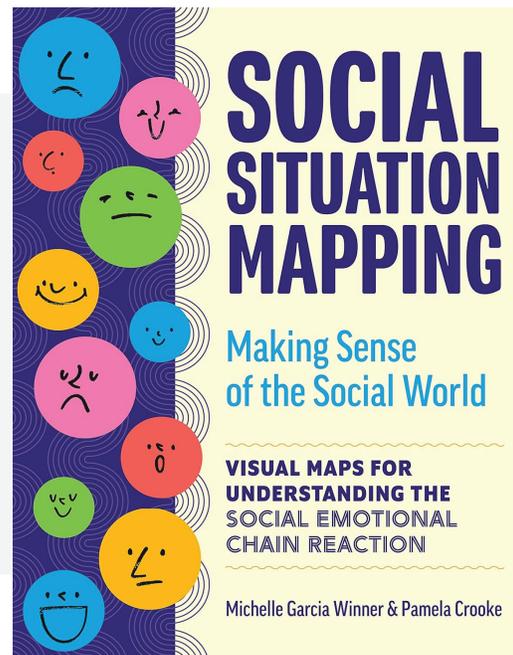


CURRICULUM  
SPOTLIGHT:

## SOCIAL SITUATION MAPPING (SSM)



### Who This Is For:

This curriculum is best for individuals ages 9 and older. The book also explains how parts of the process can be adapted for children younger than 9.

### Overview

Social Situation Mapping helps students understand how social situations work, not just how to behave.

The main idea is simple:

- What we do in a situation affects how others think and feel
- Those thoughts and feelings affect how others respond to us
- How others respond affects how we think, feel, and respond next

This back-and-forth process happens quickly and continuously in everyday life. Because people shift roles from Doer to Responder, social interactions are dynamic, not one-directional.

SSMs use visual maps to show this process clearly, with very little writing required.

## Key Concepts Taught

### 1. The Social Emotional Chain Reaction (SECR)

The SECR explains what happens in any social interaction. It includes four parts:

#### Context

Context refers to where we are, what is happening in the situation, and who is present, such as a teacher, peer, friend, or stranger.

#### The Doer

The Doer is the person who is doing something within that specific situation.

#### Others' Thoughts and Feelings

This step focuses on how people interpret what the Doer did and what they might think or feel about that behavior.

#### Reactions and Responses

Reactions and responses describe how others respond to the Doer and how that response then affects the Doer's next thoughts, feelings, and actions. When behavior matches the expectations of the context, responses are usually neutral or positive. When behavior does not match the expectations of the context, responses are often confused, frustrated, or negative.



## 2. What a Social Situation Map Does

A Social Situation Map is a visual graphic organizer. Students write single words or short phrases in each column to show what is happening in the SECR.

Maps are created separately for expected behavior and unexpected behavior. This helps students clearly see how different choices lead to different outcomes.

## 3. Focus on Understanding, Not “Fixing” Behavior

SSMs are not about making students behave or comply. Instead, they help students notice social information, understand hidden expectations, and learn how social interactions actually work. The goal is to build social competence, not just teach individual social skills.

## 4. The Social Learning Process

Students learn to move through four steps:

- Social Attention- what is happening around me?
- Social Interpretation- what might others be thinking or feeling?
- Social Problem Solving- what are my options in this situation?
- Social Response- how do I choose to respond based on my social goals?

## 5. Why We Start With Observation

SSMs are first taught with students in the role of observers, rather than as the Doer. This is important because students are not being corrected, there is no pressure to “behave correctly,” and they can focus on understanding social expectations. In this way, students act like social detectives, learning how people’s actions affect others without feeling singled out.

# SOCIAL SITUATION MAPPING (SSM)

# spotlight

# Sample Goals to Target using Social Situation Mapping:

- Using SSM, client will identify the context (where, what is happening, and who is involved) in a given situation
- Using SSM, client will identify expected and unexpected behaviors in a given situation
- Using SSM, client will identify appropriate social alternatives to unexpected behavior
- Using SSM, client will identify how others may think or feel about expected and unexpected behavior
- Using SSM, client will identify how others may respond based on those thoughts and feelings
- Using SSM, client will identify how the Doer may think or feel following others' responses.
- Using SSM, client will explain how behavior, thoughts, feelings, and reactions are connected
- Using SSM, client will complete a social situation map showing the expected or unexpected chain reaction

