

Module: Social Narratives

Steps for Implementation: Social Narratives

These steps for implementation were adapted from:

Wragge, A. (2008). *Social narratives: Online training module*. (Lincoln, NE: Nebraska Department of Education). In Ohio Center for Autism and Low Incidence (OCALI), *Autism Internet Modules*, www.autisminternetmodules.org. Columbus, OH: OCALI.

When planning for and implementing social narratives with children and youth with ASD, the following steps are recommended.

Step 1. Identifying the Social Situation for the Intervention

1. Teachers/practitioners refer to IEP or IFSP for learner's goals.
2. Teachers/practitioners discuss goals with IFSP/IEP team members, including family and learner.
3. Teachers/practitioners select a social behavior for change, preferably one that will result in positive social interactions, a safer environment, additional social learning opportunities, or all three.

The first step in creating a social narrative is for teachers/practitioners to select a social behavior for change. Additional information from the learner, his/her family, and/or educational team may be helpful in identifying a target for change as well.

Step 2. Defining the Target Behavior or Skill

1. Teachers/practitioners clearly define the target behavior or skill so that it is observable and measurable.

Once the social situation has been identified, it is important for teachers/practitioners to clearly define the target behavior or skill so that it is observable and measurable. For example, "Bill will interact appropriately," is less easy to identify than "Bill will greet others by saying, 'Hello,' waving, or giving a high-five." Clearly defined target behaviors make it easier to teach the skills and to collect data on the skills. Even more important, it will be easier for the student to learn the expected behavior or skill.

Step 3. Collecting Baseline Data

1. Teachers/practitioners determine the type of data (e.g., permanent product, assessment) needed to assess the target skill.
2. Teachers/practitioners collect data on at least three occasions over three to five days to identify the baseline skills of the learner before beginning the intervention.

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Prior to writing and implementing a social narrative, teachers/practitioners should collect baseline (pre-intervention) data on the target behavior or skill to track learning and the effectiveness of the intervention. Sometimes it is helpful to collect data across settings and involve other people in the process (e.g., asking a parent to collect data at home, or another teacher/practitioner to collect data in a different setting).

Step 4. Writing the Social Narrative

1. Teachers/practitioners write the social narrative in language that is appropriate for the learner's age and comprehension.
2. Teachers/practitioners consistently use first or second person, based on learner characteristics.

There are two important features of a well written social narrative. First, teachers/practitioners use words appropriate for the learner's age and comprehension. Second, the author of the narrative consistently uses first or second person, based on the characteristics of the learners. Specifically, the narrative may be written first person, "I will tap the teacher on the shoulder when I want her attention," or second person, "Ben will tap the teacher on the shoulder when Ben wants her attention."

Step 5. Choosing the Appropriate Length of Story

1. Teachers/practitioners select a number of sentences per page that are appropriate for the learner's functioning level and age.
2. Teachers/practitioners construct each sentence (or page) to allow the learner to focus on a specific concept.

The teacher or practitioner should choose a number of sentences per page that is a good match for the learner's age and comprehension. Many learners with ASD are able to help construct their own social narratives and should be encouraged to do so.

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

1. Teachers/practitioners use visuals that are appropriate for the individual learner.
2. If appropriate, teachers/practitioners include the learner in creating or selecting pictures to include.

While not all learners will benefit or enjoy illustrations within their social narratives, those that do include visual elements should be appropriate for the learner's age, comprehension ability, and preferences. Again, many learners with ASD can either provide drawings for their own stories, or can be the subject of photos used with the story. Some learners may even enjoy finding clip art on the computer that can be used to supplement the narrative.

Step 7. Implementing the Social Narrative

1. Teachers/practitioners use the social narrative as a regular part of the learner's daily schedule.

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2. Teachers/practitioners read the social narrative to the learner, or the learner is encouraged to read it aloud or silently as part of the daily routine.

Once the social narrative has been constructed, teachers/practitioners will insert the social narrative into the learner's daily routine. This is often done as a precursor to an upcoming event (i.e., the social situation identified in step one). For example, if a learner has a social narrative to support him during passing time between classes, the teacher may choose to have him read the social story just before the bell indicating passing time rings. For a younger or non-reading individual needing support for finding a playmate during recess, the teacher may ask a peer to read the story to her just before recess begins. Social narratives are most successful when they are a regular part of a learner's routine.

Step 8. Monitoring Learner Progress

1. Teachers/practitioners collect data to measure the effectiveness of narrative intervention on the target behavior or skill for a minimum of two weeks.
2. Teachers/practitioners ask others who work or live with the learner to collect data on the target behavior across settings.

As the use of the social narrative becomes part of the learner's routine, teachers/practitioners should collect data on the target behavior to measure learner progress, as well as the effectiveness of the particular social narrative.

Step 9. Reviewing Data and Modifying the Narrative if Necessary

1. Depending on intervention findings, teachers/practitioners may continue to use the narrative, increase use of the narrative, or adapt the narrative.
2. When the social narrative procedures are altered (modification in narrative or frequency), teachers/practitioners change only one variable at a time.
3. Teachers/practitioners collect and review data following each adaptation or change.

In addition to collecting data on the target social situation and behavior, the teacher should review it regularly and use data to inform instructional decisions. If the learner is not progressing toward the intervention goal, teachers/practitioners might consider altering the social narrative procedure. It is important, though, for only one variable or aspect of the social narrative intervention to be changed at a time. For example, in our earlier example, the learner was reading his own social narrative just prior to the bell for passing time. If the collected data indicated that the learner was still having difficulty with the target behavior during passing time, the teacher might consider having him read the story aloud to someone else, having someone else read the story to him, changing the frequency with which the story was used, including more visuals, or changing the wording of the story. Changing only one variable at a time will help to identify what worked and what did not work.

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

1. Teachers/practitioners promote generalization of the target skill by including multiple peers and/or adults in the social narrative process.
2. Teachers/practitioners 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 read-aloud to silent reading.
3. If the learner begins to show signs of returning to target baseline levels, the social narrative is reintroduced.

Once the learner begins to show some success with use of social narratives, teachers/practitioners can turn their attention to generalization of the target skill by including multiple peers and/or adults in the social narrative process or by adding new settings. For example, in the earlier example of the little girl using a social narrative prior to recess to learn how to appropriately join others in play by asking to join rather than taking toys away from others, the teacher may have implemented it during the recess time in the classroom following morning snack. To promote generalized use of the target skill, the teacher could add use of the narrative to just before large group, outdoor recess. Another important facet of effective instruction is to promote maintenance of the target skill by fading the use of the narrative by a) increasing the time between readings, b) reducing the number of readings per day and then per week, c) having learners progress from having the narrative read to them to having them read it to themselves (interestingly, even pre-readers can often tell the story by memory after it has been used for a while), or d) by shortening the story to just a few clue words or phrases and one or two pictures as a visual reminder. Many learners with ASD, for whom social narratives are effective, enjoy having them in their routines. If the use of the narrative does not interfere with the regular routines or learning, it is okay to allow students to use the narrative as they desire.