

# Social Stories

Making a Positive Impact on Behavior



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# Social Stories

Making A Positive Impact on Behavior

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ALL CHILDREN, WITH OR WITHOUT A DISABILITY,  
CAN BENEFIT FROM STORIES THAT ARE WRITTEN  
FOR AND ABOUT THEM!

## What is a Social Story?

- The term *social stories* and the technique for writing them was developed by Carol Gray and is intended to help adults and children understand social situations.

## Why Do We Need Social Stories?

- We assume that children understand the behavior we expect but often they do not.
- Many times what we see as misbehavior may be the result of confusion

## What Can Social Stories Do?

- Describe social situations in terms of the relevant social cues and/or correct responses in a *non-threatening* format.
- Explain the "fictional" qualities of commercial stories/movies/etc. by identifying the realistically appropriate interactions depicted in those stories.
- Teach routines, as well as help the child to accommodate changes in routine.
- Address a wide variety of behaviors, including aggression, fear, obsessions, and compulsions.

## What Are The Basics of Social Stories?

- The parent or professional usually writes the story.
- At times, older students participate in the writing of their own stories, but it is important to remember the technique is to share information with the student that they did not previously know or understand.
- For young children an accompanying audiocassette tape can be effective.

## How Do You Write A Social Story?

- Target a behavior or situation that is difficult for the child. (or the skill to be taught)
- Spend time observing the situation.
  - What are the other people (family members, classmates) doing?
  - What parts of the situation might the student not understand?
  - Is the activity the same everyday or is it different?
- Give concrete and visual ways to make judgments.
- Write the story at the child's comprehension level.
- State things POSITIVELY!
- **Build in flexibility!** "Always" is *always* implied. Consider using words like "sometimes", "usually" or "often".
- The use of illustrations is important for young children.
  - Photographs
  - Black line drawings
  - Color drawings
- Consider using "Wh" questions as the title. The story will be the answer.

## What Are the Types of Sentences in a Social Story?

- A DESCRIPTIVE SENTENCE will describe the situation from the child's point of view and can also:
  - Identify who is involved
  - Describe what is going on
  - Identify where the situation occurs
  - Explain why the situation takes place
- A PERSPECTIVE SENTENCE will describe how others might feel or react. (*Only add sentences that reflect others point of view. Not the child's point of view.*)
- A DIRECTIVE SENTENCE is a positive statement of the desired response.
  - I will try...
  - I can try...
  - I will work on...

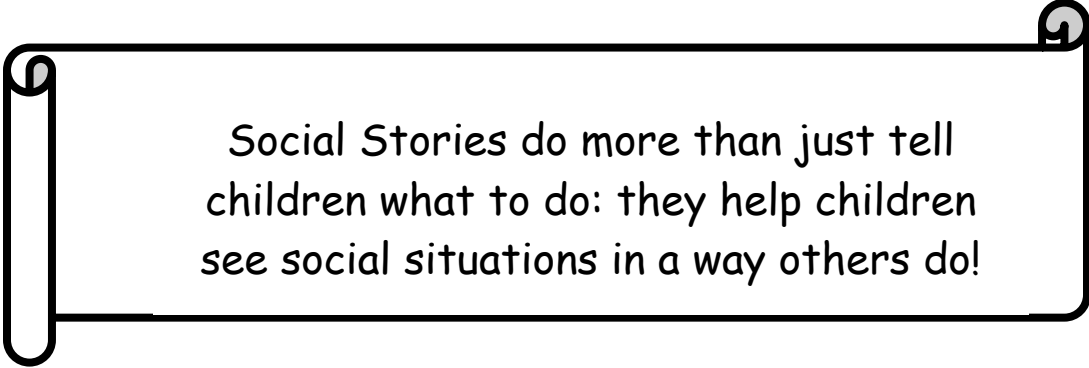
A good formula to follow for most stories is to write a minimum of three to five descriptive and/or perspective sentences for every one directive sentence in a story.

**\*WRITE THE STORY IN THE FIRST PERSON FROM THE CHILD'S PERSPECTIVE!**

***Example***

WHAT CAN I DO WHEN I MEET SOMEONE NEW?

Sometimes I meet new people. (Descriptive) Often they say "Hi" or Hello" to me. (Descriptive) They might even ask me some questions. (Descriptive) People I meet are usually friendly and would like to get to know me better. (Perspective) When I meet someone new I will try to remember to say "Hi."  
(Directive)



Social Stories do more than just tell children what to do: they help children see social situations in a way others do!

What Are Some Helpful Tips?

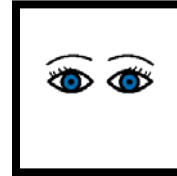
- Remember; use three to five descriptive or perspective sentences for every one directive sentence.
- Remember; write the story from the child's perspective and in the present or future tense.
- Remember; write the story at the child's comprehension level.
- If possible, read the story immediately before the targeted behavior or event.
- Limit the number of stories presented at a time.
  - Start with only one story and wait until the child becomes familiar and comfortable with social stories.
  - As the child becomes familiar with social stories introduce only one or two new situations at a time and wait until that skill is learned before introducing additional stories.
  - Allow the child to keep the story. This allows the child to review the lesson repeatedly as the new skill is learned.

# WHEN SHOULD I WASH MY HANDS?

Often my hands get dirty.



Sometimes I can see the dirt and sometimes I cannot see the dirt.



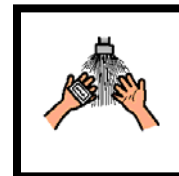
Even when I cannot see the dirt there might still be germs on my hands.



Dirt and germs can make people sick.



It is important to wash my hands after I use the toilet and before I eat food.

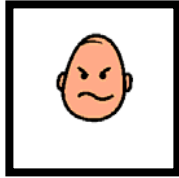


I will try to remember to wash my hands after I use the toilet and before I eat food..



# WHAT CAN I DO WHEN I FEEL MAD?

Sometimes people feel mad.



Sometimes I might feel mad.



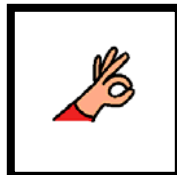
If I feel mad, I can find a grown-up who can help me.



I will try to use my words and tell the grownup I am mad and I need a break.



It is Ok to tell a grownup I feel mad and need a break.



# WHAT WILL I DO WHEN I GO TO THE GROCERY STORE WITH MY MOM?

Most people go to the grocery store to buy food.



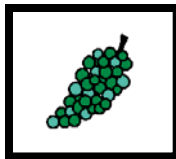
Often children sit in the front of the grocery cart and the adult pushes the cart.



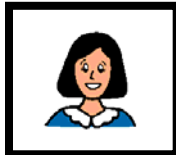
Usually the adult chooses the food off the shelves and puts it in the back of the grocery cart.



Sometimes my mom gives me a snack to eat while I sit in the front of the grocery cart.



It makes my mom happy when I sit in the front of the grocery cart and eat my snack.



It is OK to sit in the front of the grocery cart when I go to the grocery store with my mom.

