

WHAT ARE SOCIAL NARRATIVES (SCRIPTED STORIES)?

Social narratives are **visually** represented stories that describe social situations and socially appropriate responses or behaviors to help children acquire and use appropriate social skills. They are written by parents or educators, at the individual's language and learning level, using visuals to enhance understanding of the content (Myles & Simpson, 2003). They are written in **positive language**, avoiding "no", "don't", and "can't". Social narratives can be used:

- After a social "error" has occurred (e.g., saying something rude to a classmate, hitting, yelling)
- Prior to a transition or new experience (getting a haircut, changing schools, going to the Dr.'s office, etc.)
- As an intervention to reduce existing recurring behaviors (nose picking, blurting out in class, tantrums, etc.)

Social narratives should be read often, as near to the time the transition or behavior usually occurs.

WHAT SKILLS CAN BE TAUGHT WITH SOCIAL NARRATIVES?

- communication
- problem-solving
- decision-making
- self-regulation
- peer relations

HOW TO WRITE A SOCIAL NARRATIVE:

1. Identify a social situation for intervention.

Select a social behavior or situation for change, preferably one in which improvement will result in positive social interactions, a safer environment, additional social learning opportunities, or all three.

2. Write a social narrative using language at the individual's level. Consider whether to use first-person ("I") or second-person ("you") language.

- Affirmative sentences: Stress an important idea especially around an opinion or value that is shared with a culture. They typically precede a sentence that describes. (E.g. At school, it is important that everyone is safe.)
- Descriptive sentences: objectively define anticipated events where a situation occurs, who is involved, what they are doing, and why. (E.g. When people are inside, they walk to keep everyone safe.)
- Perspective sentences: describe the internal status of the person or persons involved, their thoughts, feelings, or moods. (e.g., Running inside could hurt me or other people.)

- **Directive sentences:** are individualized statements of desired responses stated in a positive manner. They may begin “I can try...” or “I will work on...” Try to avoid sentences starting with “do not” or definitive statements. (E.g., I will try to walk in inside. NOT- I do not walk inside.)
- **Affirmative sentences:** Stress an important idea especially around an opinion or value that is shared with a culture. They typically precede a sentence that describes. (E.g. At school, it is important that everyone is safe.)
- **Cooperative sentences:** Tell what other people can do to help the child. (E.g. If I want to run, I can tell my teacher. My teacher can help me find a safe place run.)
- **Control sentences:** Written by the child to apply strategies and information to the situation.

There should be 3 to 5 descriptive and perspective sentences for each directive sentence. Avoid using too many directive sentences.

3. Use photographs, hand-drawn pictures, or pictorial icons.

Pictures, such as photographs, hand-drawn pictures, or computer-generated icons, may enhance understanding of appropriate behavior, especially with individuals who lack or who have emerging reading skills or are visual learners.

4. Read the social narrative to the individual and model the desired behavior. To teach the use of the social narrative, use 1-to-1 direct instruction. The direct instruction will include reading the social narrative to or with the individual and modeling the related behaviors for them. Reading the social narrative and modeling related behaviors should become a consistent part of the individual's daily schedule. The individual who is able to read independently may read the narrative to peers or adults so that all have a similar understanding of the targeted situation and expected behaviors.

5. Generalization.

After a behavior change has become consistent, it is recommended that the social narrative be faded. Fading may be accomplished by extending the time between readings or having students be responsible for reading the story themselves. In some cases, the social narrative is not faded. This decision should be made on a case-by-case basis.

Adapted From:

The Hidden Curriculum (p. 26) by B. S. Myles, M. L. Trautman, & R. Schelvan, 2004. Shawnee Mission, KS: Autism Asperger Publishing Company.

Annette Wragge (2011). Social narratives: Online training module (Columbus, OH: OCALI). In Ohio Center for Autism and Low Incidence (OCALI), *Autism Internet Modules*, www.autisminternetmodules.org. Columbus, OH: OCALI.

Gray, C. (2003). Social Stories. <http://www.thegraycenter.org>.

Power Cards

Power Cards are visual aids that incorporate a child's special interest to help promote an understanding of social situations, hidden curriculum items, routines, organizational skills and transitions. The Power Card strategy consists of a script and a Power Card (Gagnon, 2001).

About Power Cards:

- They are visuals that incorporate a child's special interest in a brief scenario that deals with a situation that is difficult for the child.
- They are written in the first person from the perspective of a child's hero and describe how the hero solves the problem.
- A small card recaps how the child can use the same strategy to solve a similar problem of her own.

The Script:

- In the first paragraph the hero or role model attempts to solve a problem and experiences success.
- The second paragraph encourages the student to try a new behavior which is broken down into 3-5 manageable steps.

The Power Card:

- The Power Card is the size of a trading card, bookmark, or business card.
- It contains a small picture of the special interest and the solution to a problem broken into 3-5 steps.

Adapted from *Power Cards: Using Special Interests to Motivate Children and Youth with Asperger Syndrome and Autism* (p. 21) by E. Gagnon. 2001. Shawnee Mission, KS: Autism Asperger Publishing Company.

Becky's example:

Chris Hemsworth is a cool guy who has made a lot of movies. It takes a lot of people doing many jobs to make a good movie. Sometimes mistakes are made by Chris or others on the movie set.

Chris Hemsworth stays calm when he or someone else makes a mistake. If he needs to, he asks for help. Chris knows that everyone make mistakes.

Chris would like everyone to remember to stay calm when mistakes happen, to ask for help if it is needed, and that EVERYONE makes mistakes!

Chris Hemsworth wants me to remember:

- 1. Stay calm when I make a mistake**
- 2. Stay calm when someone else makes a mistake**
- 3. Ask for help when I make a mistake**
- 4. Everyone makes mistakes!**





Elsa is a queen with magical powers. Sometimes Elsa gets disappointed when she isn't first or doesn't get what she wants. Elsa stays calm when she is disappointed. Elsa knows it is hard to wait to take turns. She can take deep breaths to calm down when she is disappointed. Elsa wants everyone to remember that disappointments are hard, but if you breath to calm down, you can get through it.



Elsa wants me to remember:

1. Waiting is hard, but my turn will come.
2. Disappointment is hard.
3. Take deep breaths when I am disappointed.
4. I can say, "I am disappointed. Can I have a turn next?"