

Incorporating Social Stories in the Treatment of Children on the Autism Spectrum

Supporting both social skill learning and literacy in the elementary classroom

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Impairments of Social Cognition

- Children on the Autism Spectrum have difficulty relating to other people. Two theories of social cognition may explain why these children face social challenges:
 1. Theory of Mind
 2. Central Coherence

Theory of Mind

- Have difficulty attributing thoughts and feelings to others.
- Have difficulty in taking the perspective of others.
- Have difficulty understanding that others may not share their beliefs and intentions.
- Have difficulty interpreting the thoughts and feelings of others.
- (Howley & Arnold, 2005)

Central Coherence

- Have difficulty extracting the “main idea” from social situations.
- Pay more attention of irrelevant details particularly of a concrete nature.
- Have difficulty “adding up” the social cues into a socially meaningful “Big Picture”.
- (Bauminger, 2002)

A TRIAD OF SOCIAL IMPAIRMENT

- Wing and Gould (1979) identified a triad of social dysfunction which included:
 1. Impaired Social Interaction
 2. Impaired Reciprocal Communication
 3. Impaired Imaginative Play

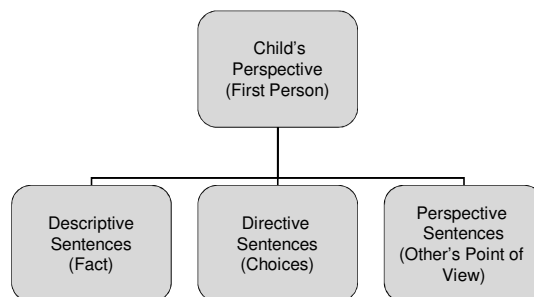
Social Stories

- Recent research has shown that social stories can be an effective way of treating social skill deficits.

Carol Gray invented the idea of a social story in the early 1990's

- Brief individualized stories that describe a social situation
- Provide specific behavioral cues
- Instructs on the who, what, when, where and why of a social situation (Sansosti & Powell-Smith, 2006).
- Teach social – perspective taking.
- Explain likely reactions of others in the situation.
- Consistent with “Theory of Mind” hypothesis. (Delano & Snell, 2006)

Carol Gray's Social Story Structure



Gray's Basic Social Story Ratio

- Social Stories should have a ratio of 2:5 descriptive and/or perspective sentences for every 1 directive sentence

(Delano & Snell, 2006)

Gray Has Augmented Her Theory

- She has added three other kinds of sentences:
 1. Cooperative-to explain other's support.
 2. Affirmative-to enhance directive sentences.
 3. Control-to help the child recall (Howley & Arnold, 2005)

EXAMPLE

- I like to play with my friends. (*descriptive*) My friends will play with me if I ask them nicely. (*perspective*). At recess, I ask a friend, "Can I play with you?" (*directive*) My friends like it when I ask them nicely. (*perspective*) They will play with me if I ask them nicely. (*cooperative*)

How Do They Teach?

- Social Stories teach by providing information about the social world so that the child can develop his or her own social schema that can then be applied across many social contexts. (Rowe, 1999)

Social Stories can be constructed with:

- Boardmaker Pictures
- The child's own words and/or drawings
- Objects
- Photos

Personal Social Stories

- Made with a digital camera
- Features the child himself/herself
- Uses literary conventions
- Uses story grammar
- Effective at teaching pragmatic language skills
- Effective at getting parent cooperation with rehearsal
- Support broader goals of the curriculum

The child will verbalize to....

- Gain notice
- Access, maintain and terminate participation in a peer group
- Ask for or defend his/her turn
- Resolve a conflict
- Use polite routines
- Will monitor his/her listener and respond to their verbalizations.
- Ask for clarification or respond to another's bid for clarification
- Ask for help or respond to another's bid for help
- Display sportsmanship during games.
- Share resources

Sample IEP goal

- **Need:** Bob needs to verbalize to interact with peers in order to succeed at school.
- **Goal:** Bob will verbalize to interact with peers during small speech group on 10 documented dates.
- **Benchmarks:**
 1. Bob will verbalize to gain access, maintain and terminate participation in a peer group.

Benchmarks continued

- 2. Bob will verbalize to ask for or defend his turn, resolve a conflict and to request or accept help from a peer on 10 documented dates.
- 3. Bob will verbalize polite routines to initiate a conversation with a peer and to extend that conversation for 4-5 exchanges on 10 documented dates.
- 4. While conversing with a peer, Bob will monitor and respond to his listener's bids for clarification and will ask for clarification on 10 documented dates.

What is the therapist doing?

- COACHING
 1. Direct Instruction
 2. Feedback on performance
- REHEARSAL
 - Practice Makes Perfect*
 1. *In the therapy setting*
 2. *At home*

How does the therapist do a Social Story

- Set up an interactive situation such as game playing
- OR
- Catch in the act at recess, the classroom or cafeteria
- Coach during the activity
- Take pictures with a digital camera during the activity
- Let it happen-let go of your need for control

Writing the Story

- Download pictures into computer
- Print out a contact sheet
- Number the order of the pictures you will use and write a story using literary conventions
- Bring up your picture file
- Bring up a new blank document in Word then minimize it.
- Insert your picture from your file into Word document through copying and pasting.
- Add text to each page.

Parent Compliance

- Most parents will read the story over and over to their children because they, too, love seeing him/her as the star!
- Each time the story is read and discussed, rehearsal occurs
- The story can shape the parents behavior (Adams, Gouvousis, VanLue, & Waldron, 2004)

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