

Information for parents and professionals

What are social stories

Prepared by Mr Neil Nicoll, Psychologist (Psychologist Number PS0003047), CHERI

Social Stories are short stories. They describe situations or concepts in a format that is meaningful for people with developmental disorders. Social stories help people with developmental disorders to "NAVIGATE" a situation which they find difficult to manage.

Social Stories are used as a communication strategy. They enable people to:

- understand a situation
- learn how to respond or behave in that situation.

For Example:

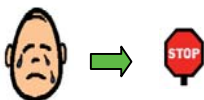
"CRYING"

People sometimes cry when they feel sad.



It's OK to be sad and cry.

Later the crying will stop.



When people cry I can say: "it's OK."

When people cry I can give Mummy or a teacher a cuddle

When crying is too noisy I can walk away or cover my ears



I can wait. Soon crying will stop and everyone will be happy again.

WRITING SOCIAL STORIES

Social Stories contain sentences that are:

1. Descriptive: What is going to happen?
 2. Directive: What should I do?
 3. 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. For example: "People sometimes cry when they feel sad". Descriptive sentences help the person focus on relevant cues in situation. For example: "Later the crying will stop"
 - Directive sentences tell the person what is expected as a response to the cues or situation described. For example: "When people cry I can give mummy or teacher a cuddle".

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. For example: " Soon the crying will stop and everyone will be happy again".

A SOCIAL STORY RATIO

Most Social Stories have a ratio of two to five descriptive or perspective sentences for every directive sentence. The person is always one of the key characters. Social Stories are:

- individualised for the person
- relevant to the person's life



WHY USE SOCIAL STORIES?

- They explain how to behave in specific social situations
- They teach specific social and communication skills
- They assist in managing change
- They reduce anxiety
- They assist in managing repetitive behaviours
- They help to cope with school curricula
- They help to teach independent living skills

WHO CAN USE SOCIAL STORIES?

- People who are readers & non-readers
- Verbal and non-verbal people
- Any age group

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

FORMATS FOR SOCIAL STORIES

- Video taped versions
- Audio taped versions
- Flash cards
- Photo albums and card holders
- Wall sequences
- Booklets and 'big books'



SAMPLE STORIES

"Playing Games"



I like to play games with other kids.



Sometimes I get to go first. Sometimes I don't. I know other children also like a turn going first.



Sometimes I play a game and don't even get a turn. That makes me feel angry but I say to myself "I'll get a turn another time". I take a deep breath and sit quietly.



Sometimes when I play games I win. That makes me feel happy.

Sometimes I lose. I say to myself "Oh well. I hope I win another time".



I take a deep breath and sit quietly.

Then I say "well played" to the winner and smile. I think of all the times I have won before. I say to myself "all kids like to win and everyone gets a turn to win."



Other children like playing games with me because I'm such a good sport.



I like feeling calm after I have played a game.

"Working by Myself"

I can do work all by myself.



Mrs. Hoare tells me exactly what to do.



I do my work as quickly as I can.



Sometimes I make mistakes. Oops!



That's okay. Everyone makes mistakes sometimes.



When I finish my work, I can colour in a circle on my chart.



When I have all the circles coloured in, I get to choose an activity that I like.



Mrs Hoare is so proud that I can work by myself.



I'm proud of myself as well.



"People I Can Talk To"

Sometimes I go shopping with Dad and Mum and we buy groceries and meat and clothes.

Sometimes Dad and Mum buy me chips.

I talk to Dad when I am shopping. I talk to Mum when I am shopping.

Sometimes I give money to the shop lady.

I can say "hello" to the shop lady. I can say "thank you" to the shop lady.

I only talk to people I know at the shops.

I like to talk to Mum and Dad.

I am pleased I am learning who I can talk to.

"My Friday Test"

Every Friday morning we have a test.

The test is straight after assembly.

I sit at my desk and I have my lead pencil ready.

Mrs Jones gives me a sheet of paper, face down so that I can't see the writing.

Mrs Jones says "turn the paper over".

I write my name at the top.

Mrs Jones talks to us about what is written on the paper.

She says "good luck, you can start now."

I read the first question.

I think of the answer. I write down the answer if I know it.

If I don't know the answer, I have a guess.

I need to try every question.

I feel good because I have finished my test.

Mrs Jones is happy because I have done my best.

For more Information

If you require further information please contact:

CHERI
The Children's Hospital at Westmead
Locked Bag 4001
Westmead NSW 2145

Tel: (02) 9845 0418
Fax: (02) 9845 0421
Email: info@cheri.com.au

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