

Social Narratives

Social narratives are stories that describe situations and socially appropriate responses that a student can try to make. Also called “social stories,” this strategy has been used extensively for students on the autism spectrum, but has applicability to many other students who need information in order to better navigate certain situations.

The narrative that is developed, which is written specifically for that student, is intended to clarify the situation and what responses might be considered appropriate in that situation. Situations can include times when communication can be misinterpreted, when frustration might make problem-solving more difficult, and when the “hidden rules” of a social situation might not be clearly understood. Social narratives may help the individual gain information about the thoughts and feelings of others, as well as contextual information they may have missed. They can give the student specific strategies they can try in those situations and affirm that the student can be successful.

The narrative can be written on the spot, collaborating with the student, or developed ahead of time as the first step in the instruction of a specific skill. They can be read just before a situation occurs during which the student needs the information, just after a situation occurs during which the information in the story might have been useful, or they can be used to introduce a new skill.

Social narratives are written at the student’s language and learning level. Some social narratives have a lot of pictures (sometimes illustrated by the student). Other social narratives are just text.

The first sentences describe what is happening, who is involved and where it will happen.

My classmates and I go to school every day. The teachers are there to help us. They teach many students at the same time.

They describe the situation being addressed by the narrative.

Sometimes I don’t think the teacher knows what my IEP requires.

The feelings or thoughts of the people involved in the situation are described.

The teacher may have a good reason for asking me to do a certain school task.

Sentences that describe what the student can do in that situation are next. Clarify any words that might not be clear.

If I think the teacher is making a mistake, I can try to ask her “May I ask why I am being asked to do this?” I can try to ask in a way that is respectful. Respectful means to use a calm voice and polite words.

Affirmative words wrap up the story.

The teachers want me to be successful. I can work with the teachers to learn and grow.

My name is Kathy and I am currently a 9th grader at North High School. Next year, I will be in the 10th grade. When I am in 10th grade, some things will be different at school. 10th grade is different than 9th grade because I am older and learning to be an adult.

I will have different classes and different teachers in 10th grade. In my first semester of 10th grade, my classes and teachers will be..... These classes will end in December. In January, I will start different classes and these classes and teachers will be...

In 10th grade I will have a break schedule. A break is a period of time during a class when I can leave class for _____ minutes to do something different. My teacher will show me on my schedule when my breaks will happen. I will take my break in _____. During a break I may choose what to do. My choices are...

My teachers will like it when I come back to class after my break. Teachers think class time is important, that is when they teach important information that they want students to learn. I will try to get back to class on time after break.

It is important to pay attention in class. Paying attention means watching the teacher while she is talking and following along with the class.

Sometimes I feel bored or don't want to pay attention. I need to try to watch the teacher even when I am bored. This helps me learn.

If I need a break, I can raise my hand and ask to get a drink. This will help me move around so I can come back and be ready to pay attention again.

Writing homework down is important so that I can get good grades in my classes. When I write my homework down, it is easier to remember what I have to do. I can choose many different ways to write my homework down. Whatever I choose, it is important that I use the same method every day.

When I get to a class, I should write the homework down right away if it is on the board. When I am at home, I can check my homework log and know what I have to do.

Sometimes I get mad when my schedule changes. My teacher usually tells me about the changes the day before but sometimes she does not.

If I am confused about the schedule changes, I will talk to my teacher. I will say, "Can you explain this to me please?"

It will make me feel better if the teacher explains the change to me.

Schedules sometimes need to be changed and I will follow the new schedule for the day.

Sometimes at school I feel like a need to leave and get away from a person or from a situation. I might feel this way because I am embarrassed. I might feel this way because I think I may have done something wrong. I might feel this way because I'm afraid I'm in trouble. I might feel this way because I just need a break from things.

Lots of people and teenagers have moments when they feel like this. So I know I am not alone with these feelings.

It is OK to feel this way, but it is not OK to just leave without telling an adult. When I think I'm in trouble, when I feel embarrassed, or when I just need a break I can just tell an adult "I think I need to leave this situation and talk to an adult." The adult can be a teacher or adult assistant, or the principal.

The adult WILL help me solve a problem or help me feel better.

If I just leave then other people will worry about me. They would have to let my parents know because they are worried.

When I tell an adult I need to leave, the teacher and especially my parents will know I am trying hard to be responsible.