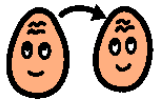


Using Stories, Interests and Visuals to Teach Social Skills

Kathy Haugen-Kelchner, M.Ed., ACAS

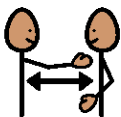


Theory of Mind

Most children around the age of four years begin to understand that other people have thoughts, beliefs, and knowledge. Children at this age typically begin to understand that other people think differently than they do. This cognitive process is crucial and gives us the ability to empathize, show sympathy, care about others, appreciate humor, lie, deceive and create imaginary art.

Austrian developmental psychologists, Heinz Wimmer and Josef Perner, devised a classic false-belief task that is called the Sally-Anne test or Smarties test. It typically involves the use of dolls or puppets. Sally and Anne are playing together. Sally has a marble (or Smartie) that she puts in a basket before leaving the room. While she is out, Anne moves the marble to a box. When Sally returns, the experimenter asks, "Where will Sally look for her marble?" Wanting to retrieve the marble, she of course looks in the basket. Typically developing children of four years of age and older understand that Sally will look in the basket even though they know the marble is not there. Three-year-old children will respond that Sally will look in the box because they saw Anne put it there. They assume Sally has this knowledge too.

Older children with autism typically do not understand this scenario from Sally's perspective either. This inability to think from another person's perspective is often called "mind blindness".



Autism and Social Implications

- Since children with autism have this characteristic, "mind blindness", it may explain their preference for reading books for information or facts rather than fiction that deals with people and their interactions.
- Difficulty with nonverbal or subtle aspects of social interactions that most people pick up naturally
 - Facial expressions
 - Body language
 - Gestures

- Difficulty interacting with friends in a give and take manner.
 - May retreat and play in solitary or parallel activity.
- May be rigid and legalistic with social rules.
- May point out rule violators.
 - Rule police
- Pragmatics: the social application of language. Taking turns and making small talk and changing the subject gracefully are areas of difficulty.
- May take over the conversation or only talk about their favorite topic excessively.
- May not understand the cause and effect of their behavior.
- Difficulty understanding emotions of self and others.
- May get into trouble without realizing they have committed an offense.
- May misinterpret the intentions of others.

Other factors/Considerations:

Wandering, elopement, "running" or bolting behaviors for those with autism present unique safety risks, and create extraordinary worry and stress among caregivers.

Drowning fatalities following wandering incidents remain a leading cause of death among those with ASD.



Effects of Other's Behavior on People with Disabilities

Excerpt from Stephen Shore, MA and Dena Gassner, MSW

ASA 2004 Conference Proceedings.

- 80% of all women with cognitive challenges experience at least one sexual assault in their lifetime. Men are also more susceptible to abuse
- 5 million crimes occur each year toward persons with physical or cognitive challenges
- 49% experience **10 or more** incidents of sexual abuse in their lifetime



Reminder about Visual Supports

- Visual information is more concrete
- Visual information allows for greater processing time
 - Written stories are another form of visual supports

**"Social Stories™ Developed by Carol Gray
Written by Stephen M. Edelson, Ph.D.
Center for the Study of Autism
Salem, Oregon**

Many persons with autism have deficits in social cognition, the ability to think in ways necessary for appropriate social interaction. For example, theory of mind describes the difficulty autistic individuals have in assuming the perspective of another person. This can be addressed by a technique that is used to help individuals with autism 'read' and understand social situations. This technique, called 'Social Stories™,' presents appropriate social behaviors in the form of a story. It was developed by Carol Gray and seeks to include answers to questions that autistic persons may need to know to interact appropriately with others (for example, answers to who, what, when, where, and why in social situations).

There are four types of sentences used in social stories™: descriptive, directive, perspective, and control. Descriptive sentences describe what people do in particular social situations. They are used to describe a social setting, step-by-step directions for completing an activity, etc. Directive sentences direct a person to an appropriate desired response. They state, in positive terms, what the desired behavior is. Given the nature of the directive sentence, care needs to be taken to use them correctly and not to limit the individual's choice. The greater the number of descriptive statements, the more opportunity for the individual to supply his/her own responses to the social situation. The greater the number of directive statements, the more specific the cues for how the individual should respond. A third type of sentence used in social stories™ is the perspective sentence. This type of sentence presents others' reactions to a situation so that the individual can learn how others' perceive various events. The final type of sentence is the control sentence. This sentence identifies strategies the person can use to facilitate memory and comprehension of the social story™. Thus, these sentences are added by the individual after reviewing the social story™. Carol Gray developed the social story™ ratio which defines the proportion of directive or control sentences to descriptive and/or perspective sentences. She suggests that for every one directive or control sentence, there should be two to five descriptive and/or perspective sentences. Directive or control sentences may be omitted entirely depending on the person and his/her needs. Examples of each type of sentence are presented below.

Descriptive Sentence

The bell rings for the children to come in from recess. The children go to their classroom where the teacher reads a story.

Directive Sentence

I am playing during recess. The bell rings for me to come in. I stop playing and line up to come in. I follow the other children and quietly go to the classroom. When we get to the classroom, I go to my desk and sit down. I listen as my teacher reads a story.

Perspective Sentence

When the bell rings for recess to end, the teacher is happy to see all the children line up quietly and walk to their classroom. Many children are excited that they get to hear a story. The teacher likes to see the children listen. The teacher likes it when children are quiet during the story.

Control Sentence

I remember that the bell means it's time for recess to end by thinking of a teapot. I know that when it whistles, the water is done. The bell is like the whistle; when it rings, recess is done.

As can be seen, the statements in the stories vary depending on the purpose of the story. Also, it is important to observe the person for whom the story will be written and to consider his/her perspective in deciding what to include. However, the individual's feelings should never be assumed since the author of the story may be incorrect in his/her assumptions. There are a number of ways a social story™ can be implemented. For a person who can read, the author introduces the story by reading it twice with the person.

The person then reads it once a day independently. For a person who cannot read, the author reads the story on an audiotape with cues for the person to turn the page as he/she 'reads' along. These cues could be a bell or verbal statement when it is time to turn the page. The person listens and 'reads' along with the story once a day. Once the autistic individual successfully enacts the skills or appropriately responds in the social situation depicted, use of the story can be faded. This can be done by reducing the number of times the story is read a week and only reviewing the story once a month or as necessary. Fading can also be accomplished by rewriting the story, gradually removing directive sentences from the story. Social stories™ are useful for helping individuals with autism learn appropriate ways to interact in social situations. They can be individualized to incorporate the

specific needs of the person for whom the story is written. They can teach routines, how to do an activity, how to ask for help, and how to respond appropriately to feelings like anger and frustration.

While studies are currently assessing the effectiveness of social stories™, they appear to be a promising method for improving the social behaviors of autistic individuals.

For additional information about social stories™, contact: Carol Gray
Consultant to Students with Autism Jenison Public Schools 8375 20th
Jenison, WI 49428 You can also call her at (616) 457-8955 or fax at (616)
457-4070. Revised 8/95

Written by: Stephen Edelson, Ph.D. Center for the Study of Autism
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<http://people.sca.uqam.ca/~sqa/SocialStoriesSQA.html>



Key points to consider before writing a story:

- Determine the needs of the person
- What is the function or motivation of the person's behavior?
- Consider the situation from the child's point of view.
- Keep stories positive.
- Write stories to celebrate the child's achievements.
- Celebrate the child's gifts and strengths with stories.
- The stories are not a set of rules.
- Write from the perspective of the person for whom the story is being written.
- Write stories to answer questions.



Terms to use in stories:

- Usually
- Sometimes
- Occasionally
- Unless the event really does ALWAYS happen that way!
- Use the student's terminology to grab their attention

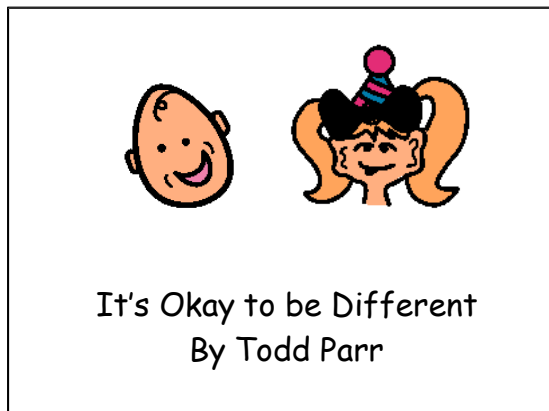


Feelings:

- Describe how others feel...mom likes it when....
- My friends enjoy it when...it makes my dad happy when...

It is okay!

- To feel afraid
- To feel brave
- To feel happy
- To feel mad
- To win
- To lose
- To try
- To cry
- To be me!



More keys...

- Practice writing stories with others.
- Practice writing stories celebrating success before tackling the tough subjects. This gets everyone used to writing and reading the stories.
- If the story is going to be used to introduce the child to a new situation, read it to the child once or twice a day several days prior to the event.
- Use a calendar to note the day of the event.



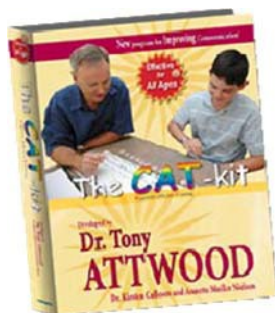
Using Interests to Motivate

Many people with autism have special interests:

- Trains
- History
- Animals
- Favorite movie characters
- Cartoon characters
- Comic book characters
- Storybook characters
- Dinosaurs
- _____
- _____
- _____

Power Cards

A visual aid strategy developed by Elise Gagnon (2001, Autism Asperger Publishing Co.) that incorporates the child's special interest in teaching social interactions. Use to teach routines, behavior expectations, etc. It presents a scenario and how the child's hero solves the problem then gives some strategies or suggestions for the child to use. The strategies can be printed on a separate card for the child to use as a reference or "Power Card".



The CAT Kit

Developed by Drs. Tony Attwood, Kirsten Callesen and Annette Moller. The Cognitive Affective Training Kit is a program that consists of visual, interactive and customizable communication elements for children, teens and adults. It is designed to help the user become aware of how their thoughts, feelings and actions all interact and, in the process of using the various visual components; they share their insights with others. It is an easy and effective way to work with neurotypical children and young adults as well as with people with developmental disabilities.

Red and Green Choices

<http://redandgreenchoices.com/>

Red and Green Choices: Principles to Effective Strategies-

- Set high, reasonable, & achievable behavioral standards
- Allow student to choose their own behavior (*provide positive alternatives*)
- Set high expectations
- Always talk, write, draw pictures of possible "green" solutions to situations
- Break down behaviors into their smallest sequential steps
- Make expectations predictable and clear
- Remain truthful, positive and supportive throughout the entire behavior change process



How I Did Taking My Test



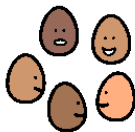
In Texas, students have to take test every year. Some of these tests are called TAKS. Today I took a test for reading. I had to go to a different room for my test.



Mr. Curry helped me by making sure I had a snack, juice and water. He also made the room "test friendly" by clearing all the distractions from my view. Those are some of the ways Mr. Curry supports me and teaches me to be independent.



I had to do the whole test by myself. I sat, read the test and marked the answers by myself. I worked hard and did my best work.



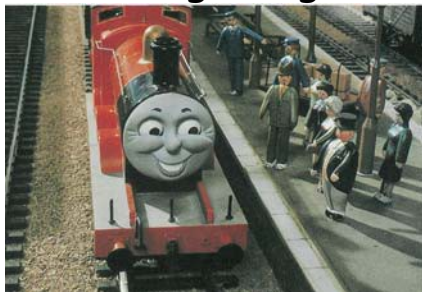
Mr. Curry and Ms. Kelchner are so proud of me. My friends are proud of me too! I deserve a pat on the back.



All Aboard For School!

By _____

Everyday, Thomas tells all of the other trains, "All aboard!" The trains join Thomas on the tracks for a busy day. Trains do important work. Some trains like James have smiles because they are happy. Others like Diesel may wear a frown because they are unhappy. Thomas knows that going to school is important work for me too. He wants me to be happy at school. Thomas says I should do these things to get on board for a good day at school.



Happy



Unhappy

1. Walk into school and to my class without crying.
2. Say, "Bye Mommy," when I get to my class.
3. Start my school day with a happy face, say, "Hi," to my friends and teachers and check the schedule for the day.



Happy



Unhappy

1. Walk into school and to my class without crying.
2. Say, "Bye Mommy," when I get to my class.
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Advice for Staying Calm

SpongeBob SquarePants, a yellow sea sponge has a knack for getting into all kinds of trouble without really trying. He tends to get on the nerves of his cranky next-door neighbor Squidward. Because of this he knows how important it is for me to control my temper. He knows I am very smart but sometimes I annoy my friends and get on their nerves too. SpongeBob SquarePants has some important things for me to try when I get frustrated and angry so I can keep from getting on everyone's nerves.

When I start to feel frustrated or angry I can:

1. Take a deep breath and count to 10
2. Walk away
3. Go to a quiet safe place to cool down.



Cinderella's Rules for the Road

Cinderella loved riding in the coach made from a pumpkin because it took her to the ball where she could dance with the Prince. Cinderella knew how important it was to follow rules while riding in the coach so she could arrive at the ball safely. She knew she had to sit quietly and let the coach driver do his job of driving the coach. This was hard because Cinderella was so excited about getting to the ball to dance with the Prince. After the ball she was upset because she needed to make it home in time before her coach turned back into a pumpkin. Cinderella knew it was important to follow the coach rules at all times.

Cinderella wants me to know there are rules for riding in a car just as she had rules for riding in a pumpkin coach. Cinderella says that while riding in a car I should:



1. Stay in my seat.
2. Keep my seat belt buckled.
3. Stay calm and quiet.
4. Keep my hands off the window and door buttons.
5. Enjoy riding in the car because I might get to go to a lot of fun places.



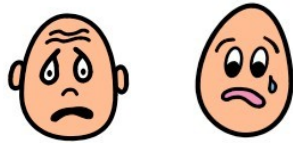
Triceratops Rules for Using the Restroom

The Triceratops lived a long time ago before restrooms were built. If the Triceratops were still alive today they would use the private bathroom stall in the restroom. The stall in the restroom would give the Triceratops privacy in the restroom. The Triceratops would be able to shut and lock the door for privacy. The Triceratops recommends that all dinosaur lovers use the stall every time when using the restroom so that he has privacy in the restroom. This will make the Triceratops feel happy.



Triceratops Rules for Using the Restroom

1. Go into the stall every time using the restroom
2. Lock the stall door
3. Wash your hands after using the restroom



What to do when I am Fearful or Sad



Take a deep breath

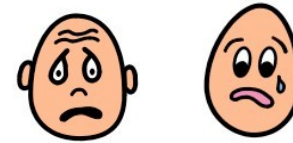
1 2 3 4 5
6 7 8 9 10



Count to 10



Think about Arthur



What to do when I am Fearful or Sad



Take a deep breath

1 2 3 4 5
6 7 8 9 10



Count to 10



Think about Arthur