

Social Stories



What is a Social Story?

Social situations and expectations can be difficult for individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder to understand. Social stories serve as a method for helping them better understand such situations. Social stories are short stories that are written for a specific individual. They outline the situation and the expected behaviors, as well as strategies to cope with any difficulties that may occur. Social stories are a visual way of clarifying information and allowing the individual to review it repeatedly until it is understood.

What can Social Stories Teach?

Social stories can address almost any situation or skill that an individual may be struggling to handle appropriately. If an individual is getting into trouble, struggling socially, or even just seems confused by a situation, a social story may be appropriate. Some examples may include”

- Simple social skills (e.g., how to have a conversation with a friend)
- Social expectations (e.g., waiting in lines, ordering food at a restaurant)
- Responses to others behaviors (e.g., what certain situations mean, how to handle change, how to solve simple problems).

Elements of a Social Story

1. Social stories are written in first person.
2. The story should be personalized to the individual’s comprehension level.
3. Social stories should also be personalized to the individual in terms of setting, people, and situations that are relevant to him/her
4. Make sure the social story is specific. It should address the specific locations, characters or situations where the individual is struggling.
5. Ensure the strategies or wording used is appropriate to the skill level of the learner.
6. Repeat key information throughout the story so the learner understands the main ideas.
7. Increase the relevance of the social story to the learner by involving him/her, when appropriate
8. Individuals with autism are often visual learners. Consider whether it may be beneficial to use pictures/graphics to make the story easier to understand.
9. Build in specific times to review the story so the individual can begin to learn and memorize the information it contains.

Sample Social Story

I ask lots of questions each day.

Sometimes I will like the answer. Sometimes I will not.

When I like the answer, I can say "Ok, thanks!" I can smile, too.

When I do not like the answer, I should still say, "Ok."

I should not ask that person other questions to get them to change their answer.

I should not ask another person the same questions.

Even though I do not like the answer, I have to remember that the adult decides.

If I do not like the answer and I feel mad or sad, I can remember to calm my body.

I can take a break.

I can take some deep breaths.

I can try to STOP and think of a new thought.

I will remember that I only ask the question 1 time.

I will remember that whatever the answer is, I say, "ok"

I will remember that the adult get to decide the answer and that their answer is final.

How Can I Learn More?

Books & Articles

- Baker, J. (2001) *The Social Skills Picture Book Teaching Play, Emotion, and Communication to Children with Autism*. Arlington, TX: Future Horizons.
- Crozier, S. & Sileo, N.M. (2005). Encouraging Positive Behavior With Social Stories: An Intervention For Children With Autism Spectrum Disorder. *Teaching Exceptional Children*, 37 (6), 26-31.
- Gray, C. (2016). *The New Social Story Book, Revised and Expanded 15th Anniversary Edition: Over 150 Social Stories that Teach Everyday Social Skills to Children with Autism or Asperger's Syndrome, and their Peers*. Arlington, TX: Future Horizons.
- Gray, C.A., & Garand, J.D. (1993). Social stories: Improving Responses of Students with Autism with Accurate Social Information. *Focus on Autistic Behavior*, 8 (1), 1-10.
- Swaggart, B.L., Gagnon, E., Bock, S.J., Earles, T.L., Quinn, C., Myles, B.S., & Simpson, R.L. (1995). Using Social Stories to Teach Social and Behavioral Skills to Children with Autism. *Focus on Autistic Behavior*, 10, 1-16.

Websites

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