

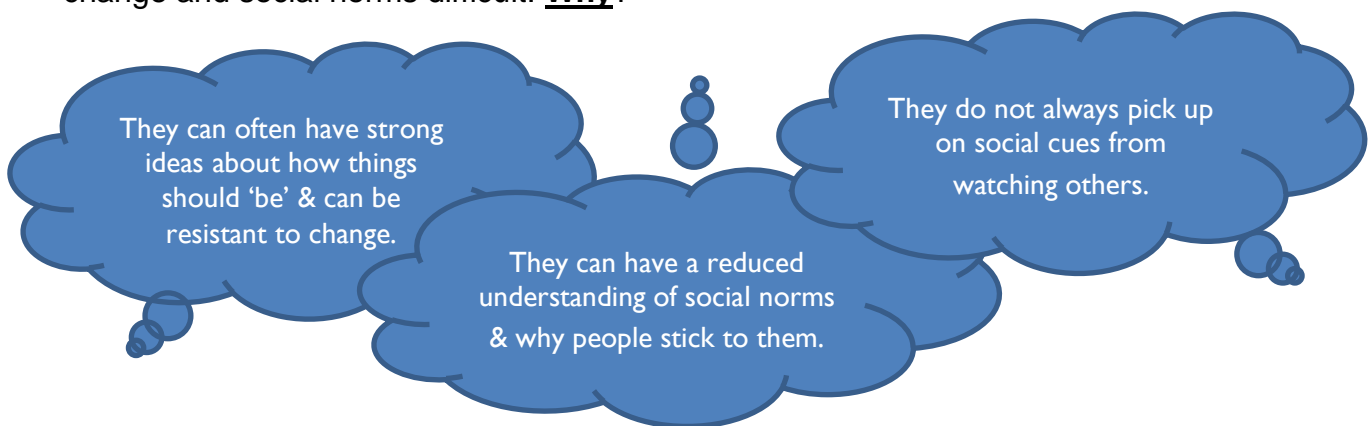
SOCIAL STORIES™

Communication Interaction Team



Social Stories™ were first developed in America by Carol Gray (1991) specifically to support people with Autism Spectrum Disorder. They are now used regularly to support many people with varying communication and/or learning needs.

Children with autism and social communication differences, can find social situations, change and social norms difficult. **Why?**



What are Social Stories™?

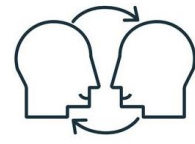
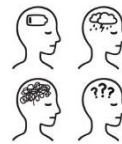
Social stories™ are short descriptions of a particular situation, event or activity, which includes specific information about what to expect in that situation and why. The stories aim to support better overall understanding.

There are many published social stories™ available and many more on-line. However, often social stories™ that are *personalised* to the individual are more meaningful and therefore more effective. Pre-written stories can be a great starting point!

When to use Social Stories™? Social stories™ can be used to help:

- explain unstructured social times e.g. playtime
- support understanding of self-care skills e.g. brushing teeth or going to the loo
- support changes to routines or an unexpected event e.g. a supply teacher
- with emotional well-being e.g. what to do when worried
- explain how someone else may respond or act in a particular situation

In fact, any situation in need of clarification.



How do Social Stories™ help?

Social stories™ are *written* – therefore the emotional and non-verbal content of explanations can be removed.

Social stories™ are very visual – it is widely understood that people with autism are often good visual learners.

Social stories™ are written to give information in a literal, 'concrete' and non-ambiguous way.

Presentation through words and pictures can be matched to the development level needed.

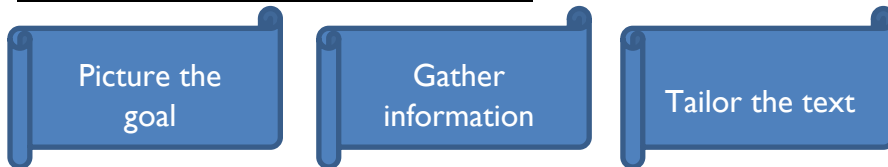
Social stories™ are permanent! Words, gesture and facial expressions are temporary and can often be misunderstood or quickly forgotten.

Social stories™ are constant and can be shared across environments and between adults supporting - the words and pictures remain the same.

Social stories™ may help a child be more flexible in their thinking

All this may support better overall understanding and therefore reduce worries.

Preparing to write a Social Story™



Picture the Goal – for example: to encourage the child to wash hands after using the toilet. To support understanding, the Social Story™ must explain why this is important i.e. to stop germs spreading. Germs may make people sick.

Gather information – gather as much information as possible, through observation and discussion with the child and people who know the child best. Can you answer who, where, what, when, why, how questions about the situation?

What is important to the child? Gather information about the child's age, attention levels, level of understanding etc. Can the story be personalised to include a particular interest? E.g. linked to dinosaurs or a favourite character.

Tailor the text

- Give the Social Story™ a meaningful title – sometimes a question or a clear statement is a good idea. E.g. *Why I Must Try to Wash My Hands* or *Wash Hands After the Toilet*.
- Write from the child's point of view, in the first person e.g. When **I** have been to the toilet... Take care with pronouns (You, I, me, he, she etc.) It *may* be best to use the child's name. E.g. When Bob has been to the toilet...
- Mostly write in the present tense. Sometimes the future tense can be used e.g. when preparing for a trip
- Be sure to write at a level that can be understood by the child. Think about: text size, word choices, comprehension skills, number of words on a page and across the whole Social Story™, the balance between words and pictures – pictures can be distracting or helpful? Sometimes the child can illustrate the story themselves.
- The Social Story™ should aim to answer the questions above: who, where, what, when, why, how
- The story should be made up of:

Descriptive sentences that accurately describe the situation such as where the situation occurs, who is there, what happens and why.

My school has a playground. At playtime, children play there.

Lots of children in my class like to be at the front of the line when the whole class need to line up

Broken glass is sharp. Broken glass can easily cut you.

It is important to keep hands clean.

Directive / coaching sentences – to gently guide behaviour. Try to use phrases such as, ‘I will *try* to...’ to support flexible thinking and ‘allow’ for mistakes.

I will try remember to stay on the playground at play time

I will try to take a card from... and look at the number. I will try to count the number of children and stand in that place.

I will try to just look at broken glass and leave it on the floor.

I will try to remember to wash my hands after...

Perspective sentences this may describe the reactions and feelings of others.

Other children know to stay on the playground at playtime.

Most children know that they cannot always be at the front of the line.

Mummy will be pleased if I try to leave broken glass on the floor.

My teacher will be pleased when I try to wash my hands after going to the toilet.

When and how to use a Social Story™:

Introduce the Social Story™ using a clear straightforward approach such as: ‘I have written a story for you. It is about washing hands. Let’s look at it together’.

Share the Social Story™ when the child is calm and relaxed.

Share the Social Story™ at the most appropriate times to be helpful in supporting understanding and shaping a particular behaviour. E.g. at the start of the day/afternoon; just ahead of playtime; before getting in the car;

The Social Story™ can also be used as a reflection story for when things don’t quite go to plan.

A Social Story™ is likely to be shared (possibly many times in one day) when first introduced and then less so as new behaviours are forming.

Sometimes, a Social Story™ can have laminated pages to make it more hardwearing.

Remember to monitor and review how successful the Social Story™ has been.

Here are some examples:

Remember each of these could include drawings, illustrations, clip-art etc to support understanding and enjoyment.

Knowing when to stop joking

My name is Joe. I have a great sense of humour and I love to make people laugh.

Other children often laugh at my jokes, but sometimes they are not in the mood for jokes.

They may be busy doing their school work.

They may be talking to someone else.

They may be feeling tired.

When people say, ‘It’s not funny anymore’, or ‘Stop Joe’. That means I have to stop telling jokes!

When people stop laughing at my jokes it also means I have to stop!

I can do something else that I find fun instead. I could find another friend. I could go on the trim-trail.

My friends will be happy when I try to remember this.

Background: Parents shared that their 4 year old daughter, Jo, often picks up pieces of glass when they are out and about. Sometimes the glass is sharp and Jo will hold it tightly. Sometimes Jo has cut herself. Jo is unaware of the risks. She likes holding the glass and doesn’t want to give it up. Jo is an able little girl, who loves to look at books. She can find verbal instructions confusing.

Jo's story about finding glass.

Sometimes Jo goes to the moors or to the park with Mummy or Daddy.
Sometimes other people have dropped glass on to the floor.
Broken glass can be pretty and shiny. Jo likes pretty, shiny things.
Broken glass can be sharp. Broken glass can cut Jo's hands.
Jo will try hard not to pick up the glass.
Jo can look at the glass and say, 'Mummy look! Shiny glass'.
Mummy can find some other, safe shiny things for Jo to hold.
Mummy and daddy will be pleased with Jo when Jo leaves broken glass on the floor.

Lining up

Lots of children in my class like to be at the front of the line when everyone is asked to 'line up'.
Other children know that they cannot always be at the front of the line.
I like to be at the front of the line. I don't like waiting.
Mrs William's tries to be fair with all children.
I will try to take a card from Mrs William's and look at the number on the card.
I will try to count the other children and stand in that place in the line.
Mrs William's will help me.
Sometimes, I will get number one and I can stand at the front.
Sometimes, I may get a different number. This is OK. I may get number one next time.
Mrs Williams and the other children, will be happy if I take a number and stand in that place in the line.

Kind Hands and Feet

At school the children work and play together.
The teachers like the children to work and play gently.
Kind hands try to play gently. Kind hands do not hurt others.
Kind feet try to play gently too. Kind feet do not hurt others.
I can try to have kind hands and feet.
The children like it best when I have kind hands and feet.
My teachers like it best when I have kind hands and feet.

My New Classroom

In September, I will be going to Mrs Lane's class.
Friends in my class will be going to Mrs Lane's class too.
I will be a junior in Year 3.
Other children know that in year 3 most things will stay the same.
Mrs Horton will still be there to help me.
I will play on the same playground.
I can have my drink and snack in the afternoon.
I can use the same toilet.
Some things will be different.
In year 3 there is no afternoon play.
In year 3 children sit at desks more than sit on the carpet.
Year 3 will be fun.
Mrs Horton and Mrs Lane will be there to help me.

We all have thoughts in our heads

Thoughts are words we hear in our heads but do not say.
Some are kind thoughts.

Some are unkind thoughts.

It is OK to say kind thoughts out loud and to others. This may make people feel happy.

It is not OK to say unkind thoughts out loud or to others. This may make people feel sad.

Other people know that they can think unkind thoughts but they must not say them out loud.

I can try to keep unkind thoughts in my head and not say them out loud.

My teacher and my friends will be pleased with me, if I keep unkind thoughts in my head.

When I am cross at school.

Sometimes Ryan is happy at school.

Sometimes Ryan is cross at school.

When other children look at Ryan or get too close, Ryan can get cross.

If, Mrs Brown thinks Ryan is getting cross, she will show Ryan a red card.

The red card means that Ryan can have 5 minutes at the quiet table.

Ryan can sit quietly and read his book or do his colouring.

Mrs Brown will help Ryan.

Ryan may feel calm and happy after 5 minutes.

Mrs Brown and other children will be happy when Ryan uses his red card and the quiet table.

Last point...

Social Stories™ are just one idea to try and support understanding and behaviour. It is likely that a Social Story™ will be used alongside other approaches that may help also.

For further information:

Websites:

Carol Gray - Social Stories

<https://carolgraysocialstories.com/social-stories/>

The National Autistic Society:

<https://www.autism.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/topics/communication/communication-tools/social-stories-and-comic-strip-conversations>

Ambitious About Autism

<https://www.ambitiousaboutautism.org.uk/information-about-autism/coronavirus-and-autism/resources>

The Graduated Approach to Inclusion

<https://www.plymouthonlinedirectory.com/plymouthlocaloffer/sencoguide/graduatedapproach>

Twinkl

<https://www.twinkl.co.uk/search?q=social+stories+behaviour>

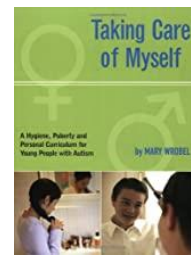
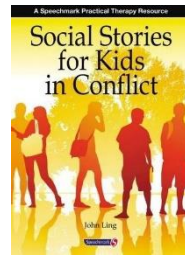
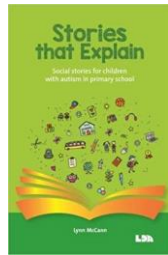
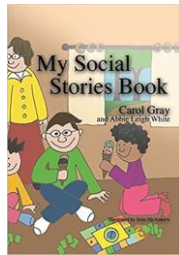
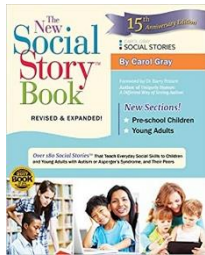
The Watson Institute:

<https://www.thewatsoninstitute.org/resources/behavior-stories/>

ASD Bright Ideas:

<https://asdbrightideas.co.uk/asd/>

Books



Apps:

Touch Autism app

<http://touchautism.com/app/social-stories-creator-library/>

Special iApps

<https://www.specialiapps.org/en/special-stories-plus>