**Social Stories for Anxiety**

**Background**

When adults want to learn something new or start a new experience, they often start with a manual or framework – a set of instructions with steps to follow, things to remember and processes to learn. Social stories are like mini manuals for children so that they know what to expect and/or how to perform the activity. Social stories have a beginning, middle and end. This provides children with context and ability to picture the full activity which can be helpful in reducing anxiety symptoms and the fear of the unknown.

**Social stories can help with:**

* **New experiences** – first day at [school](http://csefel.vanderbilt.edu/scriptedstories/bus.ppt), going on an airplane.
* **Transitions** – moving from one activity or environment to the next.
* **Social skills** – sharing, taking turns, resolving conflicts.
* **Learning routines** – bedtime routine, morning routine.
* **Setting expectations for behavior** – visiting the library, road trips.
* **Specific behavioral issues** – spitting, hitting, name-calling.

**How to write Social Stories**

* Write Social Stories from the child’s point of view in 1st or 3rd person, and in present or future tense for example “Susie is going to school today” or “I am going to school.”
* Invite your child to create the story with you by adding artwork, drawing pictures, making collage, or writing the story and/or words.
* Keep social stories at least 50% positive language and use descriptive language (“Susie will… or Susie is…”) rather than directive language such as “Susie should…” or “Susie needs to…”

**Let’s Begin!**

1. Explain the current behavior. What’s going on? What’s the problem? (Ex: “Susie is scared to go to school, Susie feels nervous about meeting new teacher”).
2. Explain the targeted behavior. (“Susie will go to school and meet new teacher”)
3. Offer alternatives to the behavior. (“Susie can meet new teacher with friend or trusted adult”)
4. Resolve the situation in a positive way.

You can also think in terms of Who, Why, What, Where, When, How:

* When it occurs (Ex: Susie is nervous in meeting new people)
* Where it occurs (In public places, such as school)
* Who is involved. (Anyone new)
* What to do in the situation. (Meet new person with parent, friend, or trusted adult)
* Why people behave in certain ways (It can be scary to meet someone new because you are not sure if they will like you/be kind to you).

**Example of a Social Story**

**Beginning Middle End**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **My Social Story**  Susie is going to school today  Young girl smiling | Susie is excited to see her friends and play at recess and lunch.  Group of smiling children at school  Susie feels nervous about meeting her new teacher. | Susie will meet her new teacher tomorrow with the help of her previous teacher.  Adult working with students |

**Online Resources to help you build Social Stories:**

Book Creator

Pic Collage

Pictello

StoryMaker for Social Stories

Stories About Me

Stories2Learn

I create…

My pictures Talk

First Then Visual Schedule

Connectability (Free)

Picto-Selector

**Selection of free social stories:**

<https://www.socialstoriesforyou.com/freesocialstories>