

Social Stories™

Joe Falkner & Jessica Bjorkman



Social Stories™

- A Social Story™ describes a situation, skill, or concept in terms of relevant social cues, perspectives, and common responses in a specifically defined style and format.
- Social Stories were developed by Carol Gray in 1991.
- A Social Story™ is a process that results in a product. As a process, parents and professional consider the perspective of the person with ASD to develop each Social Story™. (from Writing Social Stories with Carol Gray)

Social Understanding

- Social Stories are based on a social understanding approach.
- “Social understanding approaches assume that to teach “appropriate social responses” to a student with an autistic spectrum disorder could hold **little meaning if others do not understand the student’s perspective, or the student does not understand what is occurring around him and why.** The first step to teaching social skills is to ensure, beyond all assumptions, that the student...has accurate and specific social information.” (from Writing Social Stories with Carol Gray)

What is the goal of a Social Story™?

- The goal of a Social Story™ is to share accurate social information in a patient and reassuring manner that is easily understood by its audience. Half of all Social Stories™ developed should affirm something that an individual does well.
- Although the goal of a Social Story™ should never be to change the individual's behavior, the individual's improved understanding of events and expectations may lead to more effective responses.

Some Guidelines

(from Writing Social Stories with Carol Gray)

- The student's needs determine the topic of the story.
- The student's perspective determines the focus of the story.
- The goal is to translate observed behaviors into social understanding goals.
 - Example: Joshua won't stand in line.
 - Emily stands quietly and watches children play in the sand box, everyday.

Some Guidelines

(from Writing Social Stories with Carol Gray)

- Social stories are written to the level that the student understands. Pictures can be incorporated with social stories to assist in understanding.
- Each Social Story™ is written from a first or third person perspective.
- Each Social Story™ uses **positive language**, and **states desired responses positively**.
- If a reference to a negative behavior is essential to the story, it is mentioned very **carefully and in general terms**, as in, “Sometimes people make mistakes...”

Four Types of Sentences

- Descriptive sentences; objectively address the “wh” questions: where the situation takes place, who is involved, what they are doing, and why they may be doing it
- Perspective sentences: give a glimpse into the minds of those involved in the story; they provide details about the emotions and thoughts of others
- Directive Sentences: **suggest** desired responses tailored to the individual
- Control Sentences: used as something of a mnemonic device and often authored by the student himself. This can be a sentence to help remember the story or deal with the situation. Control sentences may not be used in every story. They may be specifically paired with a visual cue to use to remind the individual of the focus of the story.

Descriptive Sentences

(from Writing Social Stories with Carol Gray)

- Descriptive Sentences are accurate, assumption free statements of fact.
 - Examples:
 - My name is: _____.
 - I am attending a discussion on Social Stories.
 - The speaker is talking to the audience.
 - Other examples

Perspective Sentences

(from Writing Social Stories with Carol Gray)

- A type of sentence that MAY appear in a Social Story. Most of the time, perspective sentences describe the thoughts and feelings of other people.
 - Examples:
 - The teacher will like it if I am listening to him.
 - Ms. Kafle appreciates when people leave her a gift a chocolate on her desk.
 - It makes Mr. Scott happy when he gets an email telling him how great the students did in the LGA news video.
 - Other examples

Directive Sentences

(from Writing Social Stories with Carol Gray)

- Directive sentences identify a **possible response**/solution, and/or **gently** direct behaviors.
- Key here is to try to avoid the use of words like: *must*, *need* or *should* if at all possible. Using the word **try** opens the space for the student to learn the appropriate behaviors for a social situation.
- Examples:
 - I will try to listen to the speaker.
 - I will try to sit quietly.
 - Other examples

Control Sentences

(from Writing Social Stories with Carol Gray)

- Written by the student with ASD
- Identifies strategies that the student may use to recall the story
- Often beneficial to read the story first, then write the control sentence
- Example
 - “I changed my mind....”
 - When someone says, “I changed my mind,” I can think of an idea becoming better...like a caterpillar changing into a butterfly.

Social Stories

(from *Writing Social Stories with Carol Gray*)

- Each Social Story™ is literally accurate, mentioning possible changes in routine, and using “insurance policy” terms like **usually** and **sometimes**.
- Each Social Story™ uses text and illustrations that reflect an understanding of the Reader’s personal learning characteristics (cognitive abilities, reading skills, attention span)
- Each Social Story™ uses a title that states the gist of overall goal of the story, reinforcing the most important information

Sentence Ratio

- Carol Gray recommends that a ratio of at least three to five descriptive or perspective sentences for every directive sentence be used for each story.
- It is also important to use developmentally-appropriate vocabulary and appropriate type size for the individual.
- Try to make each story resemble as closely as possible the other literature the child may be encountering at home and school.

Descriptive Sentence Activity

(from *Writing Social Stories with Carol Gray*)

- Monica has a favorite school bus driver and has difficulty adjusting to other bus drivers. The first two descriptive sentences of Monica's story are provided; write one or two descriptive sentences that could follow:
 - My name is Monica. On most school days, I ride the bus.

Perspective Sentence Activity

(from Writing Social Stories with Carol Gray)

- Derek has Asperger's Syndrome. He has difficulty working in a small group at school, and is resistant to using the ideas of others. This is one perspective sentence that could be found in Derek's story. Write another perspective sentence that may be found in the same story.
- Each student in our group has ideas about our project.



Directive Sentence Activity

(from Writing Social Stories with Carol Gray)

- Identify which of these sentence is a Directive Sentence, Descriptive Sentence, or a Perspective Sentence
 - I will try to stay in my seat on the bus
 - Mrs. Hall likes to keep children safe on the bus
 - I may try saying, “Hi, Ben!”
 - Mom likes it when I pee in the toilet.
 - Mom knows how to drive to my school.



Directive Sentence Activity

(from Writing Social Stories with Carol Gray)

- Identify which of these sentence is a Directive Sentence, Descriptive Sentence, or a Perspective Sentence
 - Sometimes I eat vegetables. Sometimes I eat meat. I eat many different kinds of food.
 - This is a picture of me in my classroom.
 - Usually, my bus comes at about 3:00 pm.
 - Sometimes, I may use the computer.

How to get started...

- Identify target skills to be taught (when a student behaves in a way that is “unexpected” it is important to understand what that student was trying to achieve)
- Analyze the task to be taught. Break it down into simpler components but not so many that the skills becomes cumbersome to learn.
- Highlight perceptions. The better the understanding of what people are thinking/feeling, the more likely the individual is to understand why to enact the skill. Demonstrate to the individual what is “in it for them” to engage in the skill.

Write a Social Story™

(from Writing Social Stories with Carol Gray)

- Form a group of 2-5 people. You may also choose to work alone.
- Complete the activity that you are given.
- Compare your results to that on the answer page you are given.
- Use the accompanying Social Story Checklist to check your work.

Write a Social Story™ of Your Own

(from Writing Social Stories with Carol Gray)

- Form a group of 2-5 people. You may also choose to work alone.
- Decide on a student who has particular difficulties with social understanding who may benefit from a social story.
 - Discuss the facts, relevant factors, perspectives, and suggested responses appropriate to the situation.
 - Write a Social Story™ using this information.
- Use the accompanying Social Story™ Checklist to check your work.

Concerns

- Benefit may depend upon the skill of the writer and their ability to take the perspective of an individual with ASD
- Avoid including too many directive sentences
- Avoid stating directive sentences in inflexible terms (I will do...rather than ...I will try to.....)
- Avoid writing above the cognitive level or age of the individual
- Avoid complex language
- Be specific in describing the behaviors and desired response

Questions?