

**ARTICLE REFERENCE:** Chilton, H. (2017). Tricks, lies and mistakes: identifying Theory of Mind concepts within storybooks shared with deaf children. *Deafness & Education International*, 1-9.

**KEYWORDS:** Theory of Mind, Shared Book Reading, Cognitive Development, Social Emotional Development

**WHAT WAS STUDIED, HOW WAS IT STUDIED AND RESULTS:** The goal of this study was to help parents identify ways of promoting their child’s Theory of Mind. Theory of Mind (ToM) refers to a child’s developing understanding of the fact that other people have thoughts, feelings, & beliefs that may be different from their own, that those mental states guide other people’s behavior, and that people sometimes do or say things that seem to be at odds with their mental state (e.g. lying, sarcasm, humor, etc.). Unfortunately, ToM skills are commonly delayed in DHH children, especially if language skills are also delayed. The good news is that ToM skills can be increased by talking about mental and emotional states. Shared book-reading therefore presents an opportunity to not only practice literacy skills, but also to promote cognitive & social-emotional development by drawing the child’s attention to the mental states of the characters in the story.

The researcher analyzed a handful of common children’s books to identify times when characters display first-order, second-order, and higher-order ToM skills. First-order ToM skills include realizing that characters do not always know each other’s mental states, even though you (the readers) might know. For example, Little Red Riding Hood doesn’t know that her “grandmother” is really the wolf in disguise. Second-order ToM skills include realizing that characters can have thoughts about other characters’ thoughts: for example, the Big Bad Wolf knows that Little Red Riding Hood thinks that he is her grandmother. Higher-order ToM skills include becoming sensitive to how characters manipulate each other’s mental states. For example, realizing that the Big Bad Wolf was asking where Little Red Riding Hood was going because he wanted to get there first.

**HOW THIS INFORMATION MAY BE USEFUL TO YOU AND YOUR CHILD:** As you continue reading your favorite books, or begin to read new ones, look for opportunities to highlight instances where characters display first-order, second-order, and higher-order ToM skills. By discussing these mental states with your child, you can help them develop their own Theory of Mind.

**WHO WAS STUDIED:** Common children’s books were analyzed

**WHAT STILL REMAINS TO BE ANSWERED:** We don’t yet know how much of an impact this will have on your child’s ToM development.

**WHERE CAN I FIND MORE INFORMATION:**

<http://leader.pubs.asha.org/article.aspx?articleid=2292440>