

## Speech and Language Therapy

### Social Stories

Social Stories™ were created by Carol Gray in 1991. They are short descriptions of a particular situation, event or activity, which include specific information about what to expect in that situation and why.

#### What are Social Stories for?

Social stories can be used to:

- Develop self-care skills (e.g. how to clean teeth, wash hands or get dressed)
- Develop social skills (e.g. sharing, asking for help, saying thank you)
- Help a person to cope with changes to routine and unexpected or distressing events (e.g. changing schools, moving house, thunderstorms)
- As a behavioural strategy (e.g. what to do when feeling angry, how to cope with obsessions, why we wear a coat in winter)
- Help someone to understand how others might behave or respond in a particular situation

#### How do Social Stories help?

- Social stories present information in a descriptive, literal and concrete way which may improve a person's understanding of a previously difficult or ambiguous situation/ activity
- Providing information about what might happen in a particular situation, and some guidelines for behaviour, can increase structure in a person's life and reduce anxiety

- They can help with sequencing (what comes next in a series of activities)
- They can help with 'executive functioning' (planning and organising)

### How do I write a Social Story?

The presentation and content of a Social Story should be adapted and personalised to meet the individual person's needs.

1. Decide the goal
  - What is the purpose of the social story? (e.g. to teach a person to cover their mouth when they cough)
  - What does the person need to understand? (e.g. we cover our mouths to stop germs spreading and making other people unwell)
2. Collect information
  - Where does the situation occur?
  - Who is it with?
  - How does it begin and end?
  - How long does it last?
  - What happens in the situation
  - Why does it happen?
3. Customise the presentation
  - Answer the questions: What? Who? When? Where? How? Why?
  - Use descriptive sentences (e.g. Christmas Day is on the 25<sup>th</sup> December)
  - Make the sentences appropriate for the person's age and their level of understanding
  - Avoid words that may cause distress or anxiety
  - Use age appropriate photographs, symbols or drawings to support the text

## How do I use a Social Story?

- Plan when, where and how often the story will be used with the person
- Present the story at a time when everyone is feeling calm and relaxed
- Use a straight forward approach when you present the story (e.g. "I have written this story for you. It is about fireworks. Let's read it together now.")
- Monitor how well the story is received by the person
- Monitor whether the story is working
- Make a Social Stories folder for the person so that they are easy to find, use and review.
- When using pictures, remember that one picture can be interpreted as the 'only' type e.g. a picture of a red Ford car.

Concepts should be introduced progressively:

- Show one car, saying 'Sometimes, people just say 'This is a car' when they see a picture like this'.
- Show the same car from different angles, saying 'This is a car'
- Show a variety of cars - 'These are cars'
- Show pictures of cars in context e.g. on the road, in a garage, on a drive way, in a car park.