

# THEORY OF MIND – An introduction



## Theory of Mind and your family

Some assessments were carried out recently with your child to look at aspects of the development of Theory of Mind.

### What is Theory of Mind?

Theory of Mind is the understanding that we each have our own thoughts and feelings and that they may be different from the thoughts and feelings held in others' minds. This then leads to the understanding that those thoughts cause us to act in certain ways.

### Why is it important?

Theory of Mind underpins the development of a child's social skills. It helps us know how to behave in different situations and around different people.

### What can I do to help?

There are several ways that you can help your child develop in this way.

1. Talk about your own and others' thoughts and feelings. Include the reasons for your thinking. For example:
  - "I had to stay up really late last night. It's made me feel very tired."
  - "Oh no, it's going to rain soon, I'm worried that the washing will get wet!"
  - "Poor Aunty Sandra. She has to go to hospital tomorrow. She will be feeling very anxious."
2. Use children's books to talk about the feelings and thoughts of the characters. For example: "Little Red Riding Hood doesn't know that that's really the wolf!"
3. Talk about what is pretending and what is real. For example: "Let's pretend to be little mice, I'm a very quiet mouse. I was pretending to be a mouse, but I'm really a mummy!"
4. Read children's books that are about pretending and reality, such as Where the Wild Things Are.
5. Use lots of 'mental state language'. These are words about thinking and feeling, such as know, remember, decide, forget, worry, know and want.
6. Use lots of language to describe emotion. Emotions which children typically understand from a young age are sad, happy, tired and angry. Later, they understand words such as surprised, worried and upset.

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