



# Stop Think Do

A multi purpose tool for  
improving children's social and learning  
skills in clinics and schools

**During Term 3, all teachers will be implementing the Stop Think Do program as part of the Schoolwide Positive Behaviour for Management at Mackay West State School.**

**Below is an extract from [www.stophinkdo.com](http://www.stophinkdo.com) explaining the program.**

## Core skills and process of Stop Think Do

### 1. Critical elements in social skills training

This multi-factor, broad-based approach is reflected in my definition of social skills 'Social skills refer to the ability to perceive social cues, control emotional reactions, organize cognitions and produce behaviours with the motivation to achieve socially acceptable outcomes.'

Thus, the critical elements in training social skills must include

- perceptual skills (ability to read visual, auditory, spatial cues)
- self-awareness and self-control (understanding the link between feelings and behaviour)
- cognitive skills (how to think consequentially to solve problems)
- behavioural skills (what to do verbally and non-verbally)
- pro-social motivation (to want to apply social skills in the longer term in the real world)
- support of significant others-parents, teachers, peers (for maintenance and skill transfer)

### 2. Problem solving core of the program

The core of the program is the STOP THINK DO social problem solving method. Children learn this method for resolving child/child conflicts, with adults adopting the role of a 'third person' facilitator of the process in ongoing peer conflicts. Adults also use STOP THINK DO themselves to manage children's behaviour in adult/child conflicts, in this case directly sharing the responsibility for problem solving with the child. The steps are largely the same for adult and child, following the traffic light symbol.

This method develops self-control, perceptual and communication skills primarily at STOP, cognitive problem solving skills at THINK and behavioural skills at DO. Children with social-behavioural problems are usually stuck at one of these steps. Dependent, immature children are stuck at STOP; they tend not to think or do much for themselves but constantly rely on others. Shy, anxious children are stuck at THINK; they often think too much about what could happen and find it very difficult to choose what to do. Impulsive, aggressive children are stuck at DO; they do and do and rarely stop to think. The program aims to train all children to move comfortably through all steps with positive feedback and support from adults and peers.

In fact, self-discipline, self-control, self-esteem, self-confidence as well as maturity, respect, independence, responsibility – all the ethereal qualities we hope our children develop – are outcomes of practicing to stop, think and do over and over again. Children become aware of how to clarify problems and feelings ('I understand' at STOP), how to find answers ('I can think' at THINK), how to make decisions and act ('I choose to do' at DO) and to want to be social when others say 'You are doing okay'.

### 3. Research

The STOP THINK DO social skills/behaviour management program has support from formal research studies and considerable anecdotal data over the past decades. The program has been shown to be useful for

- Developing a broad range of social skills in children and adolescents including verbalizing feelings, positive assertiveness, controlling attention seeking and demanding behaviour, personal awareness, coping with shyness, coping with stress and teasing in non-aggressive ways, making and keeping friends, thinking before acting, controlling anger, problem ownership, listening skills, resolving conflicts with peers, enhancing group skills.
- Sociometric data also suggests greater peer acceptability and social status.
- Teachers can run the program with their whole class to produce gains equal to those obtained when children are withdrawn for more intensive small group input with parent training.
- Gains show further significant improvement over time. Other research shows maximum gains are achieved with cognitive-behavioural programs after 1 year when the process becomes assimilated as a modus operandi.
- Gains generalize across settings. Parents not directly involved in training reported significant improvements in socially appropriate behaviour at home and improved sibling relationships.
- The traffic light is powerful as a cue around school grounds, in classrooms and homes. This also helps those with reading difficulties or from different cultural backgrounds to visualize the problem solving process. Children may have their own set of lights.

#### 4. **KidsMatter initiative**

Since its inception by the Federal Government, STOP THINK DO has been a recommended resource for use in preschools and primary schools to promote the emotional-behavioural-social well-being of children in Australian schools.

# The Focus of Stop Think Do Programs

## 1. Training emotional intelligence and social skills in children and adolescents

STOP THINK DO is an Australian cognitive-behavioural social skills training program originally devised over 4 decades ago in the Adelaide Women and Children's Hospital as a treatment program for children and adolescents with social/behavioural difficulties.

The program may be run in clinics or schools, with individuals or groups. The approach is both didactic and experiential, teaching children specific social skills and a process of relating to others so they can make and keep friends.

In liaison with educationalists, STOP THINK DO has also been adapted for teaching directly in the classroom as a social skills curriculum with a preventive focus, aiming to improve the friendship skills of all children from a young age to prevent emotional-social-behavioural friendship problems from developing.

## 2. Training behaviour management skills in teachers and parents

STOP THINK DO is a complementary behaviour management method for teachers and parents. They solve problems and relate with children in their care using the same skills and process that children learn for making friends with their peers.

## 3. Devising individual plans for learning and behaviour change

The STOP THINK DO method has been adapted to improve children's motivation for academic as well as social learning, including for children with special needs. The primary aims are to develop a supportive learning environment in the classroom, and to teach individuals skills to improve problem areas which are preventing them from reaching their full learning potential.

**STOP THINK DO** is suitable for children of all ages and all personalities, including shy, anxious, unconfident, unassertive or immature children, and hyperactive, impulsive, aggressive, bossy child and all those in between.

The program has age appropriate lessons and teachers will be implementing the 7 Units and 20 Lessons throughout term 3.

### **STOP UNITS:**

Unit 1: Getting to know people

Unit 2: Look and Listen for feelings

Unit 3: Communicating feelings

Units 1, 2 and 3 focus on STOP, the hardest step of all, signalled by the red light. The main skills taught at STOP are self-control and perceptual skills. Children are taught to hold back so they don't

react emotionally and use bad habits and to use their eyes and ears to work out the problem and the feelings people have.

**THINK UNITS:**

Unit 4: Solving social problems

Unit 5: The cool and friendly way

Units 4 & 5 focus on THINK, signalled by the yellow lights. The main skills taught at THINK are cognitive problem solving and consequential thinking, so students use their brains to think about possible options to try with others and evaluate possible consequences of these options.

**Do UNITS:**

Unit 6: Doing it!

Unit 7: Dealing with unfriendly behaviour.

Units 6 and 7 focus on DO, signalled by the green light. The main skills at this step are decision/choice-making and behavioural skills. Students learn to choose the option with the best consequences and to act on it, fine-tuning the body to send the right signals.

Students are encouraged to talk to their parents about what they are learning and parents are encouraged to reinforce these new skills and attitudes in the home. Children are more motivated to learn and apply new skills if they feel that these are valued by their parents.

Teachers will use social stories and role-playing to help students focus on the following skills:

- Paying attention and remembering details
- Looking and listening carefully
- Being aware of individual differences in people's attitudes and behavioural styles
- Having self-awareness about how other see them
- Identifying and communicating feelings
- Identifying causes for feelings and their behaviour
- Perspective taking and empathising with others
- Identifying problems and ways to solve them
- Assuming various roles, including ones they may not take in real life
- Practicing and fine-tuning skills
- Providing helpful feedback to others
- Cooperation in groups.