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 person’s 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


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


**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