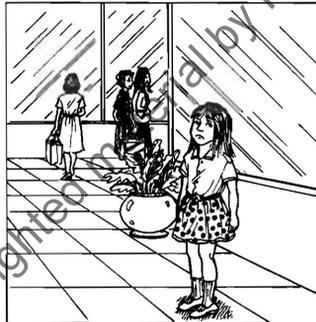
Choices such as the following could be offered: "I wish I could find my Mommy" or "I love going shopping!" The first statement should be stated in a worried tone of voice; whereas the second should be stated in a happy tone of voice. If your student can read, you can prepare two sentence (text) strips and place both on the table in front of him. Your student must choose the one that best fits the picture. Alternatively, place two or more pictures, with one or more persons depicted in each, in front of your student. Ask him to select the person that best fits your sentence.

For example, you could ask any of the following questions or make up your own.

1. Who might be thinking, "Oh no, where *IS* she?" (Use a worried tone of voice.)
2. Who might be thinking, "It's not *FAIR!* He gets *ALL* the attention!" (Use an angry tone of voice.)
3. Who might be saying, "You are just so *SWEET!*" (Use a happy tone of voice.)

Be sure to ask your student to explain his answers.

Step 2: Making Inferences About What Depicted Individuals Might Be Thinking or Saying

Show your student a picture and him ask what he thinks might be happening in the picture. Note that if the student is without prior knowledge of a specific story relating to the picture, a variety of answers may be applicable. Any plausible answer should be reinforced. Shape where necessary. Answers to subsequent questions must follow logically from your student's description of the scenario. Your student must also be able to articulate a justification for his answers by answering a follow-up question.

Using the picture and the examples from Step 1, ask your student the following questions:

1. What might the little boy be thinking or saying? How do you know that? What makes you think that?
2. What might the mother be thinking or saying? What makes you think that?
3. What might the baby be thinking? What makes you think that?
4. What do you think the little girl might be thinking or saying? What are the clues? What do you think she might do next?

There is no need to purchase expensive photo cards for use here, but you may re-use some from other teaching programs. Pictures from magazines and catalogues will work well, and it is preferable that your student not have a story already attached to the pictures you are using here. You want your student to generate his own ideas using contextual cues including background, props, and actions as well as facial expressions and body language. The advertisements in magazines for parents or catalogues for children's clothing and other products often have great pictures for the purpose of this teaching program. Continue to present new pictures until your student is routinely coming up with plausible answers for each new picture that you present.

Suggestions for Generalization

Once Again, Silent Movies and Mr. Bean Videos

Again, silent movies and Mr. Bean videos are excellent tools for the generalization of these skills. Keep the remote control in your hand with your finger on the pause button.

When the opportunity presents itself, pause the movie and ask your student to tell you what specific characters on the screen might be thinking, or what they might say were they to speak.

Wordless Comic Strips

Remove the words from age-appropriate comic strips and have your student make up his own words to go along with the illustrations. Just cut out the comic strips from the Sunday paper, remove the words, and have your student dictate his own story!

Wordless Picture Books

Wordless books are also good generalization tools. The children's sections in most libraries have a selection of these. Choose books in which the characters have clear or exaggerated facial expressions. Have your student tell a story to go along with the pictures. If necessary, prompt him to include dialogue. A listing of wordless pictures books is included in the Resource Guide, in the Appendix.