

Social Narratives for Caregivers — An Overview

<p>Evidence-Based Practice Link</p>	<p>Social narratives are interventions that provide detailed descriptions of various social situations to help prime autistic children with the relevant skills or appropriate responses for a range of situations. These narratives are most effective when they are tailored to the individual child, brief, and include pictures or visuals to support the child’s understanding of the expected behavior or skills being taught. Typically, social narratives are written from the perspective of the child, although they may also include descriptions of the emotions or thoughts of others who participate in the social or daily living situation. Social narratives are an evidence-based practice that is effective in teaching communication, social, play, school readiness, academic, adaptive, and vocational skills, as well as addressing challenging behaviors in children between the ages of 3 and 11. (Steinbrenner et al., 127).</p>
<p>When to Use Social Narratives</p>	<p>Ideal times to use social narratives with autistic children, or other children with or without disabilities, could include, but are not limited to, when a child or young adult:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • is preparing to enter a new school, new club or activity, or social situation, • is going on a new or special outing, like to the zoo or to a birthday party, • is going to have a babysitter for a period of time, • needs descriptions of how to use leisure materials appropriately, • needs help navigating the public transportation independently, • is increasing time spent completing chores or homework without caregiver prompting, • is experiencing anxiety about an upcoming transition, or • is learning a new skill or activity that is novel to the child or young adult.
<p>Why Use Social Narratives?</p>	<p>Social narratives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • clarify expectations within varied home-based transitions or social situations to prepare children for success; • describe critical changes for periods of transition (e.g., transitioning to a new babysitter or caregiver, moving to a new home, getting a new sibling, etc.); • increase predictability regarding novel situations, environments, or activities; • promote children’s understanding of what peers or adults may be thinking in social situations; and • increase functional and social skill development.

<p>Critical Components of Social Narratives</p>	<p>Social narratives should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • contain a clearly defined and described target behavior or skill; • be specific and provide appropriate descriptions of a transition, event, social situation, or activity; • be written in first or second person and use vocabulary and supportive images that the child can comprehend; • include caregiver planning to present the social narrative directly before the identified social situation; and • include caregiver planning to reinforce the child’s behavior when they demonstrate the behavioral expectations described in the social narrative.
<p>Social Narrative Creation Tips</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Observe the environment, activity, or social situation, paying attention to the most important parts and the actions the child will need to demonstrate to be successful. • Consider the format to present the social narrative to the child. You may want to have it printed for the child to look at, or share it with the child using technology like a tablet or computer. • Write the narrative, adding supportive visuals such as photographs, line drawings, or other illustrations. Taking real photographs of an environment or social situation can work well for many students. Line drawing programs like Smarty Symbols™, Boardmaker®, or Picto4me can be useful. • Consider incorporating the child’s individualized interests into the social narrative when applicable.
<p>Social Narrative Implementation Tips</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify times or activities in which to use the social narrative. • Ensure the social narrative is presented directly before the identified activity or social situation. • After reading the social narrative with the child or letting the child read the narrative to themselves, ask several comprehension questions to ensure the student understood the narrative. • During the social situation or activity, prompt the child about the expected behaviors when needed. • Provide reinforcement when the child demonstrates the expected behaviors taught in the social narrative.
<p>TRIAD Resources to Learn More</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A module about social narratives is available here. *Must create a free account to access <p>To learn more about upcoming TRIAD training opportunities: https://vkc.vumc.org/vkc/triad/live-training/</p>

Steinbrenner, J. R., Hume, K., Odom, S. L., Morin, K. L., Nowell, S. W., Tomaszewski, B., Szendrey, S., McIntyre, N. S., Yücesoy-Özkan, S., & Savage, M. N. (2020). Evidence-based practices for children, youth, and young adults with Autism. The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute, National Clearinghouse on Autism Evidence and Practice Review Team.

<https://ncaep.fpg.unc.edu/sites/ncaep.fpg.unc.edu/files/imce/documents/EBP%20Report%202020.pdf>

Sam, A., & AFIRM Team. (2015). *Social narratives*. Chapel Hill, NC: National Professional Development Center on Autism Spectrum Disorder, FPG Child Development Center, University of North Carolina. Retrieved from <http://afirm.fpg.unc.edu/social-narratives>