Social Stories
Table of Contents

Page 3 Social Stories

Page 4 How To Create A Social Story

Page 5 How To Present Social Stories

Page 6 Example of a Social Story and Further Resources.
Social Stories

“I have been told that social stories can help with my son’s behaviour, what is a social story and how do you make one?”

Social stories are short stories specifically written to help the child with autism develop social understanding, and learn how to interact appropriately with others. They also help the child to consider the perspective of another person. Social stories help because social situations are constantly changing and this can be extremely frustrating for the child with autism, especially if the child does not have the skills to interpret the change of social rules.

Social stories can be used to apply to any situation. Social stories outline the situation and the expected behaviour the child needs to display and why. Social stories can outline the perspectives of others to the child in a factual way. Social stories can have photos, pictures or just words depending on the needs of the child.

The concept was developed by US author and educator, Carol Gray. For more information on Carol Gray’s social stories visit her website at www.TheGrayCenter.org

It is important that a social story is introduced in a relaxed, positive environment where the student is attentive and can ‘learn’ the social situation and develop an understanding of the social context.

WRITING SOCIAL STORIES

Social Stories contain sentences that are:

- Descriptive: What is going to happen?
- Directive: What should I do?
- Perspective: How do I or others feel?

Descriptive Sentences describe the setting, activity, who does what and why. They are objective and do not assume reactions of the person.

Directive sentences tell the person what is expected as a response to the cues or situation described. Directive sentences often begin with the words:

“I can…….”

“I will…….”

Perspective Sentences describe the reactions and feelings of the person and of others in the given situation.
HOW TO WRITE A SOCIAL STORY

Step 1: What is the situation with which the person needs support?

Step 2: What characteristics of the person do we need to consider?

- Attention Span
- Motivators
- Learning Support Needs
- Vocabulary
- Reading ability
- Visual ability

Step 3: Give information about the situation from the person’s perspective

- who is involved
- what happens
- duration of the situation
- how it begins and ends
- consequences (both positive and negative)

Step 4: Writing the Social Story-Guidelines

A. Use ‘appropriate’ language
   Appropriate to the person’s comprehension skills
   Vocabulary and language familiar to the person
   Short sentences are best.

B. Write from the learner’s perspective
   Put yourself in the person’s shoes during observations
   Observe the person’s reactions to situations.
   What confuses, frightens, motivates them?
   Write in the first person: “I can …”, “I am …”,
   “My teacher …”

C. Build in flexibility
   Use sentences starting with “Sometimes………”, “usually…….”

D. Define clear ways to signal the beginning and end of an activity
   “My computer time finishes when the timer rings”
   “I can read my book until Mrs Ray writes our assignment on the board”

Step 5: Implementing Social Stories

Read story with the person prior to use in the target situation
Check comprehension of the story.
Initially read the story approximately once daily (or every time the target event occurs)
As behaviour improves, gradually ‘fade’ the story.
If needed, increase the frequency of use again
The learner can share the story with others
If the story is not working, check that it is:
• accurate
• positive
• read at the relevant time
Adapted from Mr Neil Nicoll, Psychologist (Psychologist Number PS0003047),
CHERI Westmead children’s hospital

How to present social stories
• Read them to the child.
• Read the story onto an audio tape so the child can listen and read along to the story.
• Act them out with dolls or puppets.
• Have the child read them aloud.
• Afterwards, you can ask the child questions about the story, such as “How would you feel if ….?"

Tips for using social stories
• Use the child’s name or nickname.
• Use ‘kidspeak’.
• Personalise the story with the names of friends and favourite things.
• Write realistic dialogue that is age appropriate and matches the child’s reading level.
• Don’t write about what needs to be learned, have the character actually do what needs to be learned.
• Use the present tense.
• Repeat the important points of the story.
• Involve the child in writing and illustrating the story.
• Insert clipart or photos of the child to add interest to the story.
• Try to end each story with a ‘confidence statement’ such as “I can do it.”

Note
To avoid literal interpretations and to accommodate changes in routine and expectation, use the following words in the story:
I can
I will
Usually
I will try
Sometimes
Probably

Some children will memorise the stories and may criticise you or become upset if you change the text even slightly. To avoid this it may be a good idea to create several versions of the same story; rewriting it from different viewpoints and altering the wording of the key statements.
Example of a social story;

When I hit my brother he cries and mum gets upset. This is because hitting hurts and is not a good thing to do. I should not hit my brother. Instead of hitting I can use words to tell my brother to go away if he is bothering me. I should say “Luke please go away” Then my brother will know he is bothering me and needs to move. Usually Luke will move away and I won’t need to hit him. Mum will be happy and will not tell me off. Mum will be proud of me for using my words. When I use my words mum is happy because no one gets hurt and I can tell Luke what I want.

Resources-


http://www.polyxo.com/socialstories/