

# Social Narrative For Autism Related Topics

## Anxiety In School *Learning Proactive Strategies*

**Listen-Share-Care**  
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**"I feel anxious in school."**

## Social Narrative For Autism Related Topics

### Anxiety In School Learning Proactive Strategies



## Anxiety in School: Learning Proactive Strategies

*It's almost here.* For our special needs children, it seems like the dramatic change in their lives entering summer break was big enough! Now, they have to get ready for a routine that may be familiar to them, or maybe not so

much. If you are the parent and your child has the same teacher as last year, which is a common occurrence in Special Education classes, especially self-contained classrooms, it can be a wonderful, somewhat smooth transition. The teacher knows your child, and you sort of know what to expect from the teacher.

**From the teacher's point of view**, there are also some positive points. Having been through this with my students for up to four consecutive years (YES!), I loved seeing my kids again. Teachers are always eager to find out what their student's summer experiences were like. Did they enjoy that social skills group they attended? How was that family trip? And, oh my, how they've grown!

**Addressing the anxiety** your students may feel as they arrive back at school can be a tiny blip for some, and for others a meltdown like no other. Most schools have a "Meet the Teacher" day prior to the first day of school. If you are the parent, please take your child to see the classroom. He or she may see kids that they recognize. Have your child interact as much as possible by sitting at their desk or table, greeting the teacher, look at their daily or individual schedule, and explore the room in a safe way. Stay close to your child if you feel it will help. As a teacher, introduce yourself and if the budget allows, offer a small treat or object that the child can take home. A picture of you in the classroom is something that may help your student with the transition, but can also be a keepsake for the family.

***The best teacher tips to ease back to school anxiety*** (for the kids!) is to be as prepared as you can be. Whether it is a new student, or one you've had for several years, make your classroom welcoming and ready. That doesn't just mean ready for learning, but ready for a student whose anxiety or behavior may escalate during this period. Extra-long body pillows with washable pillow cases worked incredibly well in my classroom "calm down" quiet area. Yes, I did throw them out at the end of the school year for hygiene safety, but it was a fairly inexpensive way to provide comfort for my kids. Make sure your visuals are up and ready to use on the first day of school. The children need to know where their schedules are and learn which one they will follow.

***Let assessments wait.*** Even if you know the child, you will be eager to begin assessing their skills to see if there were any gains made over the summer. Just hang on a bit...and I mean this for parents who may be asking about this, too. I understand that reading and math instruction must begin, but take small steps to get there. Start the following week, preferably midweek. It doesn't matter the complexity of the student's needs, just focus on making your classroom a place they want to be. You know better than anyone each student's IEP goals. You can touch on them briefly the first few days, but in a fun, engaging way. That informal interaction can provide you with a lot of great data!

***Talk to your students one-on-one.*** Even your students with very limited communication skills can hear you. Many can understand exactly what you're saying and can read your facial expressions. For your students who are able to express themselves verbally, allow them to share with you how they feel about coming back to school. You'll learn a lot from them!

***Control what you can.*** We know that the teacher can't perform magic and "make everything all better" all of the time. But, we can sure try our hardest and do what's best for our kids. Most of all, ***enjoy*** the kids! Even on those rough and tumble days that may lie ahead, make sure they feel welcome, wanted, and loved.

## **Anxiety in School: Proactive Strategies for the Family**

*(compiled by Jessica Jones, LMFT)*

***Anxiety is an emotion that everyone experiences.*** When children experience anxiety, it's natural for parents to go into protection mode and want to try to solve

their child's problems. Instead, a more effective way to help your child is to teach them the tools that they can use on their own. Children may not understand what it is that they are feeling which can cause their anxiety to be expressed as other feelings such as anger, sadness and avoidance, or physical symptoms such as headaches, stomachaches, and difficulty sleeping. As a parent, recognizing how your child shows anxiety is a great way to be able to help them understand how they are feeling. In this post, I'm here to provide some tips for you and your child to work through anxiety or other uncomfortable emotions they may experience.

### **1. Set Clear Expectations**

It's important to have similar expectations for anxious children that you have for non-anxious children. However, it can also be helpful to proceed at a slower pace and make some accommodations specific for your child.

### **2. Let Your Child Worry**

Worry serves an important function in our lives – without some amount of worry, we wouldn't stop to consider actual dangers that do threaten us. Give your child uninterrupted time with you each day to vent worries and brainstorm solutions together. No child ever stopped worrying because a parent said, "Don't worry!" or "Relax!" Explain to your child that it is okay to have these feelings.

### **3. Help Reframe Your Child's Thoughts**

Reframing is a technique that is used to help create a different way of looking at a situation, person, or relationship by changing its meaning. The anxious thought cycle can be overwhelming to children. By setting aside regular time to work on positive reframing with your child, it empowers them to take control over their anxious thoughts.

It works like this:

Name a worry floating around in your brain right now.

What is the worry telling you?

Let's break it down and see if that worry is 100% right.

How can we take that worry thought and change it to a positive thought?

### **4. Teach Them to Cope**

Every child is going to have a different way to cope with anxiety. Creating a list with your child will help them to feel confident in their ability to control their anxiety.

Some examples include:

Deep breathing  
Stress ball  
Write it out  
Listening to music  
Going for a walk  
Walking the dog  
Get help from an adult

#### **5. Get Back to Basics**

This seems like a common tip, but one we often forget when we as parents feel helpless that we are unable to help our children. When anxiety begins to affect your child, it is important to make sure that their basic needs are being met. If your child is suffering from anxiety, they may have difficulty sleeping, refuse to eat or drink, isolate themselves, and have trouble expressing themselves.

#### **6. Seek Professional Help**

If you find that your child is still experiencing anxiety, a trip to your child's doctor is the next step. The doctor will be able to carry out a detailed interview with you and your child and will be offer addition suggestions based on the specific needs of you and your child. Often times, a doctor will refer you and your child to see a therapist that is trained in helping children with anxiety. Therapists can help you as a parent to talk to your child and help them to confront their fears in a way and pace that they can manage.

## Suggested IEP Goal Alignment

*Goals which aid in leading to creating solutions and self-coping strategies to solve perceived feelings, or to develop social skills related to a specific situation.*

When a situation within the school setting arises that may arouse feelings of worry, anxiety, or stress, STUDENT will be offered a choice board containing two preferred items/activities that are part of a pre-taught coping skill to decrease these feelings without escalation, over the course of a 6 week period to decrease the feelings of worry, anxiety, or stress, by 80%, by MONTH, YEAR.

When a situation arises prior to arriving at school that may arouse feelings of worry, anxiety, or stress, STUDENT will use one or more pre-taught self coping strategies to decrease these feelings over the course of a 6 week period by 80%, by MONTH, YEAR.

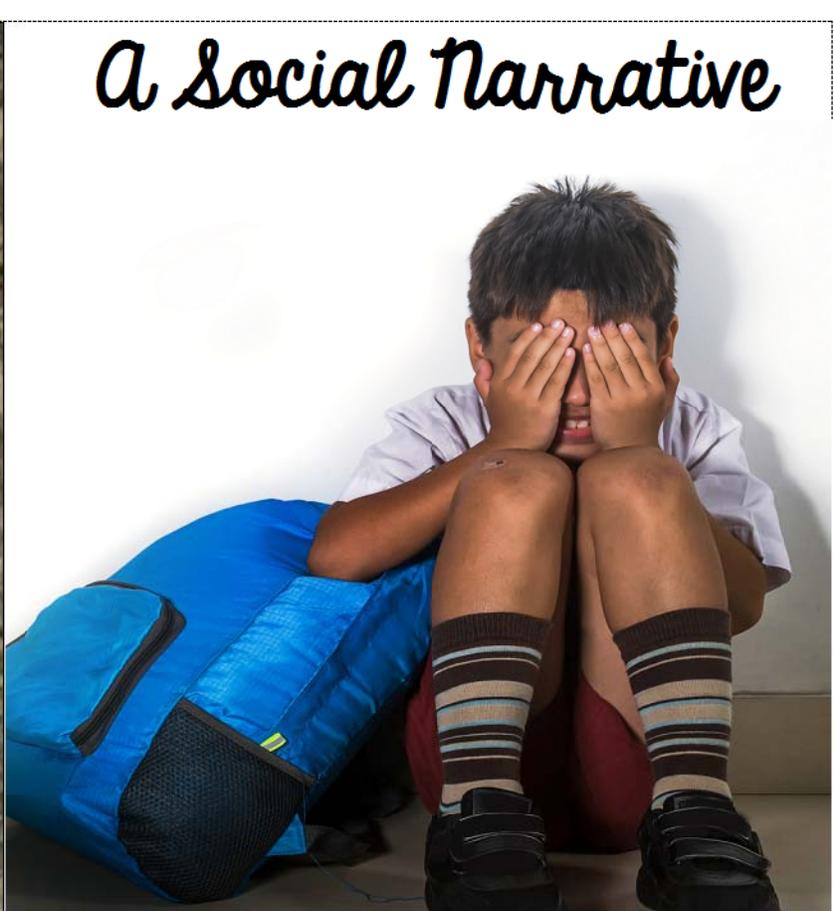
Thank you and have a wonderful learning year!



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A SOCIAL NARRATIVE: I Feel Anxious In School

# A Social Narrative



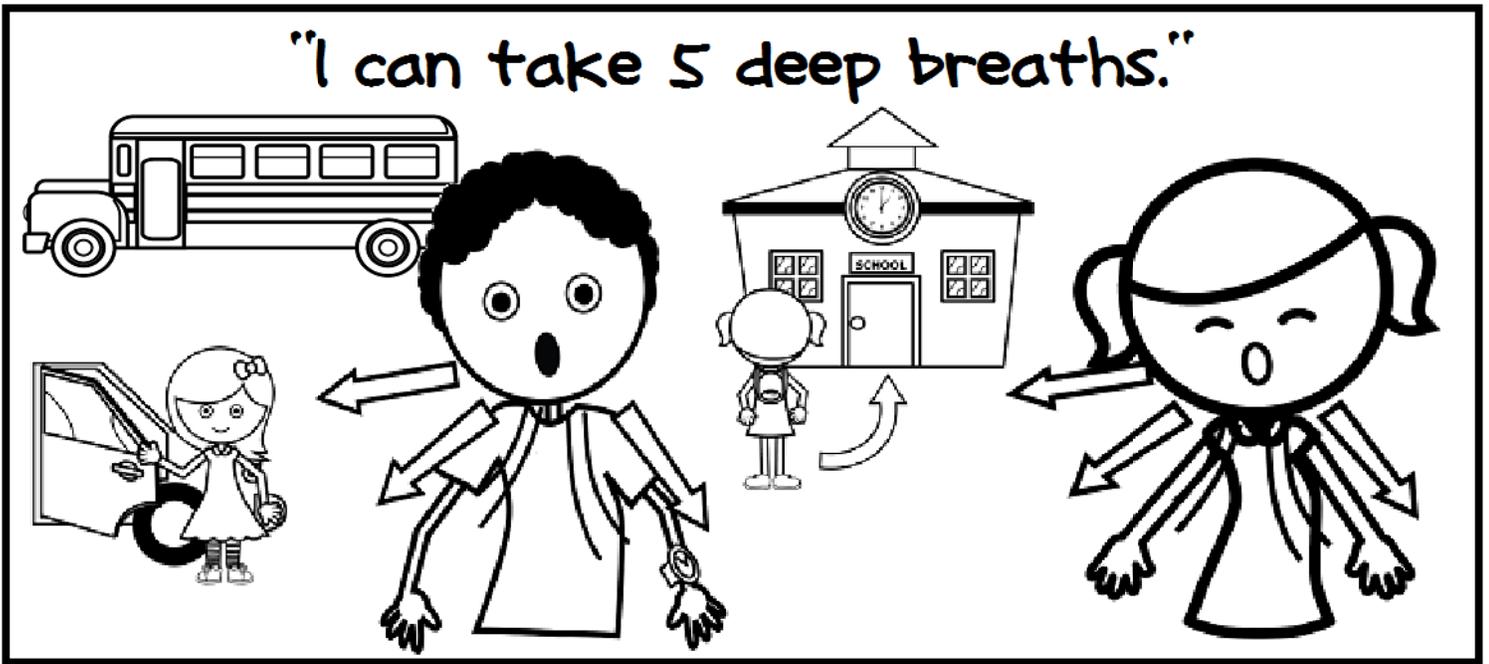
**"I feel anxious in school."**

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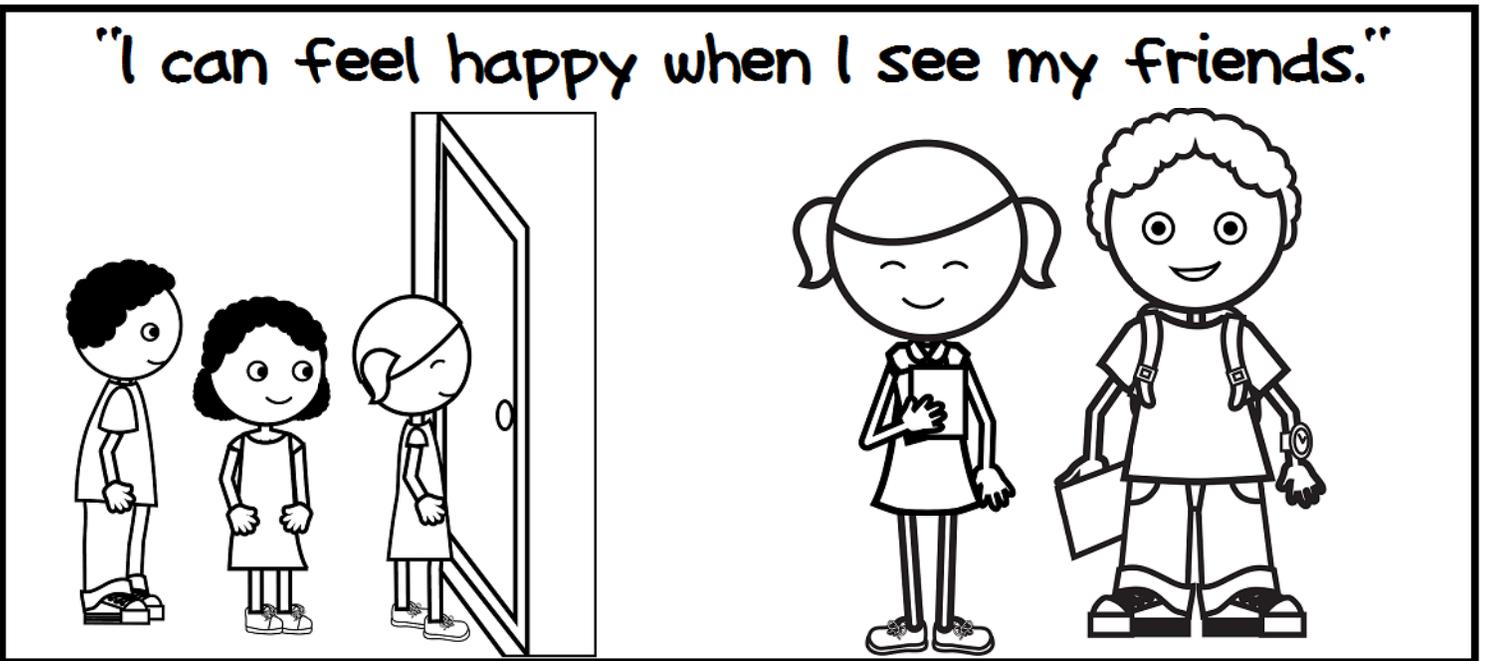
"This is how I feel when I get ready for school."



I will begin the new school year. Sometimes, when I have to get ready for school, I feel anxious. I can try and make myself feel happy when I go to school.

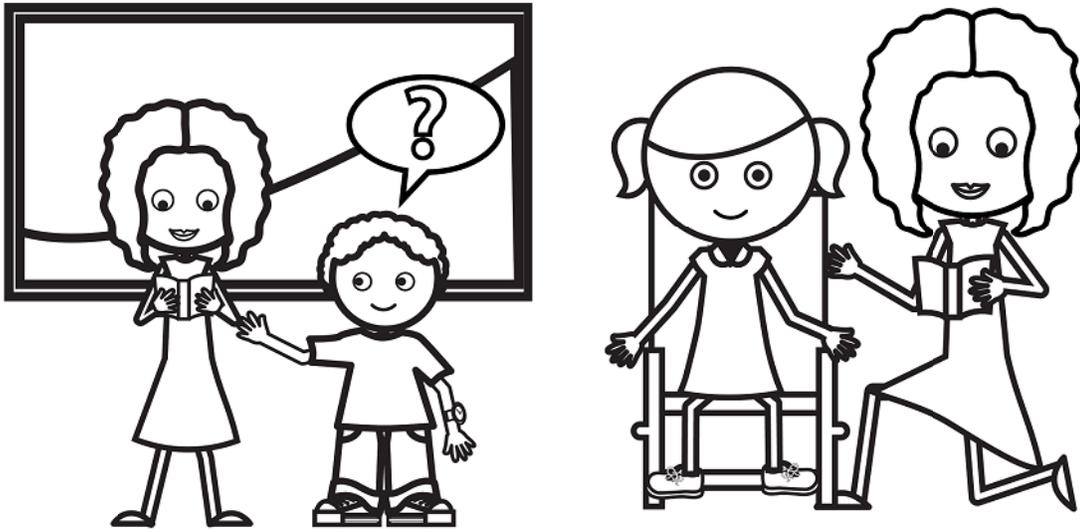


If I feel anxious when I am on the school bus, in the car, or walking to my school, I can take 5 deep breaths. This may help me feel less anxious.



When I get to school, I will go to my classroom, or our morning meeting place. I will see my friends. I can say, "Good morning" to my teacher and my friends.

"I can ask my teacher for help."



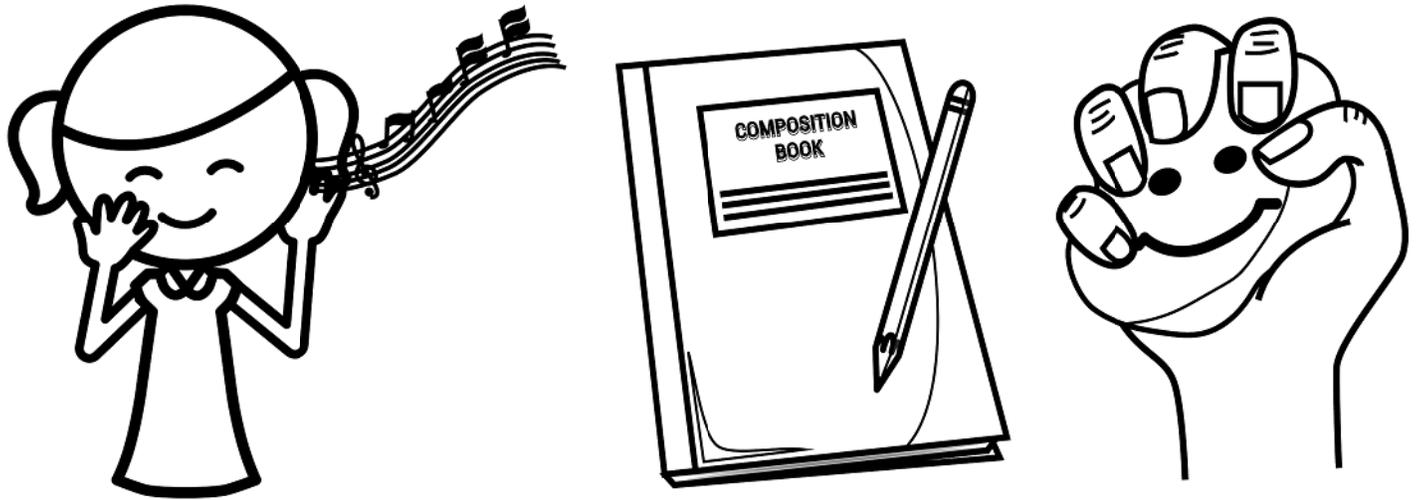
Sometimes, I may feel a little anxious about a test, or even some homework that I need to do. I can ask to talk to my teacher if I need help with my work. This can help me feel less anxious in school.

"It is okay for me to talk about it."



It is okay to sometimes worry about stuff. When I feel anxious or worried about something, I can talk about it. I can talk to my family, a counselor, or even a friend.

"I can learn ways to feel less anxious in school."



I can listen to music to feel less anxious. I can write in my journal or squeeze a ball. One thing I can do to feel less anxious in school is \_\_\_\_\_

"This is one thing that may make me feel anxious in school. I can draw it to show you."

It is okay to feel a little anxious sometimes. I can draw and show you how it makes me feel. It is okay to feel this way, but I will help myself by using coping skills.

"I can have a good day at school."

I can have a good day at school. If I feel a little anxious, I can use a coping skill I have learned. I can talk to my teacher. I can have a good day!

## Note From My Teacher

Date \_\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_\_

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

I am so happy that you are in my class today. I am here for you when you need to tell me how you are feeling. I will help you any way I can.

\_\_\_\_\_



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