

Social Stories™ Information Sheet

What are Social Stories™?

Social Stories™ were created by Carol Gray in 1990 to help teach social skills to people with autism. She also developed Comic Strip Conversations™ as another useful strategy to help children with ASD develop their pragmatic and interaction skills.

The aim of Social Stories™

To give short descriptions (stories) of a particular situation, event, or activity, which include specific information about what to expect in that situation and why. They can also give an idea of how others might respond in a particular situation, and therefore provide a framework for appropriate behaviour. They are designed to be reassuring for the pupil. The goal is to teach social understanding and not rote compliance.

As the primary aim of Social Stories™ is to develop social awareness and social understanding, they can be used with children/young people with a range of needs, including those with Social Communication Needs as well as children and young people with a diagnosis of ASC.

How to write a Social Story™

The story is written using a specific structure and format and should include social cues, perspectives, and appropriate responses. Each story should contain the following 3 main sentence types:

- **Descriptive** - Gives information and answers the 'why' questions. They will say what is happening, who is involved and why. Examples:
My name is Rachel
Most children go out to play at playtime
Most weeks in school we do PE
- **Perspective** - Gives information about why things happen, what other people think and how they respond. Examples:
My Mum knows about me.
Sometimes my sister likes to read her book quietly
Some children believe in Father Christmas
- **Directive** - Describes what a pupil should try to do. Always use sentences with 'will try' or 'may' rather than 'I will' or 'I can't'. Example:
I will try to sit still and pay attention

In each story, there should be no more than one directive and at least two (but usually no more than five) perspective and descriptive sentences.

Additional points to consider

Social Stories™ should ideally be written with the child/young person and appeal to their interests.

Stories need to have a title, introduction, body, and conclusion and should use positive language (describe what should happen, rather than what should not). They sometimes give strategies and always focus on the desired outcome.

Stories can be illustrated by including age-appropriate photographs, picture symbols or drawings with the text to help people who have difficulty reading or to appeal to younger children. They can be handwritten or typed and can be presented on computer programmes such as Clicker or PowerPoint. They can be made into a book of 'social situations'. The child/young person should decide on their way of presenting the story.

Social Stories™ can be a useful strategy to develop the following:

- Self-care skills (e.g., how to clean teeth, wash hands or get dressed).
- Social skills (e.g., sharing, asking for help, saying thank you, interrupting) and academic abilities
- Understanding how others might behave or respond in a particular situation, and therefore how they might be expected to behave. Also, it helps others understand the perspective of a person with autism and why they may respond or behave in a particular way.
- Ability to cope with changes to routine and unexpected or distressing events (e.g., absence of the teacher, moving house, thunderstorms).
- Coping skills to build self-esteem and reduce anxiety.
- Anger management skills (e.g., what to do when angry, how to cope with obsessions).
- Ability to cope with ambiguous situations. Information can be presented in a literal, 'concrete' way.
- Sequencing activities.

They can provide essential reassurance to the pupil.

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

Useful References and Links

- ◆ www.autismeducationtrust.org.uk
- ◆ www.carolgraysocialstories.com/carols-club
- ◆ www.elklan.co.uk

Books of Interest

- ◆ 'The New Social Story Book' by Carol Gray
- ◆ 'I Can't Do that' John Ling
- ◆ 'Writing and Developing Social Stories' Caroline Smith
- ◆ '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