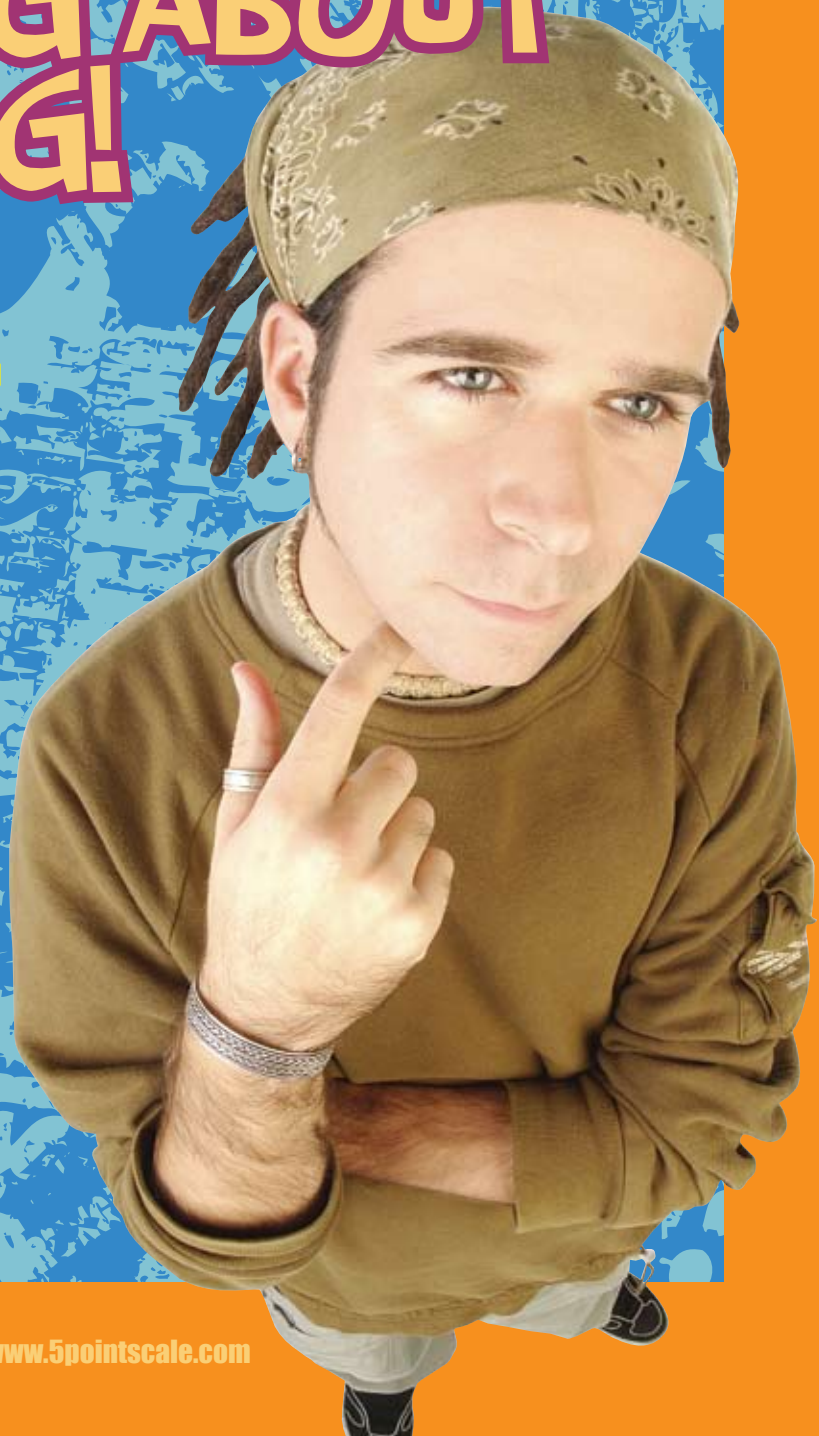
The Social Times

WHAT'S UP WITH THINKING ABOUT THINKING!

I Second That Emotion: Rating Fear

Ask Roger Gets-it: What Does Harassment Mean?



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Editors: Claire and Winston

WHAT'S UP WITH THINKING ABOUT THINKING?

When was the last time you had a "weird thought" about someone around you? I wouldn't be surprised if your answer is, "in the last hour."

Take notice of how often you look at people around you, including people you don't even plan to talk to, just because they are around you.

Our brains are supposed to be social thought magnets! In fact, most of us cannot turn off our thoughts about the people around us. These thoughts invade us all the time. For example, we notice who hangs out together, who doesn't like each other, who seems to always want to be by themselves, and other things like that. This is a good thing because it helps us understand other people.

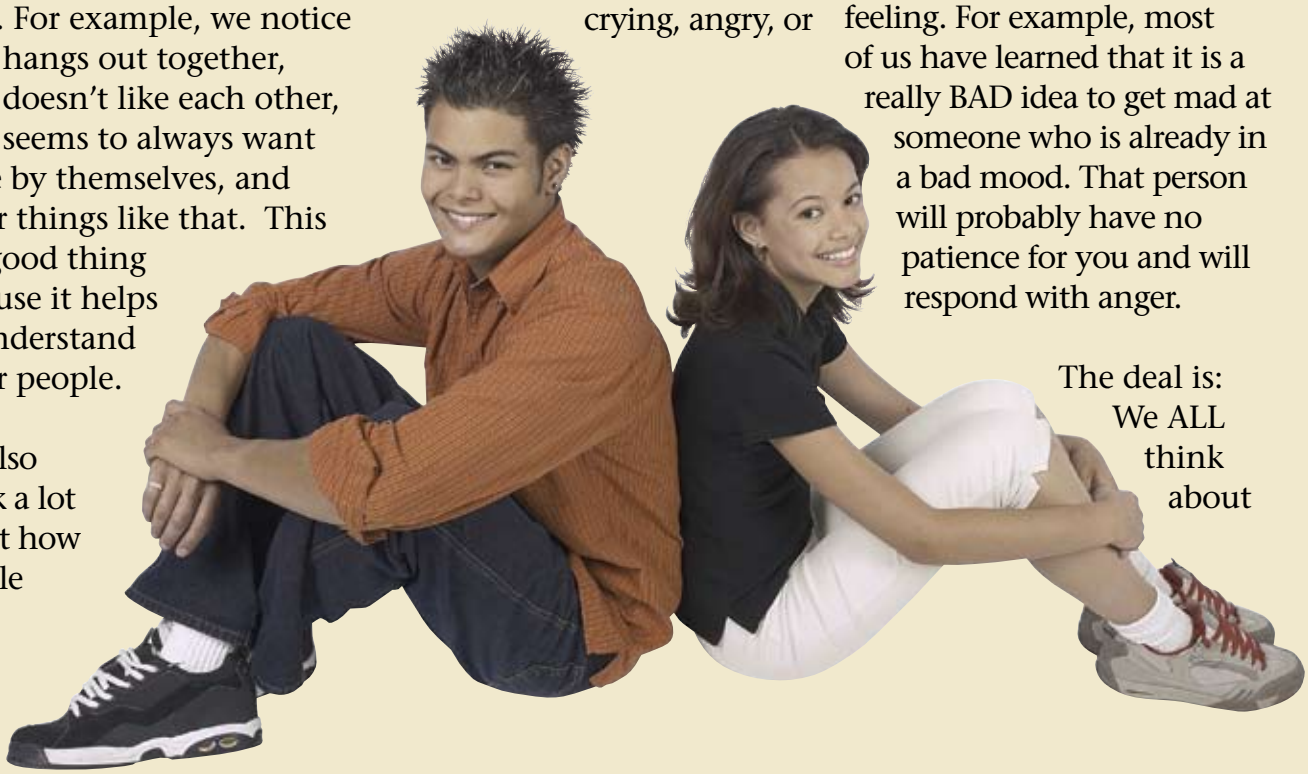
We also think a lot about how people ***feel***. We notice when our teachers and parents are in a good mood or in a bad mood. We notice when people are crying, angry, or super happy. We change our behavior based on what we think someone else is thinking about or how he is feeling. For example, most of us have learned that it is a really BAD idea to get mad at someone who is already in a bad mood. That person will probably have no patience for you and will respond with anger.

The deal is: We ALL think about

TRY IT!

Find a place to sit and relax in a public area such as a bench at a mall and bring a pad of paper and a pen with you. Now look around you. Do the people you see seem **safe** or **threatening**? How do you know?

List things that make you think they are safe. Then list things that make you think they look threatening. Are they interested in talking to you or are they just "keeping track" of you?



people every time we are around people. We not only think about them, we have ***feelings*** about them, too. For example, you might notice that a fellow student smiled at you as he passed in the hall. This might make you think that he is a friendly and nice person. His smile probably makes you feel good. That's where words like "polite," "respectful," and "cooperate" come in. You hear these kinds of words a lot, but why do people make such a big deal out of them?

These words refer to ways in which we are expected to think about how we make people feel to help them feel safe around us. Let's take a stab at defining these words. It is not as easy as you think, because these are more than words; they are "concepts."

Concepts talk about ideas rather than things. For example, "justice" is a concept. It is impossible to actually see or touch justice; instead it is a notion or thought formed in our brains.

Start to notice the thoughts you have about how people treat you. You are probably like most of people – you tend to like people who make you feel good about yourself. If someone treats you well, you consider that person friendly. If someone is consistently rude to you, then you have much more negative thoughts about that person. Each of our actions count when we are around others, so monitor your behavior and how it makes other people feel since other people are already watching you (and everyone else).

Concepts That Make Other People Feel Good About Us

1. **Being Polite:** This means you treat people in a way that does not make them irritated. We have formal ways in which we can be polite. For example, we can say "please" and "thank you." There are other ways to be polite without even talking to the other person. For example, walking around a person who has stopped to talk to a friend rather than keeping on going and bumping into her.

2. **Being Respectful:** This is an advanced form of being polite. When you are respectful, you not only try to avoid making others irritated and frustrated; you also try to show them that you appreciate their knowledge and ideas. For example, a kid is respectful when she lets the teacher explain a math concept to the class even if she already understands it, without announcing that she already knows how to do it. When we are respectful, we show that we appreciate that people share knowledge, for example, and we should let them share it even if we already know what they are talking about. Often when we are being respectful ***we don't talk; we listen!*** This is being respectful, because we are showing other people we want to hear what they know.

3. **Cooperating:** This is a special form of being polite and respectful; when you cooperate, you encourage people to share ideas in a group situation and you act as if you appreciate people's different ideas and whatever they do to help the group. Whether you actually appreciate their thoughts or actions doesn't matter; it is more about whether you make people ***feel*** you appreciate them. When you cooperate, you also contribute to whatever it is you and others are thinking about or working on, and you do it in a polite and respectful way. This means that sometimes you back off to let other people have a turn, even if you know how to do what they are doing. Cooperation is not easy, because you have to stop thinking about what you want to say and instead listen to the other people in your group.

USING THE FEAR SCALE:

Sometimes we don't feel comfortable around certain people or in certain situations. This doesn't necessarily mean that we are in danger. Maybe we are just uncomfortable or a little concerned. For example, maybe if a person is swearing you feel uncomfortable because you don't like swearing. But you probably wouldn't feel like you were in danger.

It is important to label our feelings accurately and recognize when (1) there really isn't a problem, (2) when there is a problem that is a little bit bad, and (3) when there is a problem that is really bad. If you know how big the problem is, it is easier to know what to do about it.

In the last issue of *The Social Times*, you learned about The 5-Point Scale and how we can use the scale to learn about social and emotional ***concepts.*** Here is a scale about *fear*. Fear is an emotion that we all feel from time to time. Sometimes we are just be a little wary of a situation; this is nature's way of telling us to be alert to what is going on around us. How are other people acting? Does the situation still feel safe or should you do something to make it safe? These questions are not always easy to answer, especially if every time we feel a little uneasy, we forget to rate the feeling and mistake it for being terrified! This can cause us to feel much worse than we need to, and may even keep us from doing some fun things that we might actually enjoy.

Look at the fear scale below. Think of a situation (like seeing a dog). Then break it into five parts so that it fits on the scale. Using the dog example, you can ask yourself: is the dog is tied up, is the dog barking fiercely and showing his teeth, is the dog with someone, is the dog running towards you? Answering these questions can help you break the episode into five parts. You can think about or talk about when the situation might be scary but not dangerous, and when the situation really is dangerous. When you see or hear something scary, you need to think really fast about whether or not it is dangerous. Creating scales about things you find scary can help you to make calmer and more accurate judgments about these situations when they actually happen.

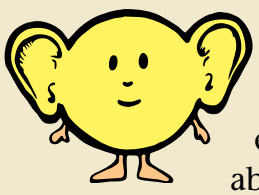
Fear Scale – Example

5	**Terrified**: In a crowd, this is when something happens that really lets you know there is danger. It might be a very scary person or a situation that looks very dangerous like a fire. Walk away and find a trusted adult as calmly and quickly and possible. Your body usually reacts to this feeling. Your heart might race or you might feel really sick to your stomach.
4	**Fearful**. This is like when you are waiting for the bus and see two other students starting to fight. You may not get hurt, but the situation could be dangerous if the fight gets out of hand. This is a good time to find an adult to help you decide what to do. This might also be how you feel if you are asked to do something that might be dangerous, like walk home from school after you miss the bus.
3	**Concerned**. In a crowd, this might be when someone says something to you that sounds like teasing or mocking. It might not be dangerous, but it is worth thinking about seriously. You may want to leave the situation. You might also feel this way when you have to do work that you have never done before.
2	**Wary**. In a crowd, this might be an assembly in the auditorium where you don't really know what is happening and there is an annoying echo in the room. Or maybe when you get a new assignment.
1	**Comfortable**. In a crowd, this might be at the lunch table where you always sit with people you know, or it might be doing something you are really good at.

WHEN SOUNDS HURT

Do sounds sometimes bother you? If so, you are not alone. Various sounds bother a lot of people, but it becomes a problem when they bother you A LOT! For example, it is hard to pay attention at school or anywhere else if the noise keeps bothering you.

Some people are bothered by the sound of an echo, like noise in a gym or some other large room. Others are bothered by people talking in the "background" when they are trying to concentrate on the teacher's instructions. Some people even get nervous just worrying about what unwanted noises ***might*** happen.



Wearing earplugs might sound too easy, but it really works for some people. There are all kinds of earplugs, so you don't have to look like an airport worker if you wear them. You can wear really small ones that are hard for other people to see.

What are some sounds that bother you? Have you ever tried to wear earplugs to help reduce the sound? Or have you tried anything else that helps?

Face to Face

Study these faces very carefully. Each face is expressing an emotion. Three of the faces are expressing the same emotion. Can you find the face that's different? Can you name the emotions? How did you figure out which faces were the same?

A Holstein cow's spots are like a fingerprint or snowflakes. No two cows have exactly the same pattern of spots.

Gets-It Knows!

Dear Roger,

I have a problem. I am in the sixth grade and I have a crush on a girl in my class. She is really cute and nice. After thinking about it, I decided to ask her to be my girlfriend. When I asked her, she said, "Not today." I figured that meant maybe she would be my girlfriend tomorrow, so I asked her again the next day. This time she said, "I can't talk to you right now." At least she didn't say no, so I asked her again the next day. She acted kind of surprised or something and walked away. She didn't say anything at all.

The following day I asked her again, and this time she told the teacher that I was harassing her! My teacher told me to leave the girl alone or I would get into trouble. What does "harassing" mean?

Rejected in Denver

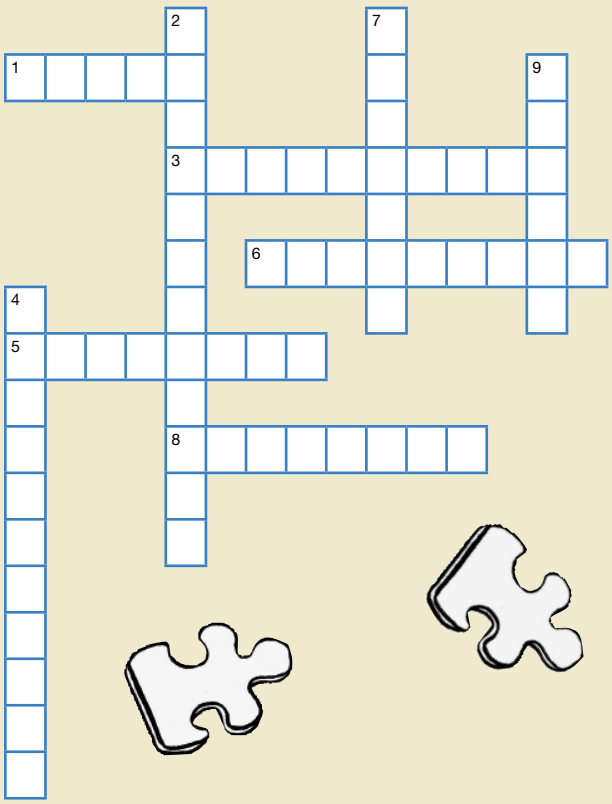
Dear Rejected,

"Harassing" can be a confusing word. In this case, it means that from the girl's perspective you were bugging her. Even though she didn't say "no," she did not want to be your girlfriend. Sometimes a girl might be afraid of hurting your feelings, so she "puts you off" by saying things like "not today," instead of "no."

When in doubt, a good rule to remember is the Three Strikes and You're Out rule. When you ask a girl on a date or to be your girlfriend, if she puts you off at least three times with her words or some other behavior, like walking away without answering, it means that she probably does not want to be your girlfriend or go on a date. It is safe to assume that three "put-offs" means no.

– Roger Gets-It

Puzzle Time



ACROSS

1) the look that means happy
3) a way of treating or talking to someone that makes her feel special
5) how someone might feel if he is irritated
6) working with another person while respecting his ideas
8) how someone might feel when he is happy

DOWN

2) something you might have about someone who looks strange to you
4) watching someone or something
7) an idea rather than just a thing
9) a way of being that usually makes another person feel good about us

A chameleon can move its eyes in two directions at the same time.

Puzzle Time

B M X G W V E R E I A U U J P Y A O C N O E Q U C X I X E N
F Z E A H I H V N N F P J Y M Z S J L E B B D Z D C F A H W
U C Y S M J L V J Q R Q C X H G X N K E A O K T U P R I I N
F M T P Z N M K V Z I B O H G M Y H J A P C X R Z M U B N K
H X N S U D D S M E E R B X P S C J W O E J B S T P V H N T
G A O X E I R M J Z N A S S K P S T H G U O H T D R I E W W
H Z K F L X X I X T D I Q D D W S T J U L B B Q H S P P P W
O Z O S J Z X Y C B L N L O O X D Y I P Q O G N Q F U N K A
Y H I O F K Y Q E A Y Q Q O I N P B I M V T B O X M C E A J
D P P X A Q J N O T P W V M M P E C D V D H M I U L C P J X
V A R P X F D M B N E W V G V O N R B B E M Z T O Y O V Y R
E W J E C G H V S H T S E X W G I S K I R Q T A Q W Y X I G
G R J F S L O Y E R I K S I W G R R X F X X W R O U G T S F
Z F F D N P B M R J L G U C E W Z V E R J V P E E B T M F W
A L Z U U W E O V X O I F V A D L Z C J J P S P I B S V H J
Q W L C Z E Z C E T P G M K B O X N S H B X C O Y Y B G T C
Z R A P V P B Y T C W Z F F R J A V D I P H Q O P V L B J Z
U X Y E Y R Z O I F E E R W P J T Z Z P T S Y C N U K Q G R
N G W R J U Z I G W U E K J X T O W W H E R O N K R R J V E
S W T K O T O K Q A K L V F Z M H O I H O T L V Z N Y L C Z

Word Bank: BRAIN, COOPERATION, FRIENDLY, MOODS, OBSERVE, POLITE, RESPECTFUL, WEIRDTHOUGHT

TRY IT!

Be aware of the next time you smile. Stop. Ask yourself, what thoughts are in my head right now. Were they happy thoughts? Funny thoughts? Did your thoughts match your smile?

WEATHER FACTOID

Fastest tornado winds:
286 miles per hour
(Wichita Falls, Texas;
April 2, 1958)

The canine nose works one million times more efficiently than the human nose.

Something to Talk About

by Winston

When I was in the third grade, I was playing with two other boys on the playground at school. I really wanted to be friends with them, and I thought they wanted to be my friends, too.

There was some construction going on next to the school, and there was a rule on the playground that nobody could play near the construction site. I am pretty good at following rules, so I never ever went close. Recess was going pretty well that day, and I felt pretty good about myself and my new friends. Suddenly they gave me a dare. They said, "We dare you to climb up on the construction tractor."

Lou Wisniewski

"I'll take out the trash when I get home, Mom, JEEZ.. Huh?.. I'm at the movies, Dad dropped me off.. I said, DAD DROPPED ME OFF."

I knew about lots of kids who gave each other dares. It seemed to me that the boys who gave and did dares were friends. They usually laughed when someone did the dare. I had never seen anyone get hurt or even get in trouble when they did dares.

I really wanted to be a good friend, so I ran over to the construction site and climbed up on a big yellow tractor. I stood up on the seat and waved my arms. I even yelled out, "I'm on top of the world!" I looked over to be sure my friends saw me. They were laughing just like I thought they would. It was a wonderful moment! Just then the tractor moved, and I fell off and into a deep ditch! My arm hurt really bad, and I knew immediately that I was in trouble.

I looked up expecting that my friends had come to help me. Instead, the first face I saw was the principal's. He was really worried about my arm, which I later found out was broken in two places. I never did see my "friends"; they ran away instead of helping me.

After my arm had been set in the emergency room and everyone knew I was going to be O.K., I got in trouble for breaking the rules.

I learned a lesson that day about the difference between a friendly dare and a stupid act. **A true friend wouldn't dare you to do something dangerous**! Climbing up on the tractor was like a stupid act, and the boys who dared me to do it never did become my friends. Now whenever I hear a dare, I think for a minute about whether it is a friendly idea or a dangerous one.

Created by Kari Dunn Buron. Her writings include *The Incredible 5-Point Scale, Adalyn's Clare, A "5" Could Make Me Lose Control!, A 5 Is Against the Law!* and *When My Worries Get Too Big*. Images ©jupiterimages

www.5pointscale.com