



# **Social Stories- The Key Points**

Canterbury STLS

# What is a Social Story?

- A Social Story is a **short** story written in a **specific style and format**.
- It describes what happens in a specific social situation.
- It describes what is obvious to most of us, but not obvious to those with impaired social understanding.
- **The Social Story describes what people do, why they do it, and what the common responses are.**

Carol Gray (1994)

# The Purposes of Social Stories

- To provide positive feedback to a child so that they can recognise their own appropriate skills and behaviour.
- To help prepare for a new experience.
- To help a child accustom themselves to a situation, and to respond appropriately.
- To help prevent extreme reactions that stem from a lack of social understanding.
- To provide a prompt for socially appropriate behaviour.

# Social Stories – the goal...

- To develop appropriate behaviour within given situations
- The goal is **to teach social understanding**, not rote compliance; **to describe** rather than direct.

**Social Stories** match the skills of  
the child-  
(they are highly appropriate for  
children with **Autism**):

- **Visual** (one aspect – one page)
- **Pictorial** (use photographs / appropriate pictures)
- **Appropriate language** (child friendly)

Think of the developmental stage of the  
child

# Features of Social Stories

- Written for an individual about a situation they find difficult.
- Based on careful assessment.
- Writing suited to match the language and vocabulary levels of the child.
- Uses positive language.

# Features of Social Stories ctd.

- Ensures the words/language spoken are accurate.
- Written in the first/third person-never in the second.
- Written in present or future tense.
- Usually- one aspect or step per page

# Why do Social Stories work?

- Provide accurate information about real / relevant social situations.
- Present information visually.
- Do not rely on interpersonal contact.
- Provide a prompt about how to respond.



# Why do Social Stories work?ctd

- Provide reassurance.
- Provide positive feedback.
- Build on child's existing knowledge
- Provide a 'recipe' for how to complete a course of action

# Preparation for Writing a Social Story

- Identify the social situation
- Talk to adults involved eg teacher, KP, TA, Parents etc.
- Observe the situation- gather precise information about what the child says and does.
- Talk to the child

# Structure of Social Stories

- Basic Social Stories use three kinds of sentences:
  - Descriptive** (2-5 sentences)
  - Perspective** (2-5 sentences)
  - Directive** ( 1 or 2 sentences)
- Content includes possibilities as well as probabilities (usually & may are good words to use).

# Basic Social Stories: sentences

- **Descriptive sentences**:- give accurate information about the setting. They provide, in words, the basic facts about what can be seen.
- **Perspective sentences**:- provide simple information about why things happen, letting the child into the heads and hearts of those featured in the story.
- **Directive sentences**:- prompt the child's appropriate behaviour

# An e.g. Why children have pencils in my school

I use pencils to colour with.

I use a pencil to draw and write with.

Some authors use a pencil to write a story.

My teacher likes it when I use my pencil for writing,  
drawing and colouring.

My teacher likes it when everybody puts their pencil on  
the table when they are not writing.

I will try to put my pencil on the table when I am not  
writing, drawing or colouring.

# Presentation to the child

- First time distraction – free
- Commonly presented black writing on white paper
- Sit slightly behind and to one side of the child
- Read to the child

# Presentation to the child ctd

- Use frequently prior to time of difficulty-never as a consequence
- Child shares story with a range of adults
- Only use one story at a time
- Reinforce success with a reward chart
- Make a duplicate for parents/carers to use at home

# Further Reading

- **The New Social Story Book-** Carol Gray
- **Writing & Developing Social Stories-** Dr Caroline Smith
- **Good Autism Practice (2) 2001-** contains articles written regarding using Social Stories
- **British Journal of Special Education 16 (1)** Do social stories benefit children with autism in mainstream primary schools? Carol Rowe
- **NAS** <https://www.autism.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/topics/communication/communication-tools/social-stories-and-comic-strip-conversations>