



Helpful Tips for Parents: Social Stories for Children

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What is it?

Social stories are used to teach social skills. A social story is a simple description of an everyday social situation, written from a child's perspective. The goal of a social story is to share accurate social information in a patient and reassuring manner that is easily understood. Social stories can be used in a variety of different situations. For example, social stories can help a child prepare for upcoming changes in routine, or learn appropriate social interactions. The idea is that the child rehearses the story ahead of time, with an adult. Then, when the situation actually happens, the child can use the story to help guide his or her behavior.

Each social story uses several different types of sentences:

- **Descriptive sentences** give who, what, where, and why details about the situation so the child can recognize when that situation actually occurs.
- **Directive sentences** tell the child the appropriate social responses in that situation.
- **Perspective sentences** describe one of the child's possible feelings or responses.
- **Affirmative sentences** often refer to a rule or are a commonly shared opinion.
- **Cooperative sentences** describe how other people will help out in a given situation.
- **Control sentences** are created by the child, to help remember strategies that work for him or her.

What's it like?

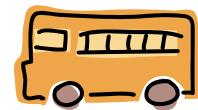
Social stories are written in the first person, in the present tense, and from the child's point of view. They are also written to match the child's vocabulary and comprehension level. When first presented, an adult should read the story with the child at least twice, even if the child is capable of reading it. The adult then checks to make sure the child understands the important elements, either using a checklist or role-playing the situation. Then, the child reviews the story each day. For children who cannot read, audio tapes, videotapes, or picture books of the story can be made for the child to review daily. Finally, the effectiveness of each story should be monitored, with the story being read less and less when the behaviors have been learned.

What is the theory behind it?

There are several ways that social stories may help improve a child's functioning in their social world. One is that, by giving examples of specific social cues and behaviors, social stories may improve social problem-solving in general. Social stories may also help organize social ideas and cues that were previously disorganized. Moreover, by using print, audio, video, or pictures to replace in-person teaching, social stories may take away some of the anxiety of social relationships.

Example: Riding the Bus to School

I take the bus to school every day.



My daddy brings me to the bus and says "Have a good day in school."

I say "hi" to Anne and get on the bus.



Daddy helps me put on my seat belt

My seat belt helps me stay safe on the bus.

When my seat belt is on, Barbara gives me my special bus toy.

I can also listen to music on the bus.



I can ride the bus to school safely, keeping my hands and voice quiet.

When I get to school, I get a star for riding the bus safely.

An aide helps me get on and off the bus.

I show my teacher my star for being safe on the bus.



My teachers are very proud of me.

I can play a special computer game because I have earned a star for good bus behavior.

Example: Being Angry is Okay

It's okay to feel angry. Sometimes kids feel happy but all kids feel angry too sometimes.



Some kids might forget to think about the right thing to do when they are angry. They may make mistakes with their anger.



They might kick or hit other people. They might use mean words.

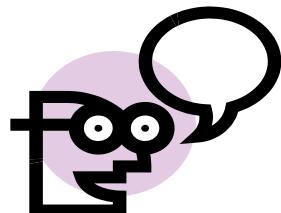
My mom, and dad, and teacher will help me learn to make good choices even when I am angry. .

When I am angry, I can choose from this list what to say or do:

Take deep breaths



Ask for a break.



Use words to let someone know I am angry

If I am having a hard time making a choice, mom, dad, or my teacher will tell me what I can do.

They will help me keep myself and other people safe. This means keeping my hands and feet from hurting others.

I can learn to stay calm and keep thinking when I am angry.



Example: I want to play, too!

Sometimes I see other kids playing. They are having fun. I want to play with the kids so I can have fun, too.



When I see kids I would like to play with, I can walk over to where they are. I should go close enough so they can see me and I can see what they are doing.



I can watch them play for a little bit. This will help me know what they are playing and how to play with them.

Next, I can say something about what they are doing. I might say “that looks fun” or “I like that game”.

Then I can say, “Can I play, too?”



I can share their toys and wait my turn.

Playing with other kids can be fun!

