Module: Social Narratives

Overview of Social Narratives


Social narratives are interventions that describe social situations in some detail by highlighting relevant cues and offering examples of appropriate responding. 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 or behaviors. Social narratives are individualized according to learner needs and typically are quite short, perhaps including pictures or other visual aides. Sentence types that are often used when constructing social narratives include descriptive, directive, perspective, affirmative, control, and cooperative. Refer to the work of Gray (1993; 1995) for specific instructions on creating effective social stories (see Additional References below).

Evidence Base

Five single subject studies make up the evidence base for the practice of social narratives.

With what ages are social narratives effective?

The evidence-based research suggests that social narratives can be used effectively with learners with ASD. In the evidence base, children and youth ranging in age from early childhood to middle school who were identified as having ASD, autism, PDD-NOS, and Asperger’s served as participants.

What skills or intervention goals can be addressed by social narratives?

Social narratives originated in the behavioral literature and have been used to (1) address behavioral difficulties, (2) teach social skills, and (3) promote effective and appropriate communication. In the evidence base, studies targeted the following skills or behaviors: repetitive behavior, social interactions, disruptive behavior, generalization of independent behavior, expression of frustration, choice-making and play, and on-task behavior.

In what settings have social narratives been effectively used?

Social narratives are designed to be used as a pre-cursor to, or in anticipation of, upcoming events. As such, they are portable and adaptable to nearly any setting. In the evidence base, the majority of the studies were conducted in school settings (including classrooms, therapy rooms, bathrooms, lunchrooms, and hallways). One study was conducted in a home setting while another study implemented a social narrative intervention in both school and community settings.
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Evidence Base

The studies cited in this section document that this practice meets the NPDC on ASD’s criteria for an evidence-based practice. This list is not exhaustive; other quality studies may exist that were not included.

Preschool


Elementary and Middle School


Selected Additional References


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