

---

**"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  
Beaverton, OR 97005

© Copyright

Permission is granted to copy this document, at no charge and in its entirety, provided that the copies are not used for commercial advantage, that the source is cited and that the present copyright notice is included in all copies, so that the recipients of such copies are equally bound to abide by the present conditions. "

<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

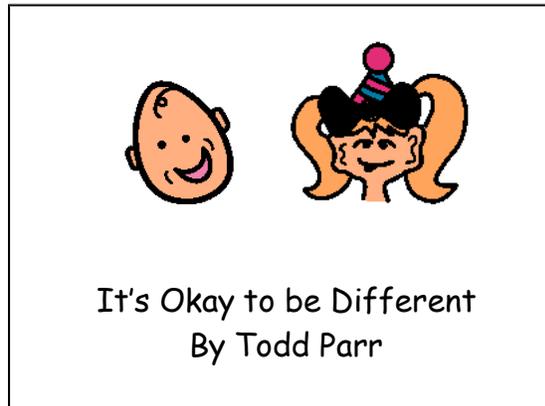


### Feelings:

- 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".