Cartoon Activity 1: Explanation

This activity involves matching cartoons with their appropriate caption. When the cartoon and caption are not simply a pun or play on words, then doing so usually involves trying to figure out what the characters in the cartoon are thinking and perceiving. This taps into a very important cognitive ability called Theory of Mind, which can be defined as “knowing other people’s minds.” We use Theory of Mind when we predict what others are thinking based on the circumstances. We use it to predict how others might respond to a certain situation. We use Theory of Mind when we decide not to say something to an individual because we know they wouldn’t respond well to it. Theory of Mind activities can exercise a number of areas of the brain. One area is the amygdala, which is the emotion center located deep in the brain center area known as the limbic system. Another area is the fusiform gyrus, the part of the brain that helps process facial expressions. It is located on the bottom of the brain. But the part of the brain that is most involved in Theory of Mind is the frontal lobe, or more specifically, the medial prefrontal cortex.

Cartoon Activity 1: Instructions

Cut the captions off the bottoms of the cartoons. Give participants the cartoons and captions and ask them to match them up. Adjust the difficulty level varying the number of cartoons and captions to match up. (Three cartoons are easy and six cartoons are difficult.) Encourage people to work in groups if you want to facilitate some fun social interaction. For a creative challenge, ask people to write their own captions.

