

Social Stories

There are a number of ways to focus on social skills and develop social understanding with individuals on the autistic spectrum. Social stories are an excellent and simple method to facilitate individuals to understand appropriate social interaction and responses. They can also be used to prepare individuals for change, describe abstract concepts, and be used to give praise.

Social stories are easily produced, focus on real life situations and can be used repeatedly, as and when required. The stories are based on a written story form, but can contain visuals to help with understanding. They offer the individual information on **what** is going to happen, information on a particular social situation, and focus on **who** is performing certain actions and **why** they are performing those actions. Stories can provide time and place related information about **when** and **where** things might happen. A story can focus on particular areas of need such as social skills or communication, and can also provide the individual with socially appropriate responses.

The story is pitched at a level that the individual can understand and contains different types of sentences:

Descriptive Sentences - these sentences state facts, they are logical and objective, and form a guide to the story. Some examples of descriptive sentences would be:

Sometimes, dad drives his car to work (it is important to use words such as “sometimes” and “maybe”, so that statements are not taken literally).

My brother's name is Bob

On Tuesday we usually go shopping

Perspective Sentences - these are sentences that describe feelings, thoughts, beliefs, opinions, a persons health etc and most often they are used to describe other people, not the person with autism.

Some of my friends like to play basketball

Some of my friends think Arsenal football team are the best

Simon believes in tooth fairies



Directive Sentences - these sentences look at responses to a situation to guide the individual with autism. Again, we must be aware of being too literal. Examples of these sentences would be:

I will try to whisper in class
I may ask mum for a drink
I will try to eat my own sandwiches for lunch

Affirmative Sentences - these are often used to stress an important point and enhance the meaning of other sentences. The following sentences might follow other types of sentences:

This is good
This is very important
This is a good thing to do

Cooperative sentences - these sentences discuss how others might help you. Cooperative sentences may facilitate an individual to understand who, and how, someone can help them in some way:

The sports teacher can help me with my football skills
Mary the teacher aid will help me use the toilet

Control Sentences - these sentences are statements from the individual with ASD, who adds his own information when the story is written to reflect his own feelings and interests. For instance, if John has a social story about when to take time-outs, he can add a sentence:

If Brian screams I can take timeout in the quiet room

When you want to write a social story, decide on the goal of the story and plan it out, taking care to choose an appropriate title. Try and tailor the story to the language level of the individual, but also keep it simple anyway. Use positive language and identify positive responses, and be aware of statements that may be taken literally. Add things that may motivate or interest the reader and if possible involve him when you are writing it. An important rule is that there should only be one directive sentence (if any), for every 2-5 descriptive, perspective and affirmative sentences.



My mum is having a baby

Sometime soon, my mum will have to go to hospital to have a baby (*descriptive*)

Mum will stay in a ward at the hospital where the nurses will look after her (*descriptive*)

Mum might be in hospital for a few days and then she will come home with the baby (*descriptive*)

When mum is away my dad will look after me (*descriptive*)

Dad will make all my food (*cooperative*)

Dad might take me to the hospital to visit mum (*descriptive*)

When mum comes home she will bring my baby sister (*descriptive*)

My baby sister will be very small (*descriptive*)

Sometimes my baby sister might cry (*perspective*)

When my baby sister cries I can go to my room for a break (*directive*)



See www.icommunicatetherapy.com for more information on Autistic Spectrum Disorders and programs for adults and children with communication difficulties.



To learn more about autism, autistic spectrum disorders and strategies to enhance communication, you can read about and purchase books on our website www.icommunicatetherapy.com. Click this link to see our online Resource Centre.

Suggested Reading

The New Social Story Book : Illustrated Edition by Carol Gray

My Social Stories Book by Abbie Leigh White, Carol Gray, and Sean McAndrew

The Social Skills Picture Book Teaching play, emotion, and communication to children with autism by Dr. Jed Baker

Comic Strip Conversations by Carol Gray

Easy Activities for Building Social Skills: Dozens of Effective Classroom Strategies & Activities to Teach Cooperation and Communication, Manners and Respect, Positive Behavior & More! by Nancy Jolson Leber

1001 Great Ideas for Teaching and Raising Children with Autism Spectrum Disorders by Veronica Zysk and Ellen Notbohm

Autism Spectrum Disorders: The Complete Guide to Understanding Autism, Asperger's Syndrome, Pervasive Developmental Disorder, and Other ASDs by Chantal Sicile-Kira and Temple Grandin

Overcoming Autism: Finding the Answers, Strategies, and Hope That Can Transform a Child's life by Lynn Kern Koegel and Claire LaZebnik

Self-Help Skills for People With Autism: A Systematic Teaching Approach by Stephen R. Anderson, Amy L. Jablonski, Vicki Madaus Knapp, and Marcus L. Thomeer

Activity Schedules for Children With Autism: Teaching Independent Behavior by Lynn E., Ph.D. McClannahan and Patricia J., Ph.D. Krantz

Visual Supports for People With Autism: A Guide for Parents and Professionals by Marlene J. Cohen and Donna L. Sloan

Making Visual Supports Work in the Home and Community: Strategies for Individuals with Autism and Asperger Syndrome by Jennifer L. Savner, Brenda Smith Hyles, and Brenda Smith Myles