

Social Stories

What are social stories?

Social stories were created by Carol Gray in 1991. They are short descriptions of a particular situation, event or activity, which include specific information about what to expect in that situation and why.

The terms 'social story' and 'social stories' are trademarks originated and owned by Carol Gray.

What are social stories for?

Social stories can be used to develop self-care skills (e.g. how to wash your hands, brush your teeth or get dressed), social skills (e.g. sharing, how to ask for help, making friends) and academic abilities.

They can also help someone to understand how others might behave or respond in certain situations and with managing changes to routine and unexpected or distressing events (e.g. absence of teacher, moving house, thunderstorms).

Additionally, social stories can be used to provide positive feedback to a person about an achievement or strength in order to raise self-esteem or as a behavioural strategy (e.g. what to do when they feel angry).

How do social stories help?

Social stories present information in a literal, 'concrete' way, which may improve a person's understanding of a previously difficult or ambiguous situation or activity. The presentation and content can be adapted to meet different people's needs.

They can help with sequencing (what comes next in a series of activities) and 'executive functioning' (planning and organising).

By providing information about what might happen in a particular situation, and some guidelines for behaviour, you can increase structure in a person's life and thereby reduce anxiety.

Creating or using a social story can help you to understand how the autistic person perceives different situations.

How to write a social story

PICTURE THE GOAL

Consider the social story's purpose. For example, the goal may be to teach a child to cover their mouth when coughing.

Now think about what the child needs to understand to achieve this goal. For example, they need to understand why covering their mouth when coughing is important, ie it stops germs from being spread which may make other people sick.

GATHER INFORMATION

Collect information about the situation you want to describe in your social story. Where does the situation occur? Who is it with? How does it begin and end? How long does it last? What actually happens in the situation and why? If it is for a situation where a particular outcome is not guaranteed, use words like 'sometimes' and 'usually' in the story.

Information taken and adapted from the National Autistic Society website (2018)

Compiled by Debra Glazier, Neurodevelopmental Associate Practitioner for the Child Development Team, V2 February 2021

Stories should appeal to the interests of the person for whom they are written and avoid using words that may cause the person anxiety or distress. The content and presentation of social stories should be appropriate to the person's age and level of understanding. Use age-appropriate photographs, picture symbols or drawings with text to help people who have difficulty reading or for younger children.

So gather information about the person including their age, interests, attention span, level of ability and understanding.

TAILOR THE TEXT

A social story needs to have a title, introduction, body and conclusion and should use patient and supportive language.

It should answer six questions: where, when, who, what, how and why?

It should be made up of descriptive sentences, and may also have coaching sentences. A descriptive sentence accurately describes the context, such as where the situation occurs, who is there, what happens and why, eg:

- Christmas Day is 25 December.
- Sometimes I get sick.
- My body needs food several times per day; just like a steam train needs coal to stay running.

A coaching sentence gently guides behaviour, eg:

- I will try to hold an adult's hand when crossing the road.
- It's ok to ask an adult for help with nightmares.
- When I am angry, I can take three deep breaths, go for a walk or jump on the trampoline.

How to use social stories



Carol Gray has developed guidelines on how to use social stories effectively.

- Think about ways to aid comprehension – would adding questions help, or replacing some text with blanks for the person to fill in?
- Find ways to support the story, eg create a poster with a key phrase from the story.
- Plan how often, and where, the story will be reviewed with the person.
- Present the social story to the person at a time when everyone is feeling calm and relaxed, using a straightforward approach, eg I have written this story for you. It is about thunderstorms. Let's read it together now.
- Monitor how well the story is received and whether it is working as intended.
- Keep your stories organised in a ringbinder or computer folder. This makes them easier to find and review, and to develop with new information.


Examples of social stories:

 When I get angry I sometimes hit Mummy.	 This makes Mummy sad.	 When I feel like hitting, I need to stop.
 I will hold my hands.	 I will take 5 big breaths. This helps me stay calm.	 Mummy is happy when I am calm.


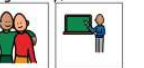

I Don't Interrupt
by Sasha Hallagan
Communication Symbols by Mayer-Johnson LLC. All Rights Reserved. Used with permission of Mayer-Johnson LLC.


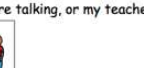
I see people I want to talk to who are talking to someone else.




I want to start talking to them right away, I don't want to wait.

But it is rude to interrupt. I don't interrupt if my mom or dad are talking to someone, my friends are talking, or my teacher is busy.

Instead of just starting to talk and interrupt, I wait my turn. I can stand nearby. I wait until they are done. Then I say, "excuse me."



When I act respectfully, people will want to talk to me.

 **When I go to the movies**

When I go to the movies, I wait in line to get my ticket.

 Sometimes we buy snacks. Sometimes we buy drinks.

It can be a good idea to use the bathroom before we sit down.

 In the theater, we pick a seat and sit down.

The theater might be dark. The theater might be loud.

 I can take breaks if I need to. I can ask to take a walk.

When I am in the theater, I am sitting in my seat with a quiet voice.

 **Going to the movies is fun!** 

When You Can Give a Hug
by TheaCarmeliger.com

I like my friends. I want to give them a hug to show them.

But sometimes, it's not the right time to give a hug.

When we are at lunch, working at school, on the bus, and playing sports - it's not the right time for a hug.

When it's my friend's birthday, the first day of school, the last day of school, or my friend is hurt - I can ask him if he wants a hug.

If he says no, I say, "No problem" and if he says "Yes" we hug!

 I'm a young man	 I'm growing up	 Sometimes my underarms will sweat and feel wet	 Sometimes they will smell bad
 Now I need to wash with soap and water every day	 I dry off	 I put on deodorant	 It keeps my under arms dry
 Now I smell good!	 I will put on deodorant every day before I put on clothes	 Deodorant helps	 Now it's part of my daily routine

Information taken and adapted from the National Autistic Society website (2018)

Compiled by Debra Glazier, Neurodevelopmental Associate Practitioner for the Child Development Team, V2 February 2021