In Class Lessons: Lesson Plans: Unit 1

Unit 01 Lesson 01
How Our Minds Work

Unit Description:

This foundational unit introduces students to the mind as an interconnected system with three essential parts: Thinking (the "Idea Factory" for planning, problem-solving, and imagining), Feeling (the "Messenger" providing information through emotions and body sensations), and Doing (the "Action Player" making our inner world visible through observable actions). Students learn that everyone has a mind with these same three parts, and critically, that these parts influence each other in multiple directions through reciprocal loops, not just in one-way linear chains.

Through concrete daily-life examples, sorting activities, and observation exercises, children identify and label these three parts in themselves and others. They practice distinguishing between private mental experiences (thinking and feeling happen inside, invisible to others) and observable actions (doing is what others see). The curriculum builds progressively toward understanding reciprocal influence: early lessons explore each part individually, while Lesson 4 reveals how they work together as a dynamic feedback system where any part can influence any other part in both directions.

Students discover their "loop power"—while they cannot directly control thoughts or feelings appearing, they can use their Action Player strategically to influence the reciprocal loops and change how they think and feel. Role-play and cause-and-effect scenarios help students describe these bidirectional influences using simple language: "I thought about..., which made me feel..., so I did..., and then that action changed how I was feeling."
The three-part reciprocal model establishes psychology's foundational framework—that mental processes can be observed, categorized, and understood systematically as an interconnected system rather than isolated components. This introduces age-appropriate metacognition (thinking about thinking) by making abstract internal experiences concrete through metaphor and observable examples, providing the organizing structure for understanding all future psychology concepts.

By framing the mind as an understandable system of reciprocal influences rather than a mysterious black box or simple cause-and-effect chain, students develop foundational psychological literacy and self-efficacy ("I can understand how my mind works, and I have power to influence it through my actions"). The shared vocabulary and reciprocal loop framework enable both self-awareness and empathy, supporting children to discuss mental experiences that will underpin learning about attention, memory, emotions, relationships, and problem-solving throughout the curriculum.

Unit Learning Objectives

- Define psychology as the study of how minds work and explain that everyone has a mind with three parts: Thinking, Feeling, and Doing
- Identify and label examples of thinking (Idea Factory), feeling (Messenger), and doing (Action Player) in everyday scenarios from their own lives or observations of others
- Distinguish between private mental experiences (thinking and feeling) and observable actions

(doing) by categorizing given examples as "inside my mind" or "others can see"
- Describe how the three parts of the mind influence each other through reciprocal loops (bidirectional influence) rather than just linear cause-and-effect, using examples that show influence flowing in multiple directions (e.g., "I did [action], which changed how I felt, which then changed what I thought")
- Use the framework vocabulary (Idea Factory, Messenger, Action Player, loop power, reciprocal loops) to discuss their own mental experiences and explain their actions or the actions of others
- Apply the concept of "loop power" by identifying how they can use their Action Player to influence their thinking and feeling through feedback loops, even when they cannot directly control thoughts or feelings appearing

---

Lesson Description

This lesson introduces the mind as a system with three interconnected parts: **Thinking** (making ideas, solving problems, planning), **Feeling** (emotions and body sensations that give us information), and **Doing** (actions our bodies take). Importantly, students learn that these parts influence each other back and forth, providing a foundation for the reciprocal loop concept that will be fully developed in Lesson 4.

Through concrete examples from daily life, children explore how these parts work together and influence each other. The teacher demonstration explicitly shows a simple reciprocal loop: "When my Action Player walked to my lunch bag, I felt even MORE hungry, and my Idea Factory thought 'good decision!' See how the parts talk back and forth to each other? My action created new feelings and thoughts — it's a loop!" This early introduction plants the seed for understanding bidirectional influence.

Children learn to identify which parts are active in different situations and recognize that everyone's mind has these same three parts. The lesson emphasizes observation and curiosity—children become "mind scientists" noticing how their minds (and others' minds) work in action, with special attention to how the parts communicate with each other in multiple directions.

This foundational framework provides the organizing structure for understanding all future psychology concepts and gives children a shared language for discussing mental experiences. The early introduction of reciprocal influence (even if not fully elaborated until Lesson 4) ensures students don't develop misconceptions about simple linear causation.

Lesson Learning Objectives

- **Identify** the three parts of the mind—Thinking, Feeling, and Doing—and give one example of each from daily life.
- **Recognize** which part of the mind is active in common scenarios (e.g., correctly sorting situation cards or identifying that "planning a game" is Thinking).
- **Explain** how the three parts work together in a specific situation, including basic recognition that they can influence each other (e.g., "I felt scared, thought the dog might jump, so I stepped back")
- **Describe** the three parts of the mind at work in another person during an observed activity or role-play.
- **Apply** the mind framework to analyze a recent personal experience, identifying where Thinking, Feeling, and Doing each occurred and noticing if they influenced each other

---

Lesson Plan – Unit 01 Lesson 01

Warm-up (5 min)

Activity: "What Can Scientists Study?"

- Ask: "What do scientists study?" (animals, plants, weather, space, etc.)
- Show images of different scientists at work (biologist with microscope, astronomer with telescope)
- Reveal: "Today we become MIND SCIENTISTS! We'll study something you carry everywhere—your mind!"
- Quick poll: "Can you see your mind? Can you touch it?" (No, but we can observe what it does)
- Establish: Scientists study things by observing carefully, even things we can't see directly

Materials: Images of scientists (hard copy or projected)

Explore + Practice (30 min total)

Part A: Discovering the Three Parts (12 min)

Activity: "Inside the Mind Machine"

- Present the mind as a system with three jobs, using simple metaphors:
    - **THINKING** = Idea Factory (makes plans, solves problems, remembers, imagines)
    - **FEELING** = Messenger (sends information through emotions and body signals)
    - **DOING** = Action Player (makes movements, words, faces that others can see)

Demonstration: Teacher acts out a scenario

- "I'm looking at the clock (show looking). My Idea Factory thinks 'almost lunch time.' My Messenger sends a hungry feeling in my stomach. My Action Player makes me stand up and walk to my lunch bag."
- Students identify each part as you narrate
- And then when my Action Player walked to my lunch bag, I felt even MORE hungry, and my Idea Factory thought 'good decision!' See how the parts talk back and forth to each other? My action created new feelings and thoughts—it's a loop!

Materials: Three large labeled cards (THINKING/FEELING/DOING) displayed on board

Psychology Video (3 min)

- **Title:** "Inside Out - Riley's First Day of School (clip)"
- **Link:** Search YouTube for "Inside Out Riley first day school clip" (0-3 min clip showing Riley's thoughts, emotions, and actions)
- **Purpose:** Visual representation of inner mental processes (thoughts/emotions) leading to observable behavior
- Watch together, then ask: "What was Riley's Idea Factory thinking? What did her Messenger feel? What did her Action Player do?"

Materials: Video projection. **Title:** "Inside Out - Riley's First Day of School (clip)"

Part B: Psychology Experiment - The Stop-and-Think Test (8 min)

Simple In-Class Experiment This experiment demonstrates how the three parts work together and shows children can observe their own mental processes.

Steps:

1. **Setup:** Students stand in circle. Teacher holds up different colored cards (red, blue, green).
2. **Round 1 - Automatic:** "When you see BLUE, clap once immediately. Let's try!" (Show cards randomly, students respond automatically)

3. **Round 2 - Think First:** "Now, when you see BLUE, STOP and count to 3 in your Idea Factory before clapping. Ready?"
4. **Observe:** "What happened? Was Round 2 harder? Why?"
5. **Discuss:** "Your Messenger felt the urge to clap (automatic feeling). Your Idea Factory had to think 'wait, count first.' Your Action Player followed the new plan. All three parts worked together!"

Debrief: "Scientists call this 'impulse control'—when your Idea Factory helps your Action Player wait. You just observed your own mind working!"
Materials: Colored cards (hard copy)

Part C: PowerMind in-class Game – "Mind Part Detective Challenge" (10 min)

Game File Name: icg-01.01-game01.html

Game Title: Mind Part Detective Challenge

Game Format: Classification Trees / Gallery

Format Justification: This format has 0 uses across all units and is ideal for teaching students to systematically categorize mental experiences into the three mind parts (Thinking, Feeling, Doing). The gallery/tree structure allows students to observe multiple examples and classify them step-by-step, building pattern recognition skills essential for understanding the mind framework. Unlike simple matching, this format requires deliberate sorting through categories, reinforcing the distinct characteristics of each mind part through repeated classification decisions.

Purpose: Students observe everyday scenarios and classify them into the three mind parts (Idea Factory, Messenger, Action Player), strengthening their ability to distinguish between thinking, feeling, and doing through systematic categorization practice.

Lesson Arc Location: Part C of Lesson 1 (approximately minutes 17-27 in the 45-minute lesson)

Pedagogical Rationale: This game is placed immediately after students have been introduced to the three mind parts in Part A and watched the Inside Out video demonstration. At this point, students understand the basic concept but need practice distinguishing between the three categories. The Classification Trees format provides structured, repetitive practice in categorization—the core skill needed before advancing to understanding reciprocal loops in Part D. By requiring students to sort multiple examples through a gallery interface, they build fluency with the framework vocabulary and develop pattern recognition that will support all future psychology learning.

Part D: PowerMind Quiz - "Which Thinking Job?" (7 min)

Quiz Format: Multiple Choice
Quiz Flow:

- **Setup:** Screen displays situations one at a time. Students identify which thinking job is being used: 1=REMEMBERING, 2=IMAGINING, 3=PLANNING, 4=PROBLEM-SOLVING, 5=DECIDING.
- **Presentation:** Teacher reads each scenario. Students select their answer using clickers. App reveals correct answer with brief explanation.
- **Questions (10 total):**
    1. "What did we do at recess yesterday?" (REMEMBERING)
    2. "What would a flying elephant look like?" (IMAGINING)
    3. "How should I get ready for home time?" (PLANNING)
    4. "My pencil broke, what can I do?" (PROBLEM-SOLVING)
    5. "Should I read the red book or blue book?" (DECIDING)

6. "What is my teacher's name?" (REMEMBERING)
7. "What if dogs could talk?" (IMAGINING)
8. "First I'll clean up, then put on my coat" (PLANNING)
9. "The door is stuck, how do I open it?" (PROBLEM-SOLVING)
10. "Which friend should I play with today?" (DECIDING)

- **Feedback:** After each question: "Yes! That's [thinking job name]. Your Idea Factory uses [job] to [brief explanation]."
- **Scoring:** 1 point per correct answer. Track individual and class performance.
- **Win Condition:** Students score 7+ out of 10, demonstrating they can identify different thinking jobs.

Materials: PowerMind app, student clickers

Part D: PowerMind Quiz - "What's the Feeling Message?" (7 min)

Quiz Format: Multiple Choice

Quiz Flow:

- **Setup:** Screen shows situations one at a time. Students identify what message/information the feeling is giving: 1=WARNING/DANGER, 2=SOMETHING LOST/HURT, 3=UNFAIR/BLOCKED, 4=GOOD THING HAPPENING, 5=UNSURE WHAT HAPPENS.
- **Presentation:** Teacher reads scenario with a feeling. Students identify what information that feeling provides using clickers. App shows answer with explanation.
- **Questions (10 total):**
    1. "You feel SCARED when you see a big dog running toward you. What's the message?" (WARNING/DANGER)
    2. "You feel SAD when your favorite toy breaks. What's the message?" (SOMETHING LOST/HURT)
    3. "You feel ANGRY when someone cuts in front of you in line. What's the message?" (UNFAIR/BLOCKED)
    4. "You feel HAPPY when you finish a hard puzzle. What's the message?" (GOOD THING HAPPENING)
    5. "You feel WORRIED about going to a new place tomorrow. What's the message?" (UNSURE WHAT HAPPENS)
    6. "You feel SCARED hearing thunder crash. What's the message?" (WARNING/DANGER)
    7. "You feel SAD when your friend moves away. What's the message?" (SOMETHING LOST/HURT)
    8. "You feel ANGRY when your brother takes your turn. What's the message?" (UNFAIR/BLOCKED)
    9. "You feel EXCITED seeing a present with your name. What's the message?" (GOOD THING HAPPENING)
    10. "You feel NERVOUS before trying something new. What's the message?" (UNSURE WHAT HAPPENS)
- **Feedback:** After each answer: "Correct! [Feeling name] is your Messenger telling you: [information message]."
- **Scoring:** 1 point per correct answer. Display individual and class scores.
- **Win Condition:** Students score 7+ out of 10, showing they understand feelings as information messengers.

Materials: PowerMind app, student clickers

Reflection (5 min)

Activity: "My Mind Right Now"

- Students draw three quick sketches on paper divided into three sections:
    - "My Idea Factory is thinking about..."
    - "My Messenger is feeling..."
    - "My Action Player just did..."
- 2-3 volunteers share one part with class
- Teacher reinforces: "You just observed your own minds like scientists! All three parts are always working."

Materials: Paper divided in thirds, pencils/crayons (hard copy)

Home Prep (5 min)

Preparing for PowerMind at Home

- Explain: "At home, you'll play 'Mind Detective' on PowerMind. You'll watch short videos of people doing things and guess what their three mind parts might be doing."
- Show the app interface briefly on screen
- Instructions: "Watch the person carefully. What might they be thinking? Feeling? What are they doing that you CAN see?"
- Emphasize: "Remember, you can always SEE doing, but thinking and feeling are invisible—you're making scientific guesses based on clues!"

Materials: PowerMind app demonstration

Connection to Unit Arc

This foundational lesson introduces the three-part framework that will structure all subsequent learning. Lesson 2 will zoom in on THINKING (Idea Factory), exploring the many jobs it performs. Understanding these three parts as interconnected through feedback loops gives students the vocabulary and conceptual structure for analyzing their mental experiences throughout the unit.