

## Comic Strip Conversations™ Information Sheet

### What are Comic Strip Conversations™?

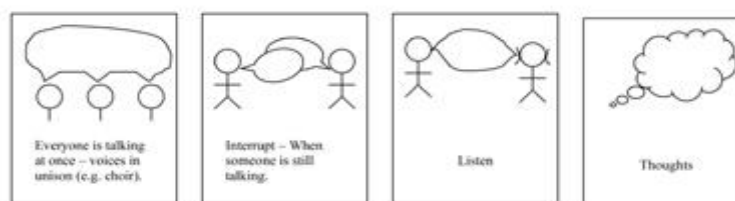
Social Stories™ and Comic Strip Conversations™ were created by Carol Gray in 1990 to help teach social skills to people with autism. She developed Comic Strip Conversations™ as a technique to help people with ASD develop their pragmatic and interaction skills and therefore, develop greater social understanding. They are now also used to help pupils with wider social communication difficulties.

### The aim of Comic Strip Conversations™

To provide visual representations of the different levels of communication that take place in a conversation between 2 or more people. Comic Strip Conversations™ is based on the theory that visualisation and visual supports may improve the verbal understanding and comprehension of conversation, which can be both complex and fast-paced. Symbols, stick figure drawings and colour are used to illustrate the different elements of a conversation. This helps to make the abstract aspects of social communication (such as recognition of feelings and intentions of others) more 'concrete' and easier to understand.

Comic Strip Conversations™ can also help us understand the perspective of the child.

### How to create a Comic Strip Conversation™



It is important that all Comic Strip Conversations™:

- Identify what people say and do and think.
- Allow basic conversation skills to be represented pictorially.
- Allow emotions to be represented using colour.
- Help pupils to understand both their own and others' perspectives.

The technique involves drawing a Comic Strip Conversation™ to illustrate what is said as the conversation with the pupil progresses. For the first one, start with a positive situation. Also focus on just one situation for each Comic Strip Conversation™ created.

The first step is to create a comic strip symbols dictionary with the pupil (see examples of symbols above). All conversations use sequence and structure, so boxes are used for this as in actual cartoon strips. Draw the boxes before the conversation starts then draw the conversation in sequence.

The pupil leads the adult guides by asking a few simple questions. The pupil then draws/writes/talks in response:

- Where did the event occur and where was the pupil? (The pupil should be encouraged to draw their position in the agreed location).
- Who else was there? (The pupil draws another person).
- What was the pupil doing? (Draw relevant items and actions).
- What did the pupil say and what did others say? (Use talk symbols – see example above).

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- What did the pupil think and what did others think when they said/did that? (Use thought symbols – see example above).

Comic Strip Conversations™ regard thoughts and feelings as holding equal importance to spoken words and actions in an interaction. To this end, the pupil is encouraged to use colour to illustrate the drawings and a personal colour directory for basic emotions should be established with the pupil (example below).

Green:	Good ideas, happy, friendly
Red:	Bad ideas, anger, unfriendly
Blue:	Sad, uncomfortable
Yellow:	Frightened
Black:	Facts, truth
Orange:	Questions
Brown:	Comfortable, cosy
Purple:	Proud
Colour combinations:	Confusion

### Additional points to consider

The Comic Strip Conversation™ can be summarised by encouraging the pupil to reflect on the whole situation and explain what happened one drawing at a time. The drawings are a working document and aspects can be rubbed out and different solution ideas inserted, allowing the pupil to use the drawings to support thinking about how things might have been done differently. For older pupils 'the pros and 'cons' of each solution can be discussed.

Comic Strip Conversations™ can also be used to describe and plan a future event.

### Comic Strip Conversations™ are useful to develop an understanding of the following:

- Coping with social skills (e.g., sharing, asking for help, saying thank you, interrupting) and academic abilities
- How others might behave or respond in a particular situation, and therefore how they might be expected to behave.
- Coping with changes to routine and unexpected or distressing events (e.g., absence of the teacher, moving house, thunderstorms).
- Coping with low self-esteem and anxiety.
- Anger management issues (e.g., what to do when angry, how to cope with obsessions).
- Coping with ambiguous situations. Information can be presented in a literal, 'concrete' way.
- How to sequence activities.

They can provide essential reassurance to the pupil.

**Remember that the comic strip is a working document and does not require artistic talent!**

SEND Service can provide further training as an hour-and-a-half workshop for staff if required.

### Useful References, Apps and Links

Comic Strip Conversations' Carol Gray  
ELKLAN's 'Language Builders for Verbal ASD' Liz Elks and Henrietta McLachlan  
ELKLAN's 'Secondary Language Builders' Liz Elks and Henrietta McLachlan  
Strip Designer and Bookabi apps  
[www.autismeducationtrust.org.uk](http://www.autismeducationtrust.org.uk)  
[www.carolgraysocialstories.com/carols-club](http://www.carolgraysocialstories.com/carols-club)  
[www.elklan.co.uk](http://www.elklan.co.uk)