



## Social Stories: What Are They and How Are They Used?

According to [Carol Gray](#), the creator of the aid Social Stories, “Social Stories describe a situation, skill or concept in terms of relevant social cues, perspectives and common responses in a patient and reassuring manner that is easily understood by its audience” (1). In other words, social stories use words or images to explain specific occurrences, behaviors, social interactions, concepts, or skills. They are designed to benefit those with developmental delays, social issues, autism, or other difficulties with comprehension.

Although social stories are generally considered an informal aid/tool rather than a rigorously validated technique, experts support them for many reasons (2). Social stories approach key concepts of autism, including limited theory of mind and weak central coherence. It is thought that individuals with autism have limited theory of mind, or that characteristic which allows people to understand others’ perspectives, beliefs, or desires. It is also hypothesized that those with autism have limited central coherence, or the ability to understand things as a whole versus as separate parts (2). Social stories approach both needs by explaining parts to form an entire message and demonstrate the thoughts and feelings of others.

An example of a social story about [riding a bike](#) can be found at the Kansas Technical Assistance Network website (3). The story uses images and words to demonstrate the concept of riding a bike and related safety measures. Social stories are excellent resources to show children with developmental delays before taking them on a bike ride to prepare for what to expect and how things will work. The [Kansas Technical Assistance Network](#) has a plethora of social story resources that can be downloaded and used for free (3).

Social stories can be especially helpful for preparing children with autism or other developmental delays for certain necessary tasks. For example, children who are overwhelmed by going to the dentist may be better equipped for it if they have read a social story beforehand. These images could divide the task into steps, from entering the dentist’s office, to sitting in the waiting room, to opening your mouth for the dentist, etc. They may



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also highlight people at the office, like the receptionists, the nurses, the parent who will be accompanying them, and the dentist. Whatever the case may be, these stories simplify the parts the child finds most difficult to comprehend and prepare them for an event by making it seem less overwhelming (4).

While social stories are primarily used for children with developmental delays or autism, they are a useful tool for illustrating complex processes simply and clearly to any child. Children with [hypoxic-ischemic encephalopathy \(HIE\)](#), [intellectual and developmental disabilities \(I/DD\)](#), ADHD, and [behavioral/emotional disorders](#) may also benefit from the use of social stories.

### About the HIE Help Center and ABC Law Centers

The HIE Help Center is run by [ABC Law Centers](#), a medical malpractice firm exclusively handling cases involving HIE and other birth injuries. Our lawyers have over 100 years of combined experience with this type of law, and have been advocating for children with HIE and related disabilities since the firm's inception in 1997.

We are passionate about helping families obtain the compensation necessary to cover their extensive medical bills, loss of wages (if one or both parents have to miss work in order to care for their child), assistive technology, and other necessities.

If you suspect your child's HIE may have been caused by medical negligence, please contact us today to learn more about pursuing a case. We provide free legal consultations, during which we will inform you of your [legal options](#) and answer any questions you may have. Moreover, clients pay nothing throughout the entire legal process unless we obtain a favorable settlement.

You are also welcome to reach out to us with inquiries that are not related to malpractice. We cannot provide individualized medical advice, but we're happy to track down informational resources for you.



Some other places where you can find social stories include:

- [Head Start Center for Inclusion: Social Stories Downloads](#)
- [Child Behavior Guide: Free Social Stories](#)
- [The Touch Autism App](#)
- [Positively Autism: Free Teaching Materials](#)
- [Kids Can Dream: Personal Hygiene Social Stories](#)
- [File Folder Heaven: Folder Stories](#)
- [Genesis Behavior Center: Printable Social Stories](#)

### Sources

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