Build Perspective Understanding through Language and Literacy Practices

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As children develop, they learn how to take someone else's perspective. This can include understanding that other people might be thinking and feeling something different from what I am thinking and feeling. Being able to interpret someone's thoughts and intentions is critical for children's academic and social success (Lecce & Devine, 2022). Language is an important part of this ability. Therefore, families and caregivers should talk to children using rich vocabulary and different kinds of sentences (Ornaghi et al., 2011). These kinds of interactions are especially important for children who have or are at risk for language difficulties (Durrleman et al., 2019). Below is a diagram describing various components of perspective-taking.
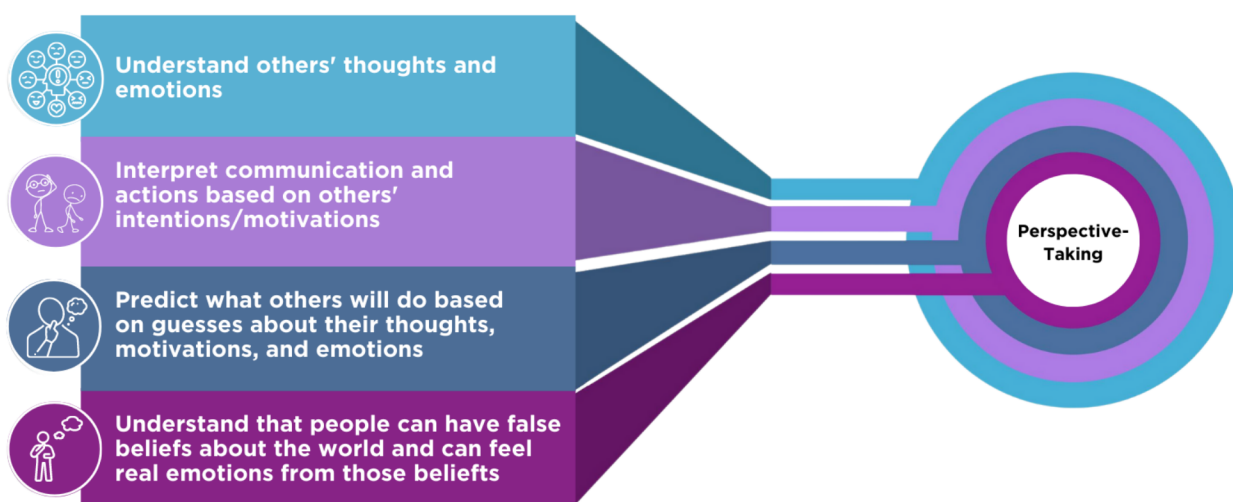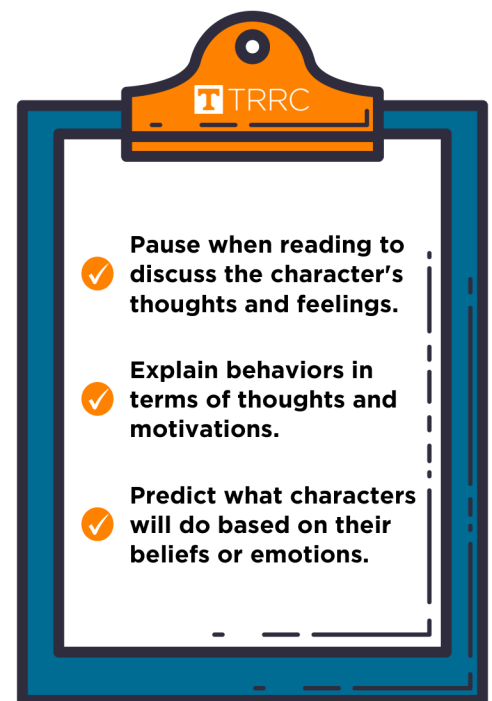
How can you help your child understand perspectives?

Many books you already have and read include mind- and emotion-related vocabulary and concepts. When reading, choose books that include vocabulary words about thinking and feeling. Expand on what you read with your child using additional discussions.

- Describe character's thoughts and emotions using different vocabulary words, not just the same few words each time.

- Ask your child about the reasons the characters behave certain ways. Have children explain characters' behavior based on thoughts, intentions, and motivations. For example, "The gorilla intended to let out all the animals, and that's why he took the zookeeper's keys."

- Wonder aloud what the characters might do next based on their thoughts, beliefs, or emotions. For example, "The Gruffalo thinks that the mouse is the scariest creature in the wood. I wonder what he is going to do next?"

Help children notice how often in everyday life we think about others' thoughts and emotions as well as use that to explain or predict what people are going to do. Set your child up for success just by using this language more in your conversations.

✓ **Pause when reading to discuss the character's thoughts and feelings.**

✓ **Explain behaviors in terms of thoughts and motivations.**

✓ **Predict what characters will do based on their beliefs or emotions.**

References

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