

## **The Success of Social Stories in Preschool**

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“I want a turn!... That’s mine!... I can do it!... Me! Me! Me!” While it may sound like a very self-centered individual, these words are often heard in the Preschool classrooms from young children asserting their wants and needs. Now, while it may not be in the kindest way, many typically developing children aged 3-5 are learning to take care of their self. Oh, how they like their emerging independence! It is a difficult world for any young child to navigate. It helps to have a voice and an audience to listen.

For many children with autism and neurodevelopmental delays, communicating their wants and needs does not come as easily. Some children may use sign language or assistive communication, some seek adult guidance, while others hit and cry and may as a means of getting what they want. A key strategy for a wide variety of children, is a magical concept that many of us have deep in our toolbox, Social Stories.

Carol Gray coined the term “Social Stories”, although the idea has been in the world of special education since the 1980’s. The stories help individuals navigate new social situations, handle unexpected events, cope with trauma, and learn rules and routines, to name a few. Using a story-based format, and following Gray’s criteria, professionals and families can come up with a personalized story. According to Gray, there are four elements that are essential to include:

*Descriptive* statements relate to the most important aspect of the story and guide the telling of the story.

*Perspective* sentences refer to other people’s feelings or opinions in the story.

*Directive* sentences provide literal behavioral choices for the reader.

*Affirmative* statements highlight a “commonly shared value with a culture” (Gray, 1994).

After writing many different social stories for students and their families, I came up with this example at a training, about why professionals and families should continue to use social stories (from my perspective as a special needs preschool teacher, and why I use social stories):

Social stories are a very useful tool to use with students. Teachers, therapists, and families collaborate to write a script, which supports safe and meaningful learning. Often, pictures can be taken pictures of the students so they can see themselves in the story. Most children like seeing pictures of themselves and their families. The short picture stories depict the child engaging in appropriate classroom behaviors, such as turn taking, center time interactions, play ground safety. The possibilities are endless and are based on the learning goals for the child.

When children learn facts about what they should or should not do in certain situations, or learn about rules and routines, it can help them in the school, home and community.

**References:**

Gray, C. 1994. The new social story book illustrated edition. Arlington, TX: Future Horizons.

<http://carolgraysocialstories.com/social-stories/what-is-it/>

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