Social Narratives (SN)

**Brief Introduction**

Social narratives (SN) are interventions that describe social situations in some detail by highlighting relevant cues and offering examples of appropriate responses. They are aimed at helping learners adjust to changes in routine and adapt their behaviors based on the social and physical cues of a situation, or to teach specific social skills.

**Description**

Social narratives (SN) are individualized according to learner needs; they describe the desired or targeted social behavior to the learner. A social narrative shares relevant social information, explicating the relevant social cues, perspectives, and appropriate responses in a reassuring, nonthreatening way. The most widely used social narrative method is Social Stories™ by Carol Gray (Gray, 1998; 2010). The purpose of a social narrative is not to tell the learner how to behave, but to describe and explicate the social situation so that it is more understandable to the learner. Sentence types that are often used when constructing social narratives include descriptive, coaching (or directive), perspective, affirmative, control, and cooperative. Social narratives should be written at the child’s language level in an emotionally safe way, meaning the language should be non-judgmental and positive. In addition, combining social narratives with visual supports reduces the child’s cognitive load and aids understanding. Refer to the work of Gray (1998; 2010) for specific instructions on creating effective social stories.

SN meets evidence-based criteria with 17 single-case design studies. According to the evidence-based studies, this intervention has been effective for preschoolers (3–5 years) to high school-age learners (15–18 years) with ASD. SN can be used effectively to address social, communication, behavior, joint attention, play, school-readiness, academic, and adaptive skills.

**Brief Adapted from**


### Matrix of SN by Outcome and Age (years)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social</th>
<th>Communication</th>
<th>Behavior</th>
<th>Joint Attention</th>
<th>Play</th>
<th>Cognitive</th>
<th>School Readiness</th>
<th>Academic</th>
<th>Motor</th>
<th>Adaptive</th>
<th>Vocational</th>
<th>Mental Health</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-5</td>
<td>6-14</td>
<td>15-22</td>
<td>0-5</td>
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<td>15-22</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

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## Social Narratives (SN)

### Research Summary: Social Narratives (SN)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ages</th>
<th>Skills/Intervention Goals</th>
<th>Settings</th>
<th>Outcome</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3–19 years</td>
<td>Social, communication, interpersonal, behavior, joint attention, play, school readiness, academic, adaptive skills</td>
<td>Home, school, community</td>
<td>EBP</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*The information found in the Research Summary table is updated yearly following a literature review of new research and this age range reflects information from this review.

### Research


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References


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Steps for Implementation

Step 1. Identifying the Social Situation for the Intervention

A. Refer to the learner’s IEP/IFSP to identify potential intervention targets.

B. Discuss goals with team members, including family and learner.

C. Select a social behavior that will result in positive social interactions, a safer environment, and/or additional social learning opportunities.

Step 2. Defining the Target Behavior or Skill

A. Clearly define the target behavior or skill so that it is observable and measurable.

Step 3. Collecting Baseline Data

A. Determine the type of data (e.g., permanent product, assessment) needed to assess the target skill.

B. Collect data on at least three occasions over three to five days to determine the learner’s skills prior to intervention.

Step 4. Writing the Social Narrative

A. Write the social narrative in language that is appropriate for the learner’s age and comprehension.

B. Consistently use first or third person, based on learner characteristics.

Step 5. Choosing Appropriate Length of Story

A. Select a number of sentences per page that is appropriate for the learner’s functional level and age.

B. Construct each sentence (or page) to allow the learner to focus on a specific concept.

Step 6. Including Photos, Picture Icons, or Hand-Drawn Pictures

A. Use visuals that are appropriate for the individual learner.

B. If appropriate, include the learner in creating or selecting pictures to include.
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Step 7. Implementing the Social Narrative

A. Use the social narrative as a regular part of the learner’s daily schedule.

B. Read the social narrative to the learner, or encourage the learner to read it aloud or silently as part of the daily routine.

Step 8. Monitoring Learner Progress

A. Collect data to measure the effectiveness of narrative intervention on the target behavior or skill for a minimum of two weeks.

B. Ask others who work or live with the learner to collect data on the target behavior across settings.

Step 9. Reviewing Data and Modifying the Narrative if Necessary

A. Depending on intervention findings, continue to use the narrative, increase use of the narrative, or adapt the narrative.

B. When the social narrative procedures are altered (modification in narrative or frequency), change only one variable at a time.

C. Collect and review data following each adaptation or change.

Step 10. Addressing Generalization and Maintenance of Learned Behavior or Skill

A. Promote generalization of the target skill by including multiple peers and/or adults in the social narrative process.

B. Promote maintenance of the target skill by fading the use of the narrative and by increasing the time between readings, and/or by having the learner progress from reading aloud to silent reading.

C. If the learner begins to show signs of returning to target baseline levels, the social narrative is reintroduced.