

## Social Narratives – 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 learners with the relevant skills or appropriate responses for a range of situations. These narratives are most effective when they are tailored to the individual learner, brief, and include pictures or visuals to support the learner’s understanding of the expected behavior or skills being taught. Typically, social narratives are written from the perspective of the learner, although they may also include descriptions of the emotions or thoughts of others who participate in the social or academic situation. Social narratives are an evidence-based practice 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>Types of Social Narratives</p>	<p>Social narratives can take many different formats to support autistic learners with different strengths and needs. Types of social narratives include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Social Stories™ – developed by Carol Gray, these narratives “describe social situations and appropriate behavior by using sentences that describe or direct the learner.” (Sam, A. &amp; AFIRM Team)</li> <li>2. Social Articles™ – developed by Carol Gray, these narratives are geared towards adults and describe a range of social situations and behavior expectations.</li> <li>3. Cartooning – these social narratives use simple drawings to provide a framework to illustrate conversations between two or more people.</li> <li>4. Comic Strip Conversations™ – developed by Carol Gray, these narratives “use simple drawings to show what people say, do, and think.” (Sam, A. &amp; AFIRM Team)</li> <li>5. Power cards – these social narratives help learners understand a range of social situations by providing a short scenario and rules on a card.</li> <li>6. Social autopsies – these social narratives help learners after a social error has occurred.</li> </ol>

<p><b>When to Use Social Narratives</b></p>	<p>Ideal times to use social narratives with autistic students, or other students with or without disabilities, could include, but are not limited to, when a student:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• is preparing to enter a new classroom, school, or social situation,</li> <li>• is going to an assembly or on a field trip,</li> <li>• needs descriptions of how to use school supplies or play materials appropriately,</li> <li>• needs help navigating the cafeteria independently,</li> <li>• is increasing time spent completing academic tasks without staff prompting,</li> <li>• needs to increase social interactions during leisure time,</li> <li>• is experiencing anxiety about an upcoming transition,</li> <li>• is focused on increasing appropriate responses during class, or</li> <li>• is learning a new skill or activity that is novel to the student.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Why Use Social Narratives?</b></p>	<p>Social narratives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• clarify expectations within varied school-based social situations to prepare students for success;</li> <li>• describe critical changes for periods of transition (e.g., transitioning to a new class, to a new school, to a new group, etc.);</li> <li>• increase predictability regarding novel situations, environments, or activities;</li> <li>• promote student understanding of what peers or school staff may be thinking in social situations;</li> <li>• foster social and academic engagement across school environments; and</li> <li>• increase functional academic and social skill development.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Critical Components of Social Narratives</b></p>	<p>Social narratives should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• contain a clearly defined and described target behavior or skill;</li> <li>• be specific and provide appropriate descriptions of a transition, event, social situation, or activity;</li> <li>• be written in first or second person and use vocabulary and supportive images that the student can comprehend;</li> <li>• include staff planning to present the social narrative directly before the identified social situation; and</li> <li>• include staff planning to reinforce the student's behavior when they demonstrate the behavioral expectations described in the social narrative.</li> </ul>

<p><b>Social Narrative Creation Tips</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Observe the environment, activity, or social situation to note the key characteristics.</li> <li>• Choose the type of narrative that is best aligned with the activity or social situation and the student’s current strengths, needs, and comprehension level.</li> <li>• 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.</li> <li>• Include two descriptive sentences for every one directive sentence that is used in the social narrative.</li> <li>• Consider incorporating the student’s individualized interests into the social narrative when applicable.</li> <li>• Consider the format to present the social narrative to the student. You may want to have it printed for the student to look at or share it with the student using technology like a tablet or computer.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Social Narrative Implementation Tips</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify times or activities in which to use the social narrative.</li> <li>• Ensure the social narrative is presented directly before the identified activity or social situation.</li> <li>• After reading the social narrative with the student or letting the student read the narrative to themselves, ask several comprehension questions to ensure the student understood the narrative.</li> <li>• During the social situation or activity, prompt the student about the expected behaviors when needed.</li> <li>• Provide reinforcement when the student demonstrates the expected behaviors taught in the social narrative.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Considerations for Students with Extensive Support Needs</b></p>	<p>Students with extensive support needs can benefit from social narratives, even if they don’t currently have fluent reading skills. By providing priming opportunities through social narratives, educators can increase the likelihood that the student will demonstrate the targeted behavior in the social situation and will have increased predictability when encountering novel situations. Social narratives can be useful supports to model and prompt students with extensive support needs during a variety of social interactions.</p>
<p><b>TRIAD Resources to Learn More</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A module about social narratives is available <a href="#">here</a>. *Must create a free account to access</li> <li>• How to Write a Social Story™ Tip Sheet is available <a href="#">here</a>.</li> <li>• To learn more about upcoming TRIAD training opportunities, visit <a href="https://vkc.vumc.org/vkc/triad/live-training/">https://vkc.vumc.org/vkc/triad/live-training/</a>.</li> </ul>



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