

Think About Fran and Sam:

Which one is better at thinking?



By Dr. Linda Elder

There are two kinds of skilled thinkers



Selfish
Sam



He's good
at thinking.
But he's
not fair
to others.



Fairminded
Fran



She's good
at thinking.
And she's
fair to
others.

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By Dr. Linda Elder

Illustrated by Sara Barnett

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PO Box 196

Tomales, CA 94971

www.criticalthinking.org

1-800-833-3645

Fairminded Fran



"I think a lot. It helps me to learn. It helps me to figure things out. I want to understand my parents and my playmates. In fact, I even want to understand myself and why I do things. Sometimes I do things that I don't understand. It's not easy trying to understand everyone and everything. Lots of people say one thing and do another. You can't always believe what people say. You can't believe a lot of what you see on TV. People often say things not because they mean them but because they want things and are trying to please you. I would like to make the world a better place. I want to

make it better for everyone, not just for me and my friends. To understand other people you have to look at things as they do. You have to understand their situation and what you would feel like if you were them. You have to put yourself in their shoes. The other night I got mad at my sister because she wanted to watch a TV program that was on at the same time my favorite show was on. I didn't want to let her until I realized that she needed to watch her program to do some homework for school. I knew then that it wouldn't be fair of me to insist on my show, since she did have to do her homework for school. It isn't easy to be fair. It's a lot easier to be selfish and just think about yourself. But if I don't think about others, why should they think about me? I want to be fair to others because I expect everyone to be fair to me."



Fairminded Fran was liked
by everyone.



People liked Fran because she always tried to be fair.

No matter what she was doing, or who she was with, she tried to be fair.

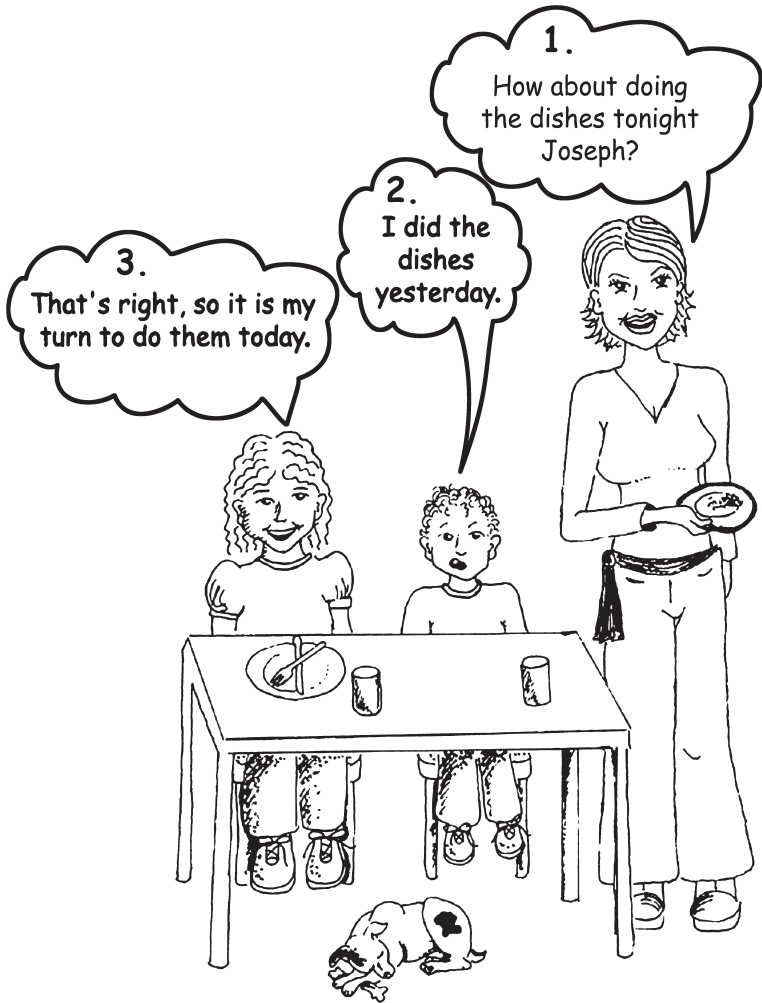


Whenever she divided a cupcake to share with a friend, Fran tried to be fair.

Whenever she was watching TV and others wanted to watch something different, she tried to be fair.

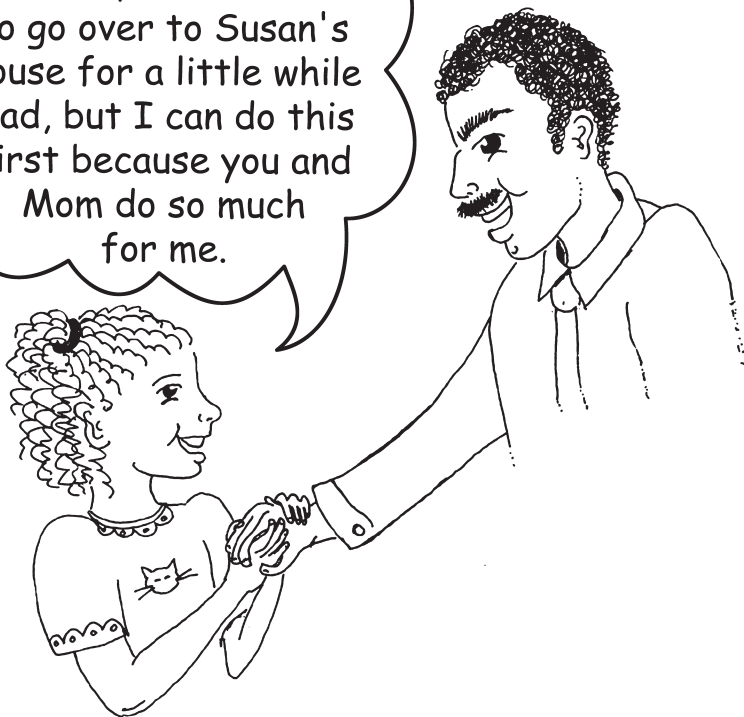


Whenever her parents asked her to do her share of work to help out around the house, Fran tried to be fair.



How about helping us get ready for our dinner guests by straightening up the living room Fran?

Well, I wanted to go over to Susan's house for a little while Dad, but I can do this first because you and Mom do so much for me.



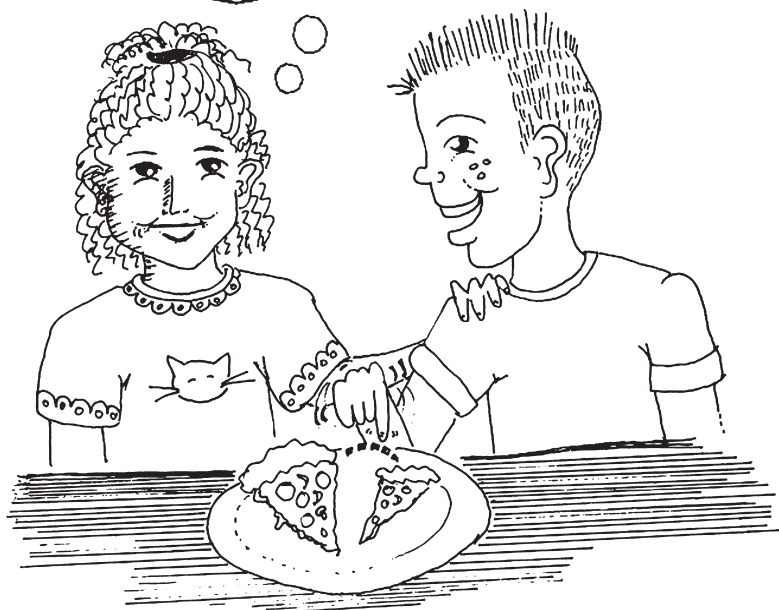
Fran tried to be fair to the family, even when she wanted to do something else instead.

Whenever her teacher asked Fran to help another student learn something in class, Fran tried to be fair.



Of course, Fran wasn't perfect. No one is. But Fran worked hard to do what she thought was fair. She wanted to be fair to herself and to others.

I would really like to take the biggest piece for myself. But would that be fair?





Because she tried to be fair, and she was fair most of the time, most people liked Fran. But there was one person who didn't like her. That was Selfish Sam.

Now Selfish Sam was just the opposite of Fairminded Fran. He didn't try to be fair. He thought that he should get whatever he wanted. He was often unfair to others. Sometimes he hurt their feelings because he was selfish.

And Selfish Sam would trick people to get what he wanted.





Most of the time, Sam was just out to get what he could for himself.

Sam, what is Christmas all about?

Getting as many presents as you can.

What about giving? Is Christmas about giving?



Well I guess you do have to give a few presents in order to get more presents yourself.

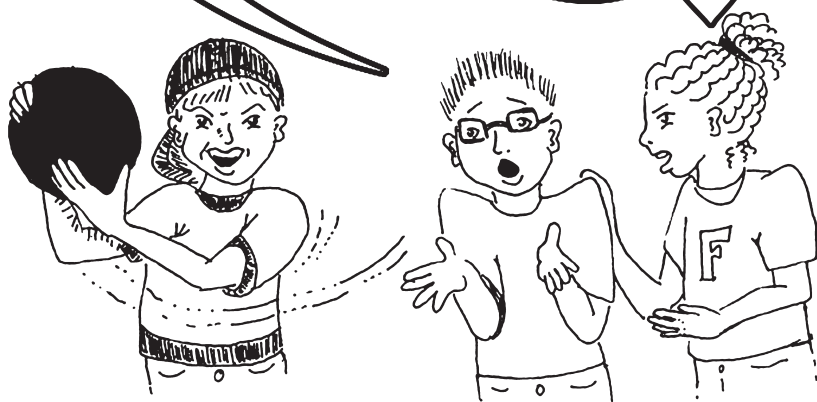
I need to figure out
how to teach Sam not
to be so selfish.



And Sam didn't like Fairminded Fran very much because Fran was always getting in his way.

Hey Sam!
Why are you
stealing my ball?

Sam, are you being fair right now?
Would you want someone to snatch
a ball away from you without
asking?



Fairminded Fran even tried to help Selfish Sam change, to become more fair. But no matter how she tried to help Sam see that it wasn't right to be selfish, Sam thought she was silly.

Sam, do you really want to be a selfish person? Don't you care about other people's feelings?



No Fran, you don't get it. The only way to get by in life is to go after what you want. If you have to hurt a few people to get what you want, it's just too bad.





Since Fairminded Fran first met Selfish Sam, she has met many more people who are selfish.

She even sees selfishness in herself at times.

But when she notices herself being selfish, she tries to use her mind to stop herself.

She wants to be fair.

What about you?

Are you sometimes selfish?

Are you sometimes fair?

Do you know people who
are often selfish?

Do you know people who
are usually fair?

Which do you want to be,
fair or selfish?

Selfish Sam

"I think a lot! It helps me trick people and get what I want. I believe whatever I want to believe, whatever gets me what I want. I question anyone who asks me to do what I don't want to do. I figure out how to get around my parents. I figure out how to get other kids to do what I want them to do. I even figure out how to avoid thinking if I want. Sometimes I say 'I can't!'



when I know I could but don't want to. You can get what you want from people if you know how to manipulate them. Just the other night, I got to stay up till 11:00 by arguing with my mother about bedtime! It helps to tell people what they want to hear. Of course, sometimes what they want to hear isn't true, but that doesn't matter because you only get into trouble when you tell people what they don't want to hear. You can always trick people if you know how. Guess what, you can even trick yourself if you know how."

At any time you are trying to get what you want, ask yourself, "Am I being more like Fairminded Fran right now or more like Selfish Sam?"

Here are some things you can do to think about what it means to be fair:

Draw a picture of yourself being fair to someone else.

How do you think others feel when you are fair to them?

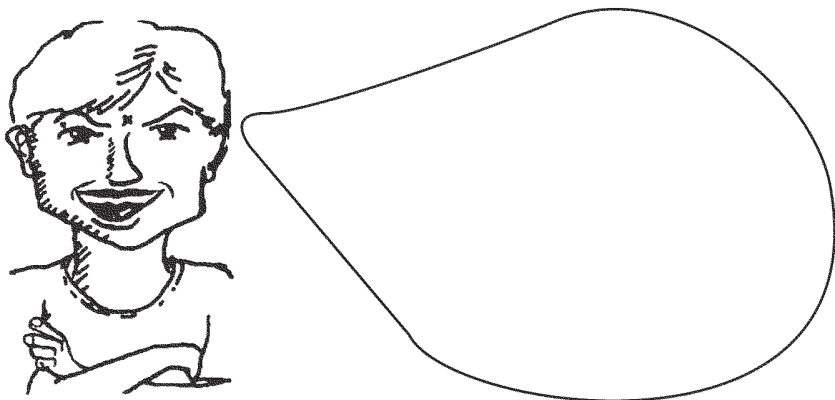
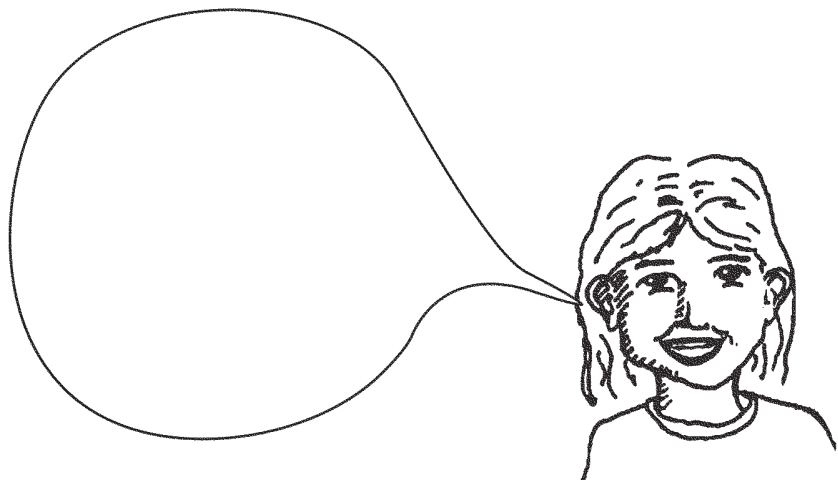
Draw a picture of yourself being unfair to someone else.

How do you think others feel when you are unfair to them?

Whenever you are unfair to someone, figure out why you were unfair and how you can be more fair next time. Complete these statements:

- The situation that happened was...
- I was unfair because I...
- Instead of being unfair, I should have done the following...
- What I can learn from thinking about this situation is...

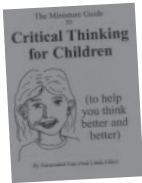
Whenever you disagree with someone, figure out what Fairminded Fran and Selfish Sam would do in the situation. Write in what Fran and Sam would think or say:



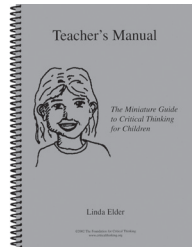
Note to the Teacher:

The templates on pages 21–24 may be enlarged and duplicated for classroom use. These pages help children internalize the concepts of fair and unfair thinking. The more students think about these concepts and apply the concepts to situations they face on a daily basis, the more they will develop as fairminded thinkers.

Additional Class Resources:



Designed for K-6 classroom use. Explains basic critical thinking principles to young children using cartoon characters. Item # 540M
24 pages
size: 4 1/4" w x 5 1/2" h

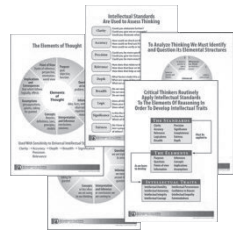


This manual provides the conceptual foundations for using the Miniature Guide to Critical Thinking for Children. It also includes instructional strategies and student worksheets that can be used in conjunction with the mini-guide. Item #541m



Using these laminated hand-held masks, students will enjoy role-playing Naive Nancy, Selfish Sam and Fairminded Fran. These masks enable teachers to focus on the importance of intellectual empathy and fairmindedness in ways meaningful to children. Item #542p

Our set of five classroom posters keep critical thinking at the forefront of teacher and student thinking. Visit our website to view poster details. Item #558s



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(To order guides or to inquire about other resources)

Phone 707-878-9100
Toll Free 1-800-833-3645
Fax 707-878-9111
E-mail cct@criticalthinking.org
Web site www.criticalthinking.org
Mail Foundation for Critical Thinking
P.O. Box 196
Tomales, CA 94971

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About the Author



Dr. Linda Elder is an educational psychologist who has taught both psychology and critical thinking at the college level. She is the President of the Foundation for Critical Thinking and the Executive Director of the Center for Critical Thinking. Dr. Elder has a special interest in the relation of thought to emotion, and in the cognitive and affective. She has developed an original theory of the stages of critical thinking development. Dr. Elder has coauthored four books on critical thinking, as well as 24 Thinker's Guides. She has presented workshops to more than 50,000 educators.

The Foundation for Critical Thinking seeks to promote essential change in education and society through the cultivation of fairminded critical thinking, thinking committed to intellectual empathy, intellectual humility, intellectual perseverance, intellectual integrity, and intellectual responsibility. A rich intellectual environment is possible only with critical thinking at the foundation of education. Why? Because only when students learn to think through the content they are learning in a deep and substantive way can they apply what they are learning in their lives. Moreover, in a world of accelerating change, intensifying complexity, and increasing interdependence, critical thinking is now a requirement for economic and social survival.



Contact us online at criticalthinking.org to learn about our publications, videos, workshops, conferences, online learning programs, and professional development programs.