



**THINKING SKILLS INVENTORY (TSI; revised 8/10; © MGH)**

Child's Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Solving problems and responding to life's demands requires thinking skills. If a child doesn't have the skills to handle a problem or expectation adaptively, the result will likely be some form of maladaptive or challenging behavior. The particular form of maladaptive behavior (aggression, screaming, whining, defiance, shutting down, crying etc) is not important. What is important is identifying the chronic problems adults have with the child or the demands that trigger the child (we call these *problems to be solved*) and the skills the child lacks that s/he would need to handle those problems more adaptively (we call these *skill deficits*).

*Problem to be Solved + Skill Deficit*            *Maladaptive Behavior*

**Situational Analysis: Identifying Problems to be Solved**

**Instructions:** Before assessing crucial thinking skills, specify the situations in which the child's maladaptive behavior occurs. Think of when, where, with whom, and over what issues the difficulties arise. What triggers the child? What are the setting events, antecedents or precipitants? What are the chronic problems causing frustration for the child or the adults around the child? List the specific situations and unsolved problems below. (Examples include: getting up in the morning, food choice and timing, clothing choice, brushing teeth, curfew, bedtime, screen time, homework, getting down to work in class, staying in one's seat, talking out in class, competitive games at recess, group attendance, taking medicine, recreation time etc.) *Be as specific as possible!*

**Problems to be Solved**

**Which Plan are you using?**

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.

Indicate above which Plan you intend to use for each problem *for now*. Decide which problems you'd like to work on first using Proactive Plan B with the following questions as your guide:

- If you have a good relationship with the child: the problems causing the most frequent challenging behavior or the most severe behavior.
- If you don't have a good relationship with the child: the problems most conducive to resolution or which the child is most invested in solving.

Indicate whether in the meantime you will use Plan A or Plan C for each remaining problem above.

## Assessing Thinking Skills

**Instructions:** Now that you have identified the specific situations in which the child tends to have the most difficulty, it is time to identify why. Below is a list of thinking skills required to problem solve, be flexible and tolerate frustration. Many children with social, emotional and behavioral challenges will have deficits in these areas. The skills are organized according to five categories or “Pathways”. Use this list as your discussion guide to arrive at a consensus about which skill deficits are contributing to the child’s challenging behavior and conversely which skills represent areas of strength for the child that you may be able rely on when problem solving with the child. Your goal is to identify specific skill deficits and strengths within these categories and to provide specific examples.

<b>PATHWAY</b>					
<b>Executive Functioning Skills</b>	<i>Consistent Strength</i>	<i>Sometimes a Strength</i>	<i>Depends</i>	<i>Sometimes Difficult</i>	<i>Consistently Difficult</i>
Handling transitions, shifting from one mindset or task to another (shifting cognitive set) <i>Example:</i>					
Sticking with tasks requiring sustained attention (perseverance) <i>Example:</i>					
Doing things in a logical sequence or prescribed order (organization) <i>Example:</i>					
Sense of time (planning) <i>Example:</i>					
Reflecting on multiple thoughts or ideas simultaneously (working memory) <i>Example:</i>					

<b>Executive Functioning Skills (cont)</b>	<i>Consistent Strength</i>	<i>Sometimes a Strength</i>	<i>Depends</i>	<i>Sometimes Difficult</i>	<i>Consistently Difficult</i>
Maintaining focus for goal-directed activities (sustained attention / concentration) <i>Example:</i>					
Ignoring non-relevant stimuli (distractibility) <i>Example:</i>					
Thinking before responding, considering the likely outcomes or consequences of actions, forecasting (reflective not impulsive thinking) <i>Example:</i>					
Considering a range of solutions to a problem <i>Example:</i>					
<b>Language Processing Skills</b>	<i>Consistent Strength</i>	<i>Sometimes a Strength</i>	<i>Depends</i>	<i>Sometimes Difficult</i>	<i>Consistently Difficult</i>
Expressing concerns, needs, or thoughts in words <i>Example:</i>					
Identifying or articulating what's bothering you <i>Example:</i>					
Understanding what is being said <i>Example:</i>					
<b>Emotion Regulation Skills</b>	<i>Consistent Strength</i>	<i>Sometimes a Strength</i>	<i>Depends</i>	<i>Sometimes Difficult</i>	<i>Consistently Difficult</i>

Managing emotional response to frustration so as to think rationally (separation of affect) <i>Example:</i>					
<b>Emotion Regulation Skills (cont)</b>	<i>Consistent Strength</i>	<i>Sometimes a Strength</i>	<i>Depends</i>	<i>Sometimes Difficult</i>	<i>Consistently Difficult</i>
Managing irritability and/or anxiety on a chronic basis (outside the context of frustration) <i>Example:</i>					
<b>Cognitive Flexibility Skills</b>	<i>Consistent Strength</i>	<i>Sometimes a Strength</i>	<i>Depends</i>	<i>Sometimes Difficult</i>	<i>Consistently Difficult</i>
Seeing the “grays”, being comfortable with “iffy” thinking (vs. more concrete, literal, black-and-white thinking and need for precision) <i>Example:</i>					
Thinking hypothetically or inferentially/ using hypothesis-testing <i>Example:</i>					
Handling deviations from rules, routine, original plan <i>Example:</i>					
Handling unpredictability, ambiguity, uncertainty, novelty <i>Example:</i>					
Shifting from original idea or solution/adapting to changes in plan or new rules <i>Example:</i>					
Taking into account situational factors that would suggest the need to adjust a plan of action <i>Example:</i>					

<b>Cognitive Flexibility Skills (cont)</b>	<i>Consistent Strength</i>	<i>Sometimes a Strength</i>	<i>Depends</i>	<i>Sometimes Difficult</i>	<i>Consistently Difficult</i>
Interpreting information accurately / avoiding cognitive distortions or biases in thinking such as over-generalizing or personalizing (“Everyone’s out to get me,” “Nobody likes me,” “You always blame me,” “It’s not fair,” “I’m stupid,” “Things will never work out for me”) <i>Example:</i>					
<b>Social Skills</b>	<i>Consistent Strength</i>	<i>Sometimes a Strength</i>	<i>Depends</i>	<i>Sometimes Difficult</i>	<i>Consistently Difficult</i>
Attending to and/or accurately interpreting social cues and nuances <i>Example:</i>					
Starting conversations, entering groups, being reciprocal <i>Example:</i>					
Seeking attention in appropriate ways <i>Example:</i>					
Appreciating how one’s behavior affects other people (vs often surprised by others’ responses) <i>Example:</i>					
Empathizing with others, appreciating another person’s perspective or point of view <i>Example:</i>					
Appreciating how one is coming across or being perceived by others <i>Example:</i>					

