

How to Use Social Stories to Teach Your Child New Skills and Expectations

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Children love to listen to stories. Not only are stories used to entertain children, they can also be used as tools to teach new skills and expectations. Many parents read books to teach their children the alphabet or numbers, but stories can also be used to:

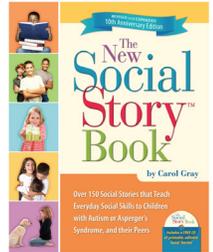
- Teach social skills, such as how to take turns.
- Teach clear behavior expectations for a time of day (e.g., quiet time) or event (e.g., road trip).
- Reinforce routines, such as getting ready for bed.
- Prepare for new experiences, such as the first day of school.
- Address a challenging behavior, such as hitting.

Social stories™, developed by Carol Gray of the Gray Center for Social Learning and Understanding, can be used to help children and adolescents understand social situations and expectations. Social stories are brief, simple stories that are created to show your child what to expect, and what is expected of him, during a specific activity. Social stories can include pictures of your child and are written in a way that he can understand. They also use positive language to show your child what he can do and provide healthy ways to deal with strong emotions. For example, a social story that teaches a new skill to replace hitting might say, "If my friend tries to take my toy, I can say 'Stop. This toy is busy.'" Social stories validate how your child feels, but also can show him how others feel. For example, "My friend feels sad when I hit him." When used for specific situations, social stories help children to make wise choices and give them the confidence to try new experiences.

Try This at Home

- Choose a situation that has been challenging for your child. For example, if your child and her friend Ben have been having problems with sharing when they play, you can write a simple social story to teach her how to share with him.
 - Page 1: I feel excited when I go to Ben's house!
 - Page 2: We play with trains, do puzzles and build towers.
 - Page 3: Sometimes, we both want to play with the same train.
 - Page 4: If we both want the same toy, I have choices!
 - Page 5: I can find another train and ask Ben to trade.
 - Page 6: I can get a timer and we can take turns.
 - Page 7: I can ask my mommy for help.

Page 8: I can choose to play with something else.
Page 9: I feel proud when I make wise choices!



- This type of social story helps your child to see that her problem is normal, teaches her words to help her express her feelings and gives her choices by telling her what she can do. In addition to helping her share with Ben, it will also help her to understand that she can make choices in other difficult situations.
- Social stories are very helpful to children when they go into a new situation. For example, if your child is going on an airplane for the first time, you can create a social story to provide him with clear expectations and help him understand all the things he can do at the airport and on the plane.
- There are many social stories already created that address issues such as hitting, safety, going to school, emotions and more. For a book list and free downloadable scripted stories for social situations, you can go to <http://challengingbehavior.fmhi.usf.edu/Implementation/Program/strategies.html>.

Practice at School

Teachers create social stories to help children:

- Adjust to new experiences, such as saying goodbye to a parent at drop-off.
- Understand expectations, such as what we can do on our new playground.
- Learn social skills, such as how to share.

Teachers work together with families, and often read the same book at home and at school, to reinforce the skill or expectation.

The Bottom Line

Reading stories to your child provides a time for everyone to relax. These moments are a perfect time to teach your child or talk to her about feelings. Social stories are a great tool you can use to teach your child expectations or new skills before she is expected to use them. When you read a book with your child again and again, she feels confident about making choices that help her to have a positive experience.

Backpack Connection Series

About this Series

The Backpack Connection Series was created by TACSEI to provide a way for teachers and parents/caregivers to work together to help young children develop social emotional skills and reduce challenging behavior. Teachers may choose to send a handout home in each child's backpack when a new strategy or skill is introduced to the class. Each Backpack Connection handout provides information that helps parents stay informed about what their child is learning at school and specific ideas on how to use the strategy or skill at home.

The Pyramid Model

The Pyramid Model is a framework that provides programs with guidance on how to promote social emotional competence in all children and design effective interventions that support young children who might have persistent challenging behavior. It also provides practices to ensure that children with social emotional delays receive intentional teaching. Programs that implement the Pyramid Model are eager to work together with families to meet every child's individualized learning and support needs. To learn more about the Pyramid Model, please visit ChallengingBehavior.org.

More Information

More information and resources on this and other topics are available on our website, ChallengingBehavior.org.



ChallengingBehavior.org



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