

A technique to Develop Social Understanding

Social stories and comic strip conversations

Autism EPIC

**Early Play Interaction
Communication**

Lillie Connor

What is a Social story

- A tool for teaching social skills to people with Autism
- Originated in USA in 1993
- Initiated and developed by Carol Gray
- Designed to help people with Autism 'read' social situations
- Aim to provide individual with information about a confusing social situation
- Can be personalised to meet individuals needs

What we might notice in our children

May try hard to have friends, but they cannot keep them.

Lack of reciprocity. In their interactions conversations revolve around selves, self centred.

Do not learn social skills and social taboos by observing others.

Mind blindness

- Many do not realize that other people have their own thoughts, plans and points of view.
- Often lacks common sense when making social decisions.
- May not be able to anticipate what others will say or do in various social situations.
- Lack of 'Theory of Mind' – Mind blindness



▸ Aims of a social story

- Describing a situation
- Personalise or emphasize social skills
- Translate goals into understandable steps
- Address a wide variety of behaviours

What are they for?

- Develop self-care skills
- Social skills
- Academic abilities
- Help someone to understand how others might behave or respond in a particular situation
- Help others understand the perspective of an autistic person and why they may respond or behave in a particular way.
- Help a person to cope with changes to routine and unexpected or distressing events.
- Provide positive feedback to a person about an area of strength or achievement in order to develop self-esteem
- As a behavioural strategy.

How do they help?

- Social stories present information in a **literal, 'concrete'** way
- They can help with sequencing 'executive functioning'.
- Providing information about what might happen in a particular situation, and some guidelines for behaviour.
- Creating or using a social story can help you to understand how the autistic person perceives different situations.

Example

My toys

My toys belong to me. They are mine.

Many of my toys were given to me

Some of my toys have my name on them.

I may play with my toys or share them with someone.

I have toys that are mine.

Carol Gray's the new social story book, 2015

How to write a social story



Picture the goal

- Consider the social story's purpose
- Now think about what the child needs (**SKILL**) to understand to achieve this goal.

Gather information

- Where does the situation occur?
- Who is it with?
- How does it begins and ends?
- What actually happens in the situation and why?
- If it's for a situation where a particular outcome is not guaranteed, use words like '**sometimes**' and '**usually**' in the story.



Taylor the text

A social story needs to have:

- Title
- Introduction
- Body
- Conclusion
- It should use gentle and supportive language.
- It should answer six questions: where, when, who, what, how and why?

There are four types of sentences used in Social Stories

- Descriptive sentences
- Perspective sentence
- Directive sentence
- Control sentences

Example:

A descriptive sentence

Where Christmas Day is 25 December.

Who Sometimes I get sick.

What My body needs food several times per day.

Why just like a steam train needs coal to stay running.

A coaching sentence gently guides behaviour

I will try to hold an adult's hand when crossing the road.

It's ok to ask an adult for help with nightmares.

When I am angry, I can take three deep breaths, go for a walk, or jump on the trampoline. Suggestions

Carol Gray's The new social story book, 2015

Descriptive Sentence

(who ,where, what they are doing and why they may be doing it)

Sometimes a person says:

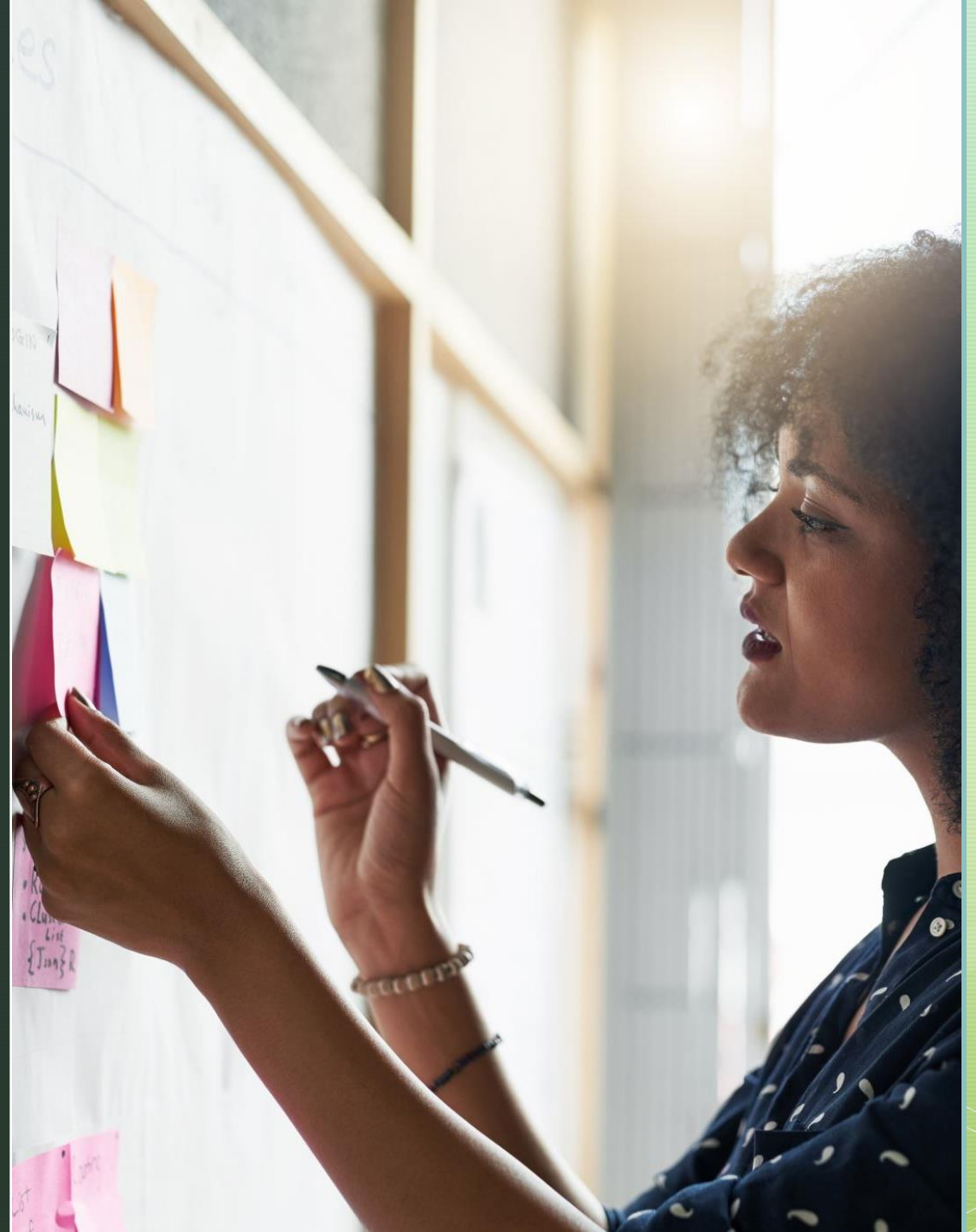
‘I’ve changed my mind’”



Perspective Sentence

(provides details about the emotions and thoughts of others)

This means they had one idea, but now they have a new idea.'



Directive Sentence

(Suggests the desired response tailored to the individual)

I will work on
staying calm
when someone
changes their
mind



Control Sentence

(Strategies to remember appropriate response)

When someone says, 'I've changed my mind' I can think of someone writing something down, rubbing it out and writing something new.



How to use social stories :

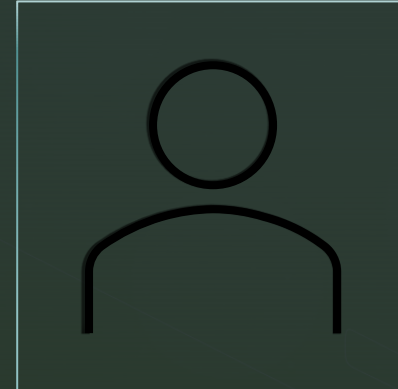
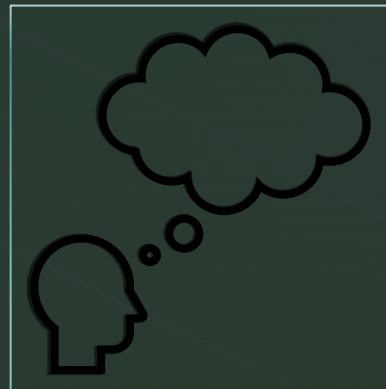
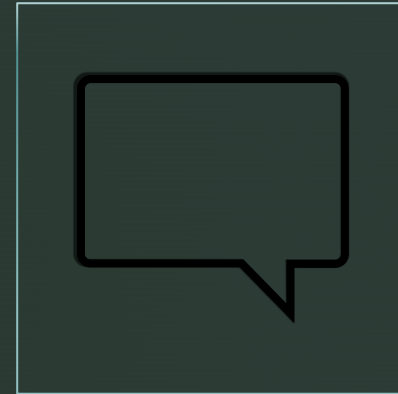
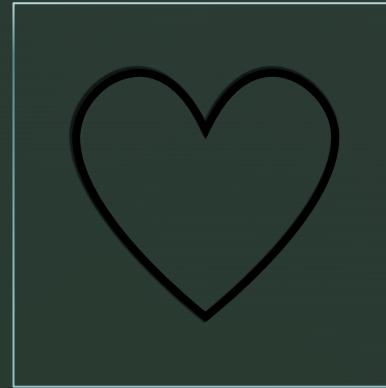
- Think about ways to aid comprehension – would adding questions help, or replacing some text with blanks for the person to fill in?
- Find ways to support the story, e.g. create poster with a key phrase from the story.
- Plan how often, and where, the story will be shared with the person.
- Present the social story to the person at a time when everyone is feeling calm and relaxed, using a straightforward approach, e.g. I have written this story for you. It is about thunderstorms. Let's read it together now.
- Monitor how well the story is received and whether it is working as intended.
- Keep your stories organised in a ring binder/folder or computer file. This makes them easier to find and review, and to develop with new information.

Comic Strip Conversations

- **It is a conversation between two or more people, which incorporates the use of simple drawings.**
- **A sets of symbols are used to represent basic conversational skills.**
- **Colour may be used to represent the emotions, thoughts and questions.**
- **Comic strip conversations can be used to visually 'work through' a problem.**

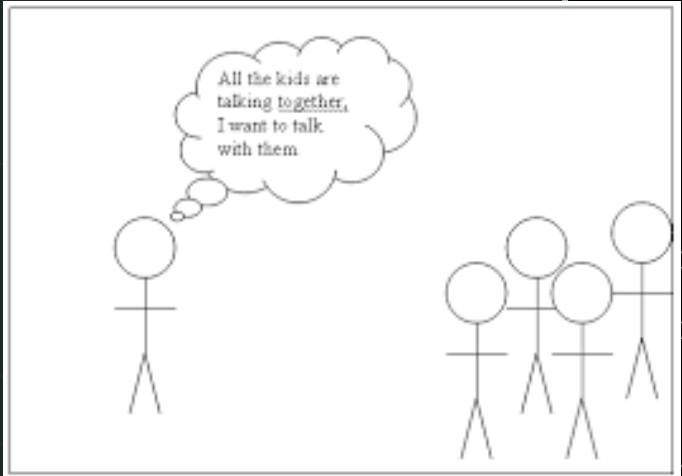
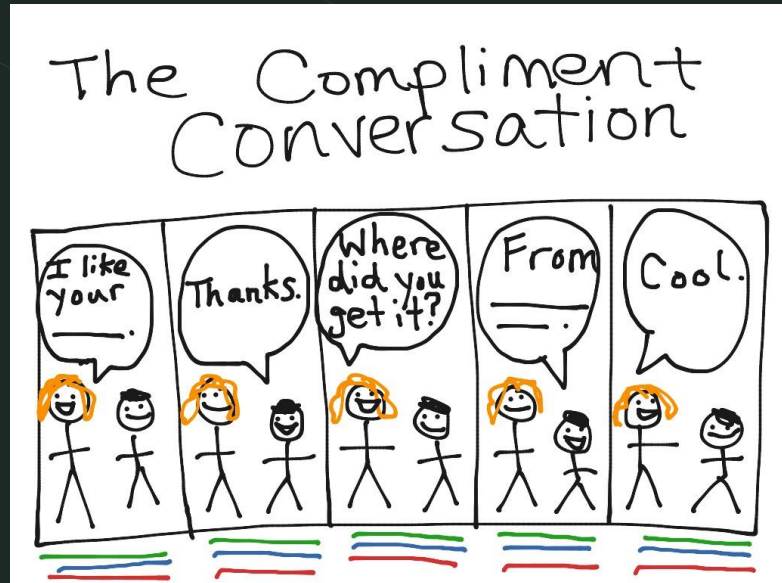
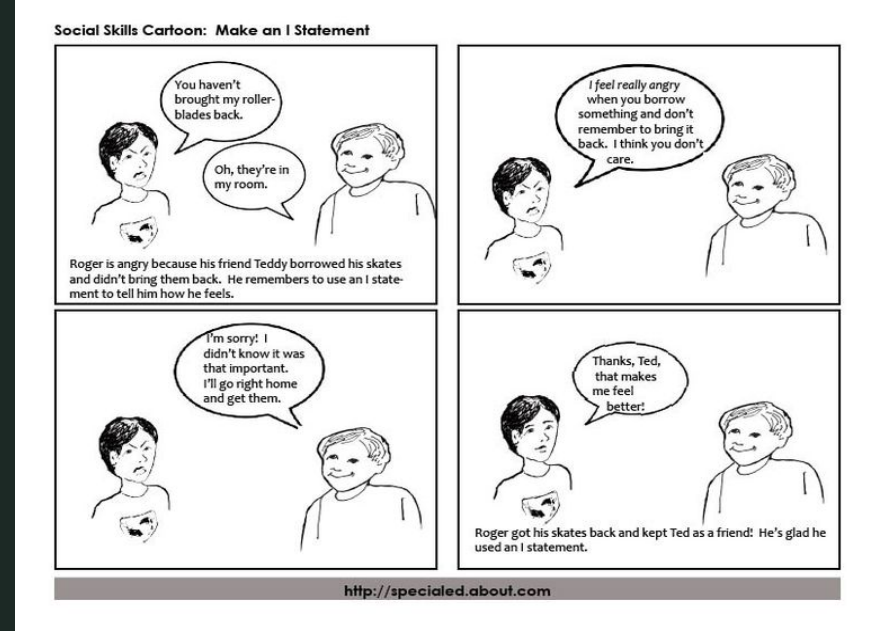
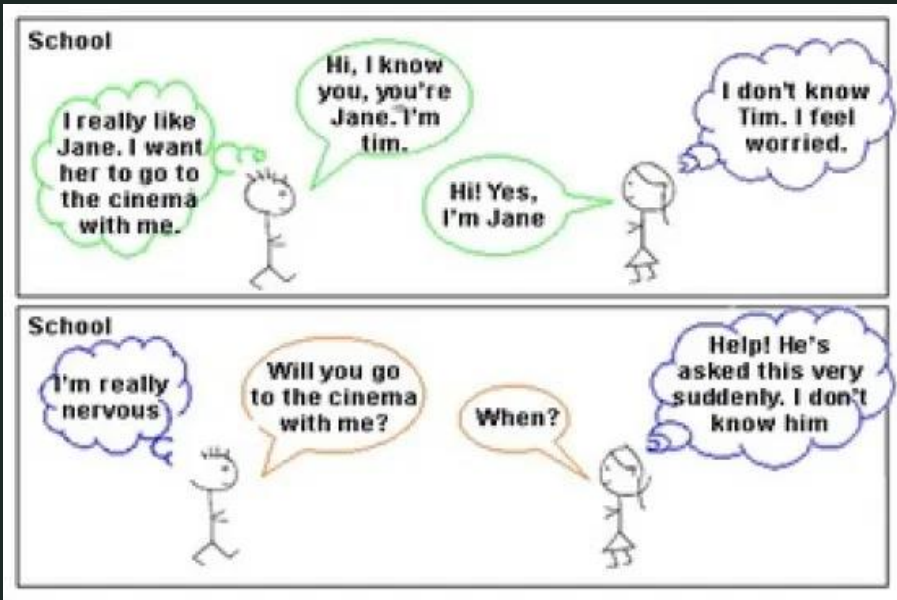
Continued...

- In comic strip conversations, thoughts and feelings hold equal importance to spoken words and actions.
- colours are used to identify the feelings behind thoughts and spoken words.
- Participants in a 'comic strip conversation' draw as they talk.
- Laminate boards, paper or chalkboards can be used.



Conversation colours

- **Green:** good ideas, happy, friendly
- **Red:** bad ideas, teasing, anger, unfriendly
- **Blue:** sad, uncomfortable
- **Brown:** comfortable, cosy
- **Purple:** proud
- **Yellow:** frightened
- **Black:** things we know
- **Orange:** questions
- **Combination of colours :** confused



From Carol Gray's Comic strip conversations, 1994

“By seeing the different elements of a conversation presented visually, some of the more abstract aspects of social communication (such as recognising the feelings of others) are made more 'concrete' and are therefore easier to understand.

Comic strip conversations can also offer an insight into how an autistic person perceives a situation.”

Early Play Interaction Communication

The main aim of Autism EPIC is to help children increase their understanding of the world, by teaching them the skills to improve interaction and communication within the home and educational settings. This will ensure a consistency for your child.

Autism EPIC put great emphasis on developing your child/young person's independence skills. In order to do all of this, we work with parents, carers, and settings very closely.



Autism EPIC Therapy

Lillie Connor – I am an integrated autism therapist, and the founder of **Autism EPIC**, with over 30 years practical experience.

Through a variety of teaching methods, which include intensive interaction and play, I incorporate and work on speech and language skills, managing emotions and behaviour, cognitive thinking and organisation skills. I also deliver bespoke training to parents/carers and educational settings, using the **Zoom** platform.

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