64TH CONFERENCE ON EXCEPTIONAL CHILDREN

WORKING TOGETHER
TO ACHIEVE STUDENT SUCCESS

Social Stories™

The "who, what, how and whys"

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So, what are we going to do today?

Learn what a Social Story™ is

Determine various situations in which a Social Story™ might be helpful

Look at sample Social Stories™

Learn how to write a Social Story™

Learn how to use and *teach* a Social Story™

Get references for further information on Social Stories™

Gain access to a set of handouts

Learn what a Comic Strip Conversation is and how to use it

Learn what a Power Card is and when it may be used

The National Autism Center's *The National Standards Project* identified 11 treatments as Established Treatments:

- Antecedent Package
- Behavioral Package
- Comprehensive Behavioral Treatment for Young Children
- Joint Attention Intervention
- Modeling
- Naturalistic Teaching Strategies
- Peer Training Package
- Pivotal Response Treatment
- Schedules
- Self-management
- Story-based Intervention Package

Social Story™

The most well-known story-based intervention

- The Social Story™ approach and term were developed by Carol Gray. She states:

  "The goal of a Social Story™ is to share relevant information. This information includes (but is not limited to) *where* and *when* a situation takes place, *who* is involved, *what* is occurring, and *why*."

- She further states that they can:

  "Provide missing information about the perspectives of others."
  "Provide missing information about relevant social cues."

Social Stories™

- Focus on developing not only social skills, but also social understanding.
- Provide information to help clarify the social picture.
- Provide visual support and a means of visual teaching.
  - Visuals are recognized as an effective teaching method in general education.
  - Visuals are widely accepted as an effective intervention strategy for people on the Autism Spectrum.

When a Social Story™ might be used

Think of an example in the school setting for each scenario

- For clarity in a specific situation in which a person is showing confusion or behaving inappropriately.
- In recognition of an achievement and to celebrate success.
- For explaining, reassuring and preparing for an event. These help the student to predict what will happen and what the expectations of them will be.
- To change behavior. These indicate the more appropriate responses and explain why they are important from another person's perspective.
- To teach a specific routine
- To teach an Activity of Daily Living

Preparing to write

- The process of gathering information is often more important than the Social Story™ product.

  It is critical to the success of the approach.

- Gather information and take detailed written notes
  - Do observations: Identify what is actually happening
  - Interview people; understand their perspective and expectations
  - Assess the perspective of the person for whom the story is written. However, the perspective of the individual should NOT be reflected in the story, as it may not be accurate.

Getting started:
The 3 basic Rules of a Social Story™

- Written in first or third person
- Written in present or future tense, like a newspaper article for adolescents and adults
- Written with the specific student in mind and matches the ability level and interests of the audience
  - reading ability
  - age
  - grade level
  - comprehension skills
  - attention span

Writing a Social Story™

- It has an introduction that clearly identifies the topic, a body that adds detail and a conclusion that reinforces and summarizes the information
- It provides answers to 'wh' questions: where, when, who, what, how and why
- Uses positive language, omitting descriptions or references to challenging behavior. Identifies positive responses.
- Is comprised of primarily descriptive sentences with options of other types
- Follows the Social Story™ formula
- Is literally accurate. Do not make assumptions
- Has a title that meets all applicable Social Story™ criteria

Provides answers to 'wh' questions:

- Where: setting or context
- When: time-related information
- Who: relevant people
- What: important cues
- How: basic activities, behaviors or statements
- Why: reasons or rationale behind the actions

Is comprised primarily of descriptive sentences with options of other types.

- **Descriptive sentences** objectively describe a situation or event and introduce characters and roles. They define where, who and why.

- **Perspective sentences** describe the internal states of characters. They describe the physical and/or emotional perspectives. Note that the perspective of the student with Autism is rarely described as we cannot be confident that it is accurate.

- **Directive sentences** define expected responses and behaviors.

- Must be written very carefully to avoid a list of demands and should say "I will try" verses " I must".

The Social Story™ formula & other pertinent information

$$\frac{\text{2 - 5 descriptive \&/or perspective}}{\text{0 – 1 directive}} = \text{Sentence Formula}$$

- In other words, for every directive sentence you should have an absolute minimum of three descriptive or perspective sentences.
- The sentence formula also means that Social Stories™ may contain descriptive and perspective sentences and may contain NO directives. That's great.
- Keep it as short as possible.
- Focus on relevant and important information
- Avoid 'bossy' books
- Consider individual factors that may be crucial to success
- Use the student's and the teacher's actual verbiage.

Implementing and using a Social Story™

- Read the story with/to the student in 1:1 situation - as it's written
- Do not quiz the student or 'ad lib', but do point to the pictures & text
- Read it 2 -3 times a day at school. A peer buddy is great.
- Read the story as if it's a 'real' story with appropriate voice volume, inflection and enthusiasm
- Best practice is to send a copy home to parents and have them read it a couple of times each evening too, unless the routine happens differently at home. (independent bathroom use, hand washing, homework, etc.)

Implementing and using a Social Story™ - continued

- Read it 2 -5 days consecutively before practicing the behavior/skill
- Do not expect immediate changes after the story has been read 2-3 times, though you may see some behavioral changes
- Practice the 'story' if appropriate. Tell the student you're practicing
- May need to *generalize* the skill with another version of the story
- Never refer to the story or attempt using the storywhen the child is in crisis or having a meltdown
- Leonard's bathroom story

For further information on Social Stories™:

Revealing the Hidden Social Code Social Stories™ for People with Autistic Spectrum Disorders by Marie Howley and Eileen Arnold

The New Social Story™ Book by Carol Grey

A Treasure Chest of Behavioral Strategies for Individuals with Autism by Beth Fouse and Maria Wheeler

www.thegreycenter.org/social-stories

Handouts:

- Social Story™ Checklist
- Social Story™ Guidelines and Rules
- Social Stories™: Introducing and Teaching

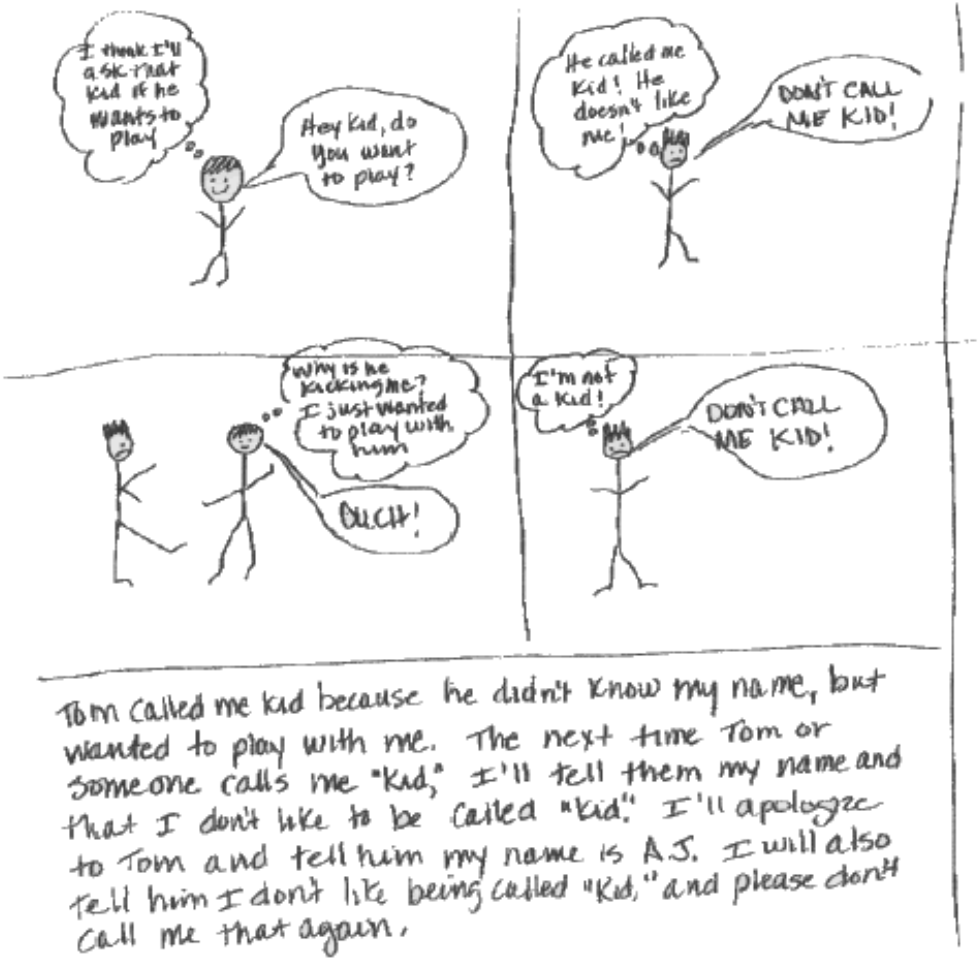
Comic Strip Conversations
Also by Carol Grey

Tool used to visually illustrate the actions, feelings, thoughts and/or intentions of the various people involved in a "conflict", and to help students think of or understand, possible solutions.

- Artistic ability is not required. Use stick figures to represent the people involved. If student draws, may choose to draw more elaborately.
- Word bubbles show the words and/or thoughts of the participants from the drawer's perspective
- May also write words or thoughts in different colors to represent different emotions
- Student takes the lead in creating whenever possible, with adult assisting
- A series of "frames" can/should be used to show the sequence of events
    - Sequence of events that have already occurred
    - Sequence of events that are likely to occur
    - Sequence of events with different solutions

Comic Strip Conversation: Example

A quick glance.



How can comic strip conversations be used?

- to convey important information
- for problem-solving and conflict resolution
- to learn social skills
- to follow simple classroom rules
- to communicate perspectives, feelings, and ideas

Elements of comic strip conversations

- a description of the event that caused the problem
- feelings and thoughts of those involved
- a solution to the problem and ideas on how to avoid it in the future
- reinforcement
- appropriate symbols (stick figures, smiley faces, thought bubbles & speaking bubbles)
- colors used to express feelings (green-happy, blue-sad, black-angry)
- may use student's favorite fictitious character

Comic Strip Conversation Process

Provide Insight: The adult shares personal insights during the cartooning process when natural opportunities occur. Students should have as much control as possible and adults should try to balance the student's perspective while sharing accurate information.

Provide Structure: Use comic strip boxes. Boxes can be numbered if the events are drawn out of sequence

Summarize the Cartoon: Allow the student to discuss the comic strip in chronological order. The student should verbalize it as independently as possible with clarification by the adult only if necessary. This step makes certain that the student and the adult have the same understanding of a situation.

Identify a New Solution: Again, the student and adult work together, with the student being allowed to be as independent as possible, to identify different outcomes to the event. Each item is analyzed, discussing the advantages and disadvantages of each and the student keeps the list of solutions for future use.

May re-draw the scenario: The cartooning process may be repeated with the stick figures representing the new insight and projecting the different outcome.

Comic Strip Conversation: Example

Tom called me kid because he didn't know my name, but wanted to play with me. The next time Tom or someone calls me "kid," I'll tell them my name and that I don't like to be called "kid." I'll apologize to Tom and tell him my name is A.J. I will also tell him I don't like being called "kid," and please don't call me that again.

For example: the new plan:
Jimmy reacts inappropriately when people in his environment use a loud voice. He created this comic strip conversation using characters from his favorite TV show to provide him with the appropriate response of "Ouch, that hurts my ears. Don't talk so loud, okay?" instead of Jimmy hitting the loud person in his environment.

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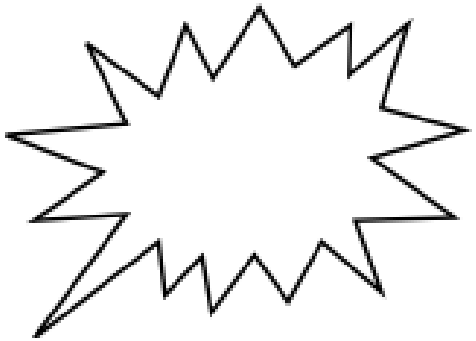
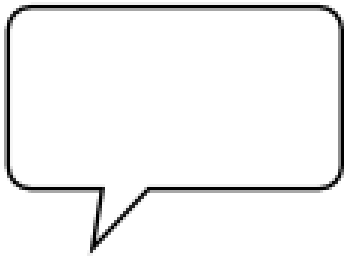
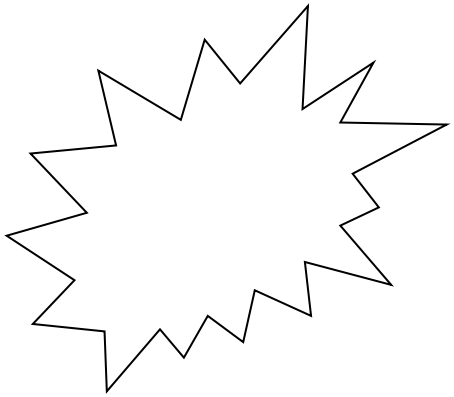
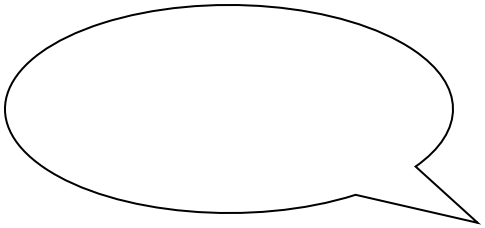
http://www.autismspectrum.ilstu.edu/resources/factsheets/comicstrip.shtml









Power Cards

Developed by Elisa Gagnon, 2001

- Teaches children and adolescents appropriate social interactions, including:
  - routines
  - behavioral expectations
  - the hidden curriculum
  - the meaning of language

- Incorporates the student's (intense) special interest onto a single sheet or card that tells how this "hero" handles a particular situation that is currently of focus for this student.

- A short social story™ is also included in this intervention; the social story™ describes the situation more fully than can be put on the card.

- The student first reads the social story, and then carries the card with him so that he can refer to the steps that his "hero" follows when he is in this situation.

- No training is required

Consider using a Power Card if the student is motivated by a special interest and at least one of the following is true:

1. lacks understanding of what he is to do
2. does not understand that he has choices
3. has difficulty understanding a cause-and-effect relationship between a specific behavior and its consequence
4. requires a prompt to remember what to do
5. understands appropriate behavior in calm situations, but under stress becomes anxious
6. needs a visual reminder to remember appropriate behavior
7. has difficulty generalizing
8. has difficulty accepting directions from an adult (Gagnon, 2001)

Power Card Components:

• A brief scenario using the student's hero or special interest and the behavior or situation that is difficult for the student. The scenario is written at the student's comprehension level.

In the first paragraph, the hero or role model attempts a solution to the problem and experiences success. The second paragraph encourages the student to try out he new behavior, which is broken down into three to five manageable steps.

• The Power Card is the size of a trading card, bookmark, index card or business card. It contains a small picture of the special interest and the solutions to the problem behavior or situation broken down into three to five steps. The Power Card is given to aid in generalization. It can be carried in a purse, wallet, book bag pocket, or clothing pocket or velcroed inside a book, notebook, or locker. It can also be taped onto the side of a student's desk.

(Gagnon, 2001, pg. 21)

Example

Student Description

Aaron has been acting out in class and seeking attention from his peers by saying or blurting out inappropriate comments in class. He likes the attention he gets from his peers for doing this and he thinks he's being accepted when his peers laugh at him for doing this.

Aaron's special interest is Nascar and he especially likes Nascar driver, Jeff Gordon.

Power Card Story

"Jeff Gordon and His Fans"

Jeff Gordon loves being a race car driver, but sometimes it is difficult for him to think before he speaks. At the end of a long day sometimes all he wants to do is make others laugh. Sometimes Jeff blurts things out when his boss is talking. But Jeff has learned to think before he speaks. Jeff has learned it is important not to talk when his boss is talking and not to say things to try and make others laugh when his boss is trying to talk to his pit crew and teach them the latest NASCAR rules and regulations. Jeff has learned to stop and think about the comments he makes before speaking.

Just like Jeff, it is important for Aaron to think before he speaks. It would make Jeff proud to know that Aaron is like him and that he thinks before he speaks and doesn't interrupt his teachers in class. It is important for Aaron to remember to do the following:

1. Think before he speaks. Say it in your head first before saying it out loud. If it's not related to what the teacher is teaching then Aaron shouldn't say out loud in class.
2. If Aaron can't think of something to say about the teacher's lesson, it's better for him not to say anything at all.
3. Always follow the classroom rules and raise your hand before you speak.

Power Card

1. Think before he speaks. Say it in your head first before saying it out loud. If it's not related to what the teacher is teaching then Aaron shouldn't say out loud in class.

2. If Aaron can't think of something to say about the teacher's lesson, it's better for him not to say anything at all.

3. Always follow the classroom rules and raise your hand before you speak.

Example written for a fourth-grade girl who was struggling to pay attention in class.

Hannah Montana loves being in concert and also loves being on the set of her TV show. She still, however, has to go to school. Sometimes it is hard for her to pay attention to her teachers when she is in class. As Miley Cyrus she is sometimes tempted to daydream about her other life as Hannah Montana. She has learned, however, that listening to her teachers and doing her school work is as important as singing, dancing and acting. She has learned that she needs to pay attention in class and do her work, so that she has time to do what she loves to do.

Just like Hannah Montana, it is important to pay attention in class. This would make Hannah Montana proud. Hannah would like all girls who love her to remember these three things.

- Listen to your teacher when she is talking. Be ready to answer any questions that she might ask.
- Do your school assignments and stay on task until the assignment is completed.
- Always ask for help when needed.

Remember to pay attention in class and do your school work and you will have lots of time to watch and listen to Hannah Montana when you are finished.

The Power Card accompanying this was a picture of Hannah Montana with the three steps to success.

Social Story™ Summary

- Determine a specific need
- Spend time gathering and writing down information
- Write a story following the guidelines
- Remember..... the shorter, the better
- Check your story against the checklist
- Introduce and implement the story (Teach it)
- Do *not* be afraid to try. Worst case scenario, it doesn't work.

  You're no worse off than you were before you started.
- Your *first* Social Story™ may take a while, but they get much quicker, and in my opinion are ***always*** worth it.

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Also by Carol Grey

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- Artistic ability is not required.

Power Cards

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  - behavioral expectations
  - the hidden curriculum
  - the meaning of language

- Incorporates the student's (intense) special interest onto a single sheet or card

Social Story™ Checklist

- ☐ Meaningfully shares social information or teaches new skill with a reassuring quality.
- ☐ Has an introduction that clearly identifies the topic, a body that adds details and a conclusion that reinforces the topic.
- ☐ Story provides the very specific and concrete answers to the where, when, who, what, how and why.
- ☐ The story is written from first person point of view as though the student is describing the event (for younger kids) or third person, like a newspaper (for the older kids).
- ☐ The story uses positive language, omitting descriptions or references to challenging behaviors in favor of identifying the positive ones.
- ☐ The story is comprised of descriptive sentences: Objective often observable statements of facts. May include: 1) others thoughts feelings or actions, 2) what others will do to support the student 3) identify suggested responses or choices of responses 4) sentences developed by the student to help him recall & apply the information if able/appropriate.
- ☐ Story follows the *Social Story™* formula
  Descriptive+perspective+cooperative+affirmative >or = to 2
  Directive & controlling
- ☐ Story matches the ability and interests of the audience and is **literally accurate**.
- ☐ If appropriate the story uses carefully selected illustrations that are meaningful to the student.
- ☐ The title of the story meets all applicable *Social story™* criteria

Social Story™ Guidelines/Rules

- It has an introduction that clearly identifies the topic, a body that adds detail and a conclusion that reinforces and summarizes the information
- It provides answers to 'wh' questions: where, when, who, what, how and why
- Is written in present or future tense
- Is written from first person perspective, or third person perspective, like a newspaper article, for adolescents and adults
- Uses positive language, omitting descriptions or references to challenging behavior. Identifies positive responses.
- Is comprised of primarily descriptive sentences with options of other types
- Follows the Social Story™ formula
- Matches the ability level and interests of the audience
- Is literally accurate
- Has a title that meets all applicable Social Story™ criteria

Provides answers to 'wh' questions:

- Where: setting or context
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Is comprised primarily of descriptive sentences with options of other types

- Descriptive sentences objectively describe a situation or event and introduce characters and roles. They define where, who and why.
- Perspective sentences describe the internal states of characters. They describe the physical and/or emotional perspectives. Note that the perspective of the student with Autism is rarely described as we cannot be confident that it is accurate.
- Directive sentences define expected responses and behaviors. Must be written very carefully to avoid a list of demands and should say "I will try" verses " I must".

Introducing and **Teaching** a Social Story™

To introduce and teach expected behaviors using a Social Story™ do the following:

Adult (or when appropriate, a peer helper) reads the story in a 1:1 situation with the student.

Read the story as it is written. *Do not add words or leave out words.*

Do not quiz the student on what it says or stop to discuss any pictures. Just point to the picture on the page, as you're reading.

Read it 2-3 times a day at school.

If a copy is available for use at home (which is best practice) the parent reads their copy 2-3 times each evening and on Saturday and Sunday.

Read the story with the child for approximately 3-4 consecutive days. If necessary, continue reading until the desired behavior (or event) is observed on a generally consistent basis.

Set the book aside and review as needed or after any long break from school.

Do NOT expect immediate changes after reading the story 1-2 times.

Read the story as if it is a "real" story book, with some excitement and enthusiasm. Do not read it as if it is a disciplinary tool.

If the student is able to read the text easily, take turns having the student and the adult read it.

If changes are made in the environment that are depicted in the story, the story needs to be updated BEFORE you continue to read it. For instance, if you're teaching rules for lining up and/or behaviors in the hallway and the kids initially stood on an X on the floor when lining up, and that symbol is changed to a picture of a stop sign that needs to be changed in the book. The book MUST remain accurate.

A single picture from the story may be used to augment the teaching. A visual reminder of the expected behavior, either in picture or text, or both, is given to the student each time the task or activity is initiated. For instance, a picture of the student with their hands by their side and mouth closed may be carried by the student in the hallway.
If a single picture is used, point to the picture or text card instead of using verbal language to remind the student of the expected behavior. If verbiage is necessary in addition to the picture, use only 1-2 words. NOT full sentences. For instance say "walk". Do not say "We don't run in the hallways".