

SOCIAL STORIES

What is a Social Story? How are they written? Why do they work?



Social Stories:

are a social learning tool that supports the safe and meaningful exchange of information between parents, professionals, and people with autism of all ages (Gray, 2018).

Carol Gray, founder of Social Stories, states that there is only one definition for the term ‘Social Story’: it accurately describes a context, achievement, or concept according to 10 defining criteria. These criteria guide the research, development, and implementation of the Social Stories. The end product is a short story that describes a situation, concept, or social skill using a format that is meaningful for a child, adolescent, or adult with Autism. Often the story is written in response to a troubling situation or acknowledging an achievement. When a child is “misreading” a situation, a Social Story may be a helpful tool in guiding the child through that situation.

Social Story Topics

- difficulty riding in a car
- playing with other children
- expressing emotions
- having a substitute teacher
- why outdoor recess is cancelled
- going on a field trip
- fire/tornado drills
- attending an assembly
- taking turns
- brushing teeth or hair

10 Defining Criteria for Social Stories:

1. An introduction, body, and conclusion
2. Answers who, what, where, when, why questions
3. Written from a first person perspective
4. Written in positive language
5. Contains up to 4 basic types of Social Story sentences (descriptive, perspective, affirmative, and directive)
6. Literal meaning with words like “usually” and “sometimes” to ensure accuracy
7. May use alternate vocabulary to maintain a relaxed and positive quality
8. Uses concrete, easy to understand words enhanced by pictures if needed
9. May contain illustrations to enhance meaning of the story
10. Stories are motivating and/or reflects interests of the person with Autism

Excerpt from a Social Story on brushing teeth:

Learning to Brush Teeth



Toothbrushes, toothpaste and water (from a sink) are things people use when brushing teeth.

This means when I brush my teeth, my mouth might get wet and taste like mint. This is OK.

Effectiveness

Published research on Social Stories provides preliminary support for their effectiveness in reducing challenging behavior and increasing social interaction for children with ASD. While it is uncertain whether Social Stories alone are responsible for long-lasting change in social behaviors it is suggested that that these stories be included as part of a multicomponent intervention for children with ASD.

For more information and helpful strategies contact your Occupational Therapist if you think a Social Story may help your child. Carol Gray has an app StoryMaker for Social Stories that can be used on your iPad and iPhone for \$39.99. Again this may be something you talk to your child's OT about setting up.

