

Why the Shift to *Thinksheets*?

For decades, the education community has used the term “worksheets” to describe supplemental teaching materials designed to help students practice a specific concept or lesson. Here at Social Thinking we used that term often, but it had a slightly different meaning. For us, worksheets provided our students time to process and respond more thoughtfully to social learning concepts throughout the entire Social Thinking curriculum. Our worksheets support Social Thinking’s teaching paradigm that our students need to think socially before they can problem solve how to adapt their social behaviors (social skills). The use of worksheets also gives quieter students an opportunity to get their voice heard. It’s a clearly defined time to share their thoughts and feelings about different concepts with others in the group. Finally, worksheets are designed to be “mini-lesson plans” for parents and professionals about the concepts being shared, in that they explore a way to teach Social Thinking ideas explained in many of our other books. Through experience, we have found that the use of worksheets with our students is an effective teaching tool for priming social concepts and helping students connect these ideas to their own experiences.

Over the years, many participants in our social learning community requested we publish books filled with some of the many hundreds of worksheets we have created over time. So we did!

Just as teachers refer to information shared and explored in this manner as “worksheets,” we didn’t think much about the term until one day in the not-so-distant past we had an “a-ha!” moment and realized that not everyone thought about worksheets in the same way. We’ve always known that when it comes to teaching students about Social Thinking, the specific scenarios we were writing were really more about prompting them to “think” than “do.” Yet, maybe not everyone else appreciated that as clearly as we did, and just maybe we needed a different term to describe this to our community so everyone grasped what they were about at their most basic level (especially for our more literal-minded students with social challenges for whom “worksheets” means “work”).

That’s how ***Thinksheets*** came about, and we’re now actively using that term as part of the Social Thinking teaching framework. It echoes that we are first teaching students the thinking part of our social interactions to help them better understand the related social skills they are expected to produce. In Social Thinking, we work on both the thinking and the related behaviors our students need to practice. Also, we want people to appreciate that unlike traditional educational worksheets, the lessons inside this book were never designed to be copied and distributed to students to work on in isolation, unassociated with teacher-encouraged discussions about these concepts. They were developed as a strategy or lesson guide for you, the professional or parent, to steer your exploration of many different social concepts with your students.

To help us all adopt a different mindset on what we’re trying to teach our students, and what we hope they will learn from it, we decided to change the title of this book from *Worksheets* to *Thinksheets*. ***Only the title has changed; the individual lessons inside the cover are the same as in the original Worksheets book.*** It’s the same great material, framed in the way the lessons were intended to be.