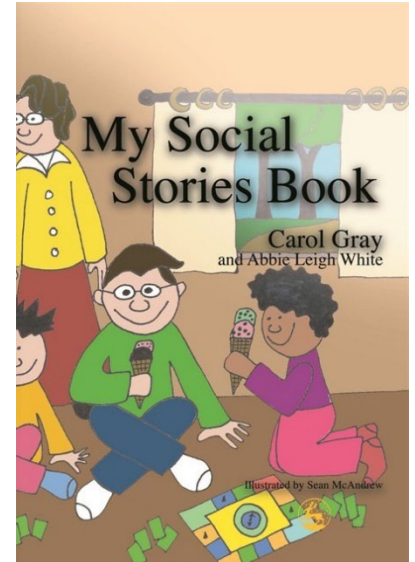


SOCIAL STORIES

What are Social Stories?

Social Stories were developed by Carol Gray in 1991, written for individuals with Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) to gain greater understanding of social situations. They are typically short stories written around a particular situation, providing the individual with information specific to the given situation. They can also help the individual to develop understanding of how other people may behave, as well as enabling others to view a situation from the perspective of the individual with ASD.



Social Story Topics

Social Stories can cover a wide range of topics, including;

- **Self-help** e.g. dressing/undressing, using the toilet, brushing teeth
- **Behavioural** e.g. managing anger, self-calming techniques and managing obsessions
- **Social Skills** e.g. turn taking, waiting in line, asking for help
- **Changes to routine** e.g. fire alarm, moving home, supply teacher
- **Supplying positive feedback** e.g. celebrating success and highlighting strengths and achievements in order to raise self-esteem and confidence

Writing a Social Story

The main points to consider prior to writing are;

- Identify the purpose of the story and consider what social understanding may need to be addressed in order to attain the story objective (if a story is being written around washing hands, highlight the importance of keeping hands clean)
- Collate as much information as possible regarding the objective of the story (when does the situation occur, when does it start and finish, who is involved, what happens in the situation etc)
- Collate information about the individual that the story is being written for (age, level and ability and understanding, key words that they will respond positively to or words that may cause anxiety and need to be omitted, level of attention, particular interests/motivators etc)

When writing the story;

- Include an introduction, main body and conclusion
- Keep the story as accurate and factual as possible
- Write with clear, positive language
- For younger children, write from the first persons' perspective
- For older children and adults, write from the third persons' perspective
- Consider the use of pictorial representations and/or props alongside the text, particularly for younger children (symbols, photographs etc)
- Ensure the content and presentation is suited to the individuals age (consider chronological and developmental) and level of understanding
- Use photos where possible to visually reinforce the written word.
- Use 'I will try' rather than 'I will' in the directive sentences.

There are 4 basic sentence types;

- **Descriptive** – accurate and truthful, provides answers to *wh* questions
- **Directive** – provides desired responses and allows for flexibility (I can try, I might like etc)
- **Perspective** – describes *other* people's feelings and thoughts (My Mum will be pleased if I eat my dinner, My teacher is happy when I sit on the carpet for register etc)
- **Affirmative** – supports information in previous sentences, emphasises an important message and enhances a commonly shared opinion or value (This is a good idea, This is ok etc)

The basic sentence ratio;

- 0-1 directive sentences
- 2-5 descriptive, perspective and affirmative sentences

Using the Story

The stories are intended to prepare the child for the situation. They should be read 1-1 with the child regularly in advance. Avoid sharing a story if the child is upset or using it as a consequence of misbehaviour. For older children, introduce them as something that will help them understand social situations and learn how to contribute appropriately. This in turn is promoting their positive contribution and increasing social acceptance.

It is useful to have a folder to keep all stories in with sections for different subjects. This folder should be kept accessible to the child at all times.

Once stories have been used successfully, they can become cumulative to include further targets. Add sentences like.....

'Before, I used to find it difficult to listen to the teacher, now I can.'

This story could then focus on a new target of putting up their hand to speak etc.

Answering the teacher's questions (Example)

My name is _____

I go to _____

Sometimes the teacher talks to the children.

The children usually sit still and listen.

Sometimes the teacher will ask the children a question.

The children listen to the words and think about an answer.

If the children think they have an answer they put their hands up.

My teacher knows who has an answer, because they have their hand up.

My teacher can only listen to one person at a time so chooses one child to give their answer.

If I'm not chosen it's ok, because the teacher knows I had an answer.

The person chosen gives the teacher their answer.

Sometimes their answer will be the same as mine, this is ok!! It just means that we are both correct!!

I can try and answer the next question.