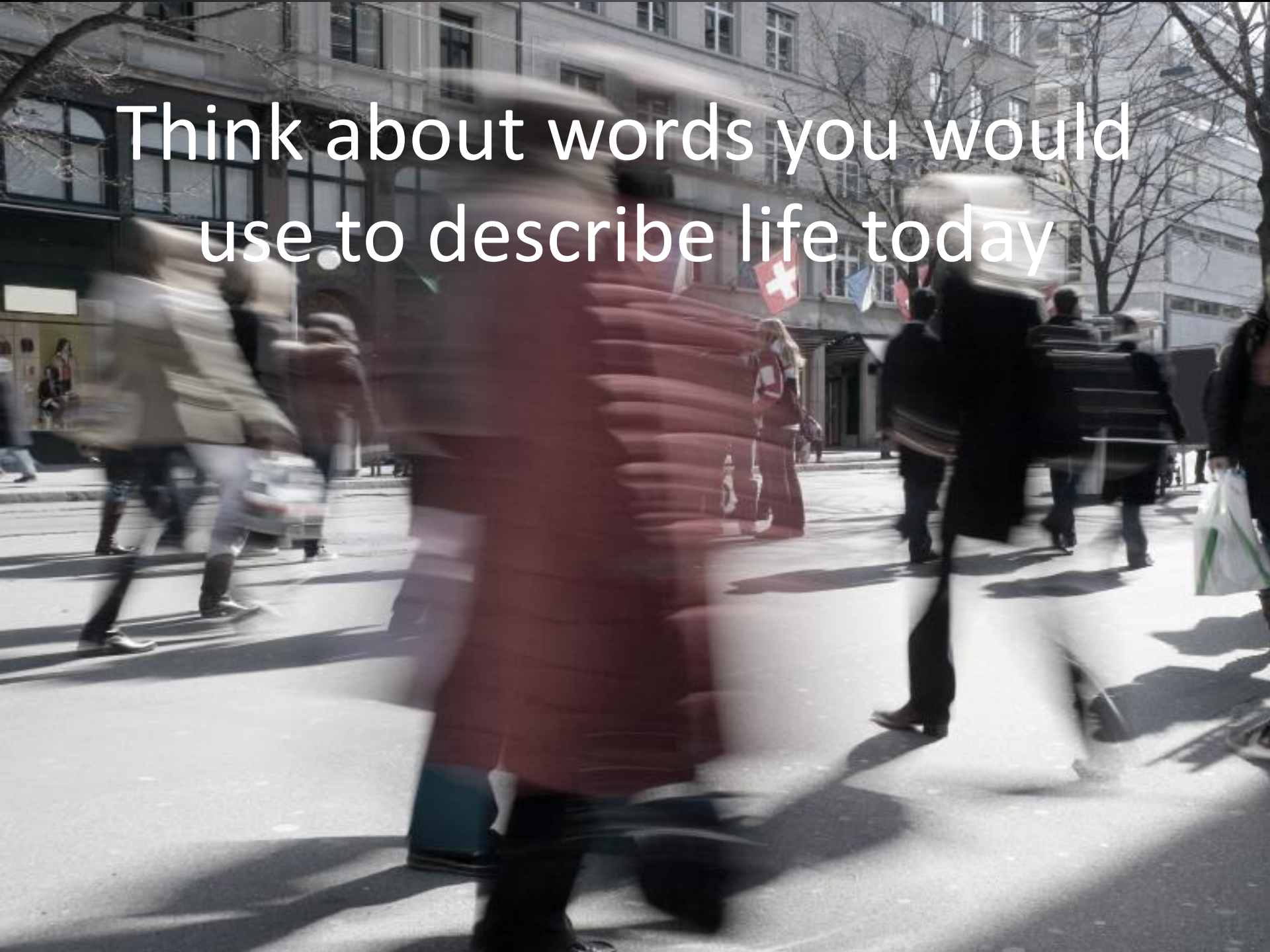


A black and white photograph of a young child's face in profile, looking upwards and to the right. The child's hair is dark and curly. The background is dark.

# Nurturing Young Children as Active Thinkers

Michelle Rupiper  
University of  
Nebraska-Lincoln

Think about words you would  
use to describe life today



# What are executive brain functions?





# Focus and Self Control

- Paying attention
- Remembering the rules
- Inhibiting initial response to achieve larger goal



# Improving Focus and Control

When children's ability to pay attention improves, their reasoning and thinking skills also improve.






The key to success in the future is not just going to be how much we know, or what we know. The ability to think and act creatively will be the key distinguishing quality that will allow people to succeed.

*Mitch Resnick, MIT*

**Build on Curiosity**






A young girl with dark hair is shown in profile, looking intently at a goldfish inside a glass bowl. Her hand is resting on the surface of the table in front of the bowl. The background is a plain, light color.

**Give Many  
Opportunities to  
Explore, Ask  
Questions &  
Make  
Connections**



# Thinking and Tinkering



A young boy with dark hair is shown from the back, flexing his biceps. He is shirtless, and his skin is a light tone. The background is a plain, light color. The text is overlaid on the lower half of the image.

**Curiosity, imagination & creativity are  
like muscles  
– if you don't use them you lose  
them.**









I hear and I forget.  
I see and I remember.  
I do and I understand.

- [Confucius](#)



**Participate in Children's Play**

# Promote Critical Thinking Skills

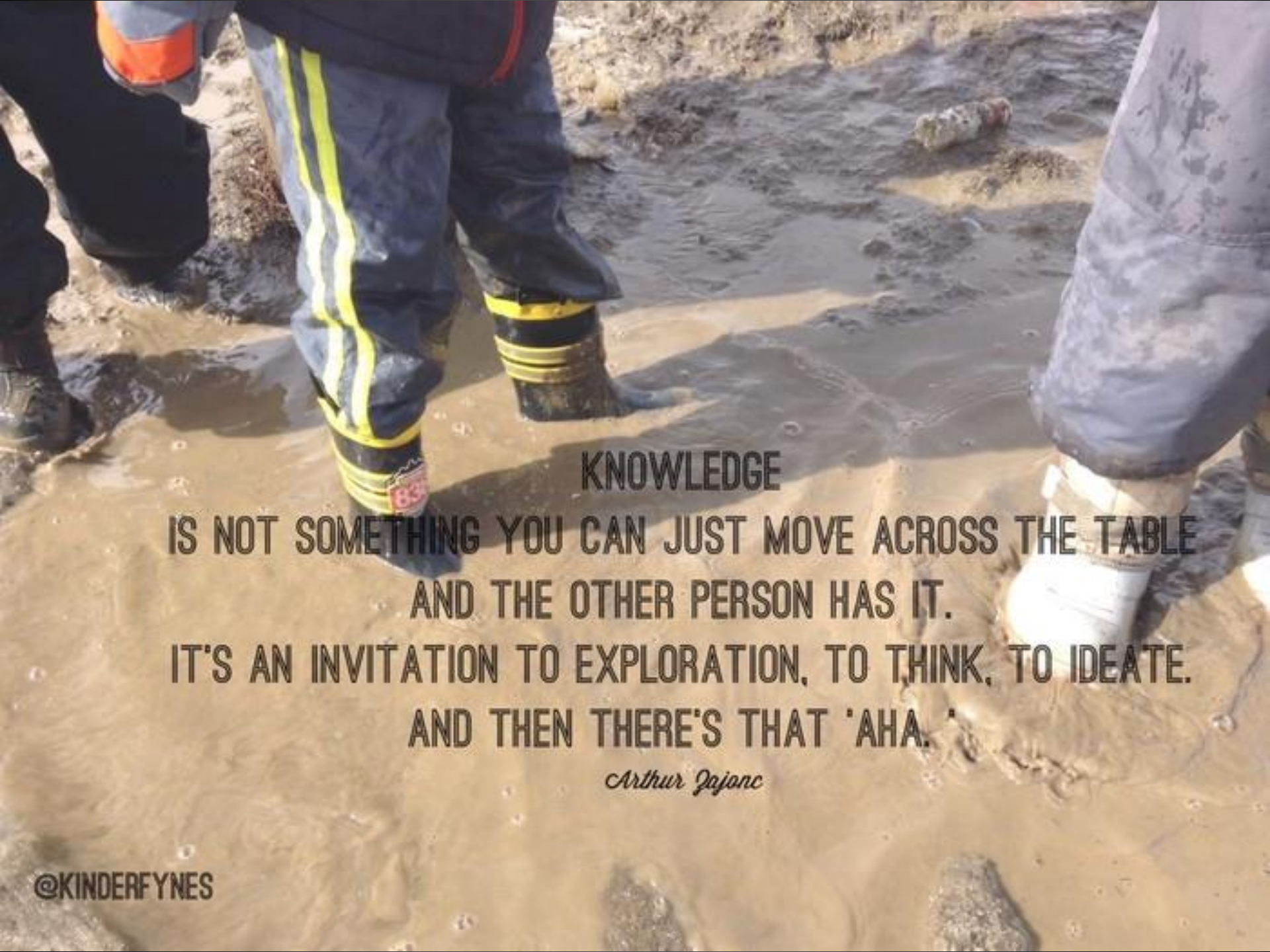




- Explore ideas
- Make meaning
- Question

A photograph of three young children, two girls and one boy, playing with a wooden toy structure in a room filled with toys. The children are gathered around a small wooden table with a white top, which has several small wooden blocks or pieces on it. One child is reaching out to touch one of the pieces. The room is cluttered with various toys, including a large wooden shelf in the background and a table with more toys in the foreground. The children are dressed in casual clothing, and the overall atmosphere is one of active play and exploration.

**The Value of Messing About**

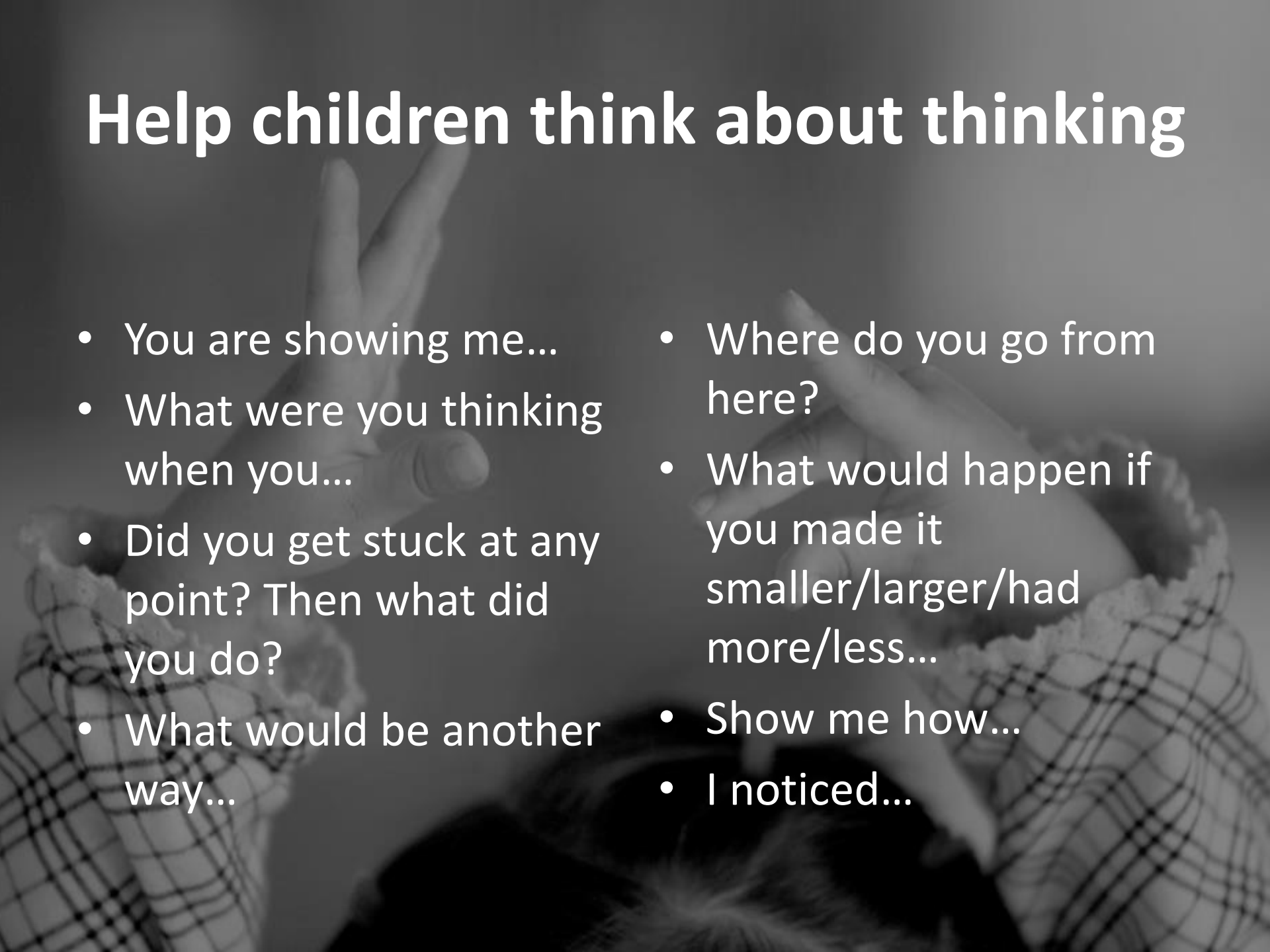


KNOWLEDGE  
IS NOT SOMETHING YOU CAN JUST MOVE ACROSS THE TABLE  
AND THE OTHER PERSON HAS IT.  
IT'S AN INVITATION TO EXPLORATION, TO THINK, TO IDEATE.  
AND THEN THERE'S THAT 'AHA.'

*Arthur Zajonc*



# Help children think about thinking

- 
- You are showing me...
  - What were you thinking when you...
  - Did you get stuck at any point? Then what did you do?
  - What would be another way...
  - Where do you go from here?
  - What would happen if you made it smaller/larger/had more/less...
  - Show me how...
  - I noticed...

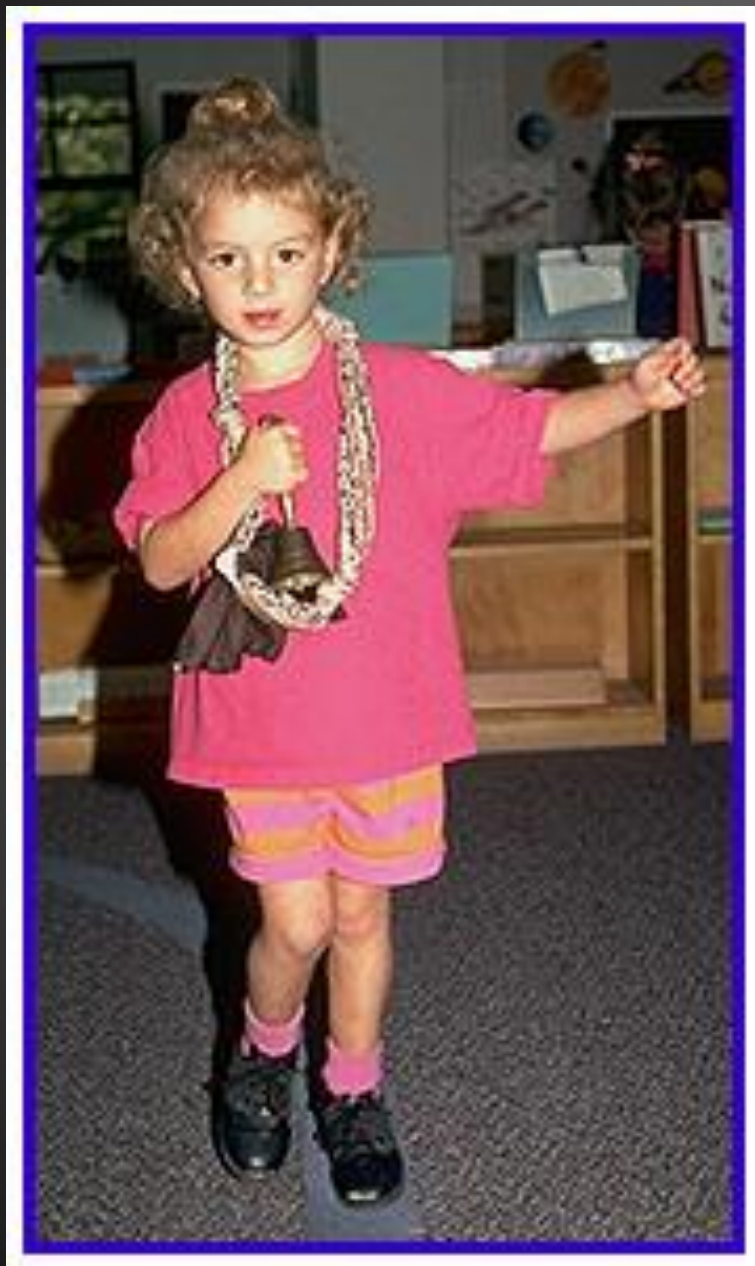




Play games that require children to pay attention.







Don't make a  
sound challenge



A close-up, low-angle shot of a young girl with dark hair, wearing a bright yellow raincoat and hood. She is looking upwards with her mouth slightly open, as if in awe or playing. Her face and the hood are covered in water droplets. The background is dark and blurry, suggesting it is raining heavily. The overall mood is whimsical and joyful.

# Poetic Pathways

Bella had a new umbrella  
Didn't want to lose it,  
So when she walked out  
in the rain  
She didn't ever use it.  
Her nose went sniff,  
Her shoes went squish,  
Her socks grew soggy,  
Her glasses got foggy,  
Her pockets filled with water  
And a little green froggy.  
All she could speak was a  
weak Kachoo!  
But Bella's umbrella  
Stayed nice and new.

Encourage children to pretend and  
make up pretend stories















# Stop-Start- Continue

- Identify 1 thing you will **stop** – it's not working
- Identify 1 thing you will **start** – something new you want to try
- Identify 1 thing you will **continue** – it's already working for you