Stories for everyday life

The Big Book of Social Stories

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Why a Social Story???

What is a social story? A social story is a learning tool that is used to support a safe and meaningful exchange of information between parents, teachers, therapists, and people with Autism of all ages (Gray, 2017). Social stories were developed by Carol Gray in 1990 when she was a special education teacher and realized there was a need. They have been used over the years to help individuals with Autism, and their families, to negotiate everyday life.

This method has been researched to determine whether social stories are effective and if they would be useful in helping those with Autism negotiate everyday obstacles, that others take for granted. According to Kokina and Kern’s 2010 Meta-Analysis, where they researched the results of 18 studies and a total of 47 students, who used social stories as an intervention. The majority of the student, 51%, had outcomes that were considered “highly effective”, however, 44% were classified as “ineffective” (Cosgrave, 2017). These results demonstrate a need for further investigation, but currently, the consensus is that social stories are either very effective for an individual, or not at all.

You may be asking “will this work for my child?” there is a high probability that these stories will work for you and your family. One of the great aspects of social stories is that they detail what you can expect in certain situations. They can also help demonstrate what you expect from your child in different situations and prepare your child for outings, such as a field trip.
How to use a Social Story

This book is designed with elementary school-aged children in mind. However, the stories can be adapted to fit any age-group. The stories in this book address typical social issues that children with Autism face, and it should be tailored to your child and family situations.

• These stories should be read with your child in an environment that will not distract them

• Read these stories prior to the outing/event/task
  o For example: Read your Social Story about visiting the doctor several days before a trip, and re-read it as the date approaches, repetition is important.

• Take your time to read, encourage your child to show you expressions and/or gestures related to the story (this will help them retain the information)

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I Will Brush My Teeth: A Social Story

After I eat I need to brush my teeth
I will go to the bathroom

Then I turn on the water
Pick up my toothbrush and wet the bristles

Then I add a small amount of toothpaste
And brush my teeth...

I’ll brush the front...  
The back...  
The top...  
and the bottom!
Now I will spit in the sink

rinse my toothbrush
And turn off the water

And that is how I brush my teeth! All by myself!!!
When I Get Ready:  
A Social Story

After I wake up in the morning
I need to get dressed for the day

I will pick out my clothes
A shirt…
Pants…
Underwear…
Socks…
And Shoes!

First I put on my underwear…
Then I put on my shirt

Next is my pants...
My socks...

And finally my shoes!
Now I am ready for the day!

I can get dressed by myself!!!
I will say “Hello”!
A Social Story

Sometimes people greet me..
And I do not know what to say

So I don’t say anything
And that can make them sad...

So when a friend or teacher says “Hello”
I can say “Hello” or “Hi” to them!

Now I can greet my friends and teachers!
When my parents say “No”: A Social Story

Sometimes I get upset when Mom and Dad tell me “NO”
And I cry and scream and lay on the ground.

This makes Mom and Dad sad, and hurts their feelings.
Because they don’t say “NO” to be mean

They say it because they care.
Instead of throwing a fit, I will take a couple deep breaths.

And ask if we can do it next time.
I can stay calm when Mom and Dad say “No”
I Will Take Turns: A Social Story

I like playing games with my friends
Sometimes I forget to take turns

Because playing is so much fun!
And I want to go again!

But no one else will have fun if I am the only one playing
So I need to STOP

Give my friends a turn
Then it is my turn again!

That way my friends can have fun too!
When everyone plays, everyone has fun!!!

I can take turns with my friends!!!
When I Lose: A Social Story

I like playing games!
When I win I am happy!

When I lose I get mad!
When I get mad, no one wants to play with me.

When I lose I will Stop!
Take a deep breath...

And say “Good game! Let’s play again!”
I can lose and still have fun with my friends!!!
I Will Stay With Mommy
A Social Story: About Not Running Away

I like going fun places with my mommy.
When I want to run
First... I stop.

And ask mommy “Can we go over there?”
I do not run away.

When I run...
I can get hurt...
...or lost.

That scares mommy and makes her sad.
So I won’t run, and I will stay with mommy.
When it is Too much: A Social Story

Sometimes I go new places my family and friends
Sometimes when I go to crowded places

I find the crowd
Or noise..

Overwhelming!!!
When it starts to feel like too much

I can ask my parents to take me somewhere else
and will cover my ears

So I can calm down
Once I calm down we can try again!

I can go new places with my family!!!
Do You Know the Password: A Social Story

Sometimes Mom and Dad can't pick me up
So they will tell me a password

If someone I don’t know tries to pick me up
And they don't know the password

I Will Not go with them
And will tell the teacher!

I know the Password! And what to do when a stranger doesn’t!
When I go to School:
A Social Story

When I’m at school sometimes I talk out of turn
Then I get in trouble for interrupting

So I will raise my hand
And wait for the teacher to call on me

When the teacher calls on me I can share my thoughts
So I will raise my hand when I am at school!!!
When I go to a Restaurant: A Social Story

Sometimes my family goes out to eat
Once we get inside we have to wait for a table

Sometimes I get upset when I am hungry
When I’m upset I will take a deep breath, and let it out.

When the waitress shows us a table, then we sit down.
After we sit, I look at the menu

If I have questions, then I can ask my parents
Before I order I ask my parents if I can get what I want

If they say no, I take a breath
And look at my menu again

If they say yes, I will tell the waitress when she asks
I will wait for everyone to get their food, before I start eating.

When we are done, I will wait for my parents to pay the bill.
And I will say “thank you” to the staff when we leave

I can go to restaurants with my family!
When I go to the park: A Social Story

Sometimes my family and I go to the park
The park can be fun!

There are swings!
And slides!

While I’m playing I need to know where Mom or Dad is
I should always be able to see them!

If I can’t see them, then they can’t see me.
So I move to where I can see them.

So they know I am safe!
If I know where Mom and Dad are...

I can go to the park and be safe!!!
When I go to the Grocery Store: A Social Story

Sometimes we go to the grocery store
While we are there we get lots of things!

I will be on my best behavior!
So everyone can enjoy our trip to the store!

I will stay with Mom while we are shopping
So that I don’t get lost while we shop

And I will ask if we can get something, before putting it in the cart!
If she says “no, put it back” I can say “maybe next time”

If she says “yes” I will say “Thank You!”
When we check out I need to be patient

I can go shopping with Mom!
Sometimes I go to the doctor’s office

When I am sick, the Doctor can help me
But sometimes I get scared

I have to wait in the Waiting room
When the nurse calls my name, Mom or Dad will go with me.

They may weigh me and check my height.
To see how much I’ve grown!

When I get to the doctors room I will sit on the table.
The Doctor or nurse will ask what is wrong today or how are you feeling?

While they are examining me they may put things on my arm.
Or on my chest

Or in my ear
Or in my mouth!

They do this to figure out why I am sick
If it is too much I will ask him to “Please Stop”

When he figures out why I am sick, he will tell us how to make me feel better!!!
I can go to the Doctor, because he’s going to help me feel better!!!
When I go to the Dentist: A Social Story

Sometimes I go to the Dentist!
The Dentist helps take care of my teeth

I will brush my teeth before I go, so they are nice and clean!
After they call my name I will follow the Hygienist to the room

I will sit in the chair that reclines
And let the hygienist put the bib on me, to protect my clothes.

We will figure out a signal for me to make if something hurts.
I will listen to the Hygienist when she tells me to open and close my mouth.

I will not bite her fingers while she is working.
If something hurts I will give her the signal

Once my teeth are clean the Dentist will take a look
After he is done, it is time to go home!!

I can go to the Dentist!!!
When I go to Church: A Social Story

Sometimes on Sunday my family goes to Church
When we get there I will go to Sunday School

While I am in class Mom and Dad will go to their class
While I am there
I will listen to my teacher

After Sunday School I will walk with my class to Junior Church
During Junior Church I will listen to the Bible stories

I will close my eyes during prayer
Raise my hand if I have questions

And sing the songs
When class is over
Mom and Dad will
pick me up

And then we head
home together!
I can go to Church with my family!!!
How to make a Social Story

Social stories use four different types of sentences: descriptive, directive, perspective, and control. These sentences are used to describe different social situations and settings using step-by-step directions for the desired activity. The stories detail, using positive terms, the desired behaviors “The greater the number of directive statements, the more specific the cues for how the individual should respond.” (Edelson, 2017)

When writing a Social Story, it is important to use action phrases i.e.” I will ________, when I (verb)” . These phrases should demonstrate the type of behavior you expect from your child. You may also include addressing their emotions during certain situations and techniques to help them regulate their emotions. For example, “Sometimes I get angry. Before I say something mean I will take 3 deep breaths”

Components of a Social Story

- Like any other story, they should have and introduction, body, and conclusion.
- Each story should have a title addressing the area of concern such as: ‘When I get dressed’ or ‘When I go to the bathroom’
- Personalize your story with pictures to make it interesting
- Stick to the four types of sentences:
    - Use ‘sometimes’ or ‘usually’ (never always)
  - Directive: What is the desired response?
o Perspective: Describe how others react and why, How do they feel?

o Control: end the story with “I can _____” it is important to show a child they can control their actions/reactions/emotions in other environments and it ends on a positive note.

Carol Gray created a screening instrument to determine if a story is really is a Social Story. I have provided a link to this screen in the appendix, as it is copywritten; but available for private use. This tool may help you when writing your own social stories.
References


Resources for creating your own Social Story


Appendix A

When I go _____:
A Social Story

Sometimes my family and I go______

Sometimes I get ______

Because there is too much ______

When I get ______, I need to take a deep breath to help me calm down

Once I calm down I ________
I can go to the ________ with my family!!!
Appendix B

Guidelines on how to Make sure your Social Story, is a Social Story. This pdf is copywritten but available for private use, so I have provided a link.