

Social Scripts

People with autism may have difficulty understanding situations because of:

- An inability to read the verbal and non-verbal behaviour of other people means that those with autism have only a limited access to accurate social information.
- A lack of understanding of what information is important.
- A lack of information seeking skills and an inability to realise that questions can be used to gain information from others.
- A lack of intuition about what the behaviour of others tells you about their feelings, thoughts and intentions.

Carol Gray (Gray 1993) developed a way of explaining social situations in a clear, visual way that can be returned to again and again. By setting the explicit rules and expectations of a particular situation down as a script, we can make it clear to a person with autism exactly how he or she is expected to behave.

At the same time, they withdraw the difficult social dimension or 'emotional context' of one person explaining inappropriate behaviour to another.

Objectives for social scripts:

- Facilitate mainstream inclusion
- Teach social skills
- Limit ritualistic or repetitive behaviour
- Help cope with change and teach new routines
- Explain people's behaviour
- Reduce challenging behaviour

Writing a social script:

The story should contain:

Descriptive sentences
Directive sentences
Perspective sentences.

The story must be accurate. Avoid using words such as *will*. Use *might* or *may* instead. Try to keep the tone positive, i.e., *Simon walks*, as opposed to *Simon does not run*. Also, use as few directive sentences as possible. The balance of 3 or 4 descriptive sentences to 1 directive one is probably about right, although in some circumstances you might want to use even fewer.

Here is a short example of a social script about winning and losing.

On Tuesdays I play games with Mrs. Merry, Thomas and Jazdeep.

Sometimes we play games that have a winner.

I like to be the winner very much.

Everybody says "Well Done!" or something like that when I win.

Mrs. Merry, Thomas and Jazdeep like to win as well.

I will try to say "Well done!" when they win.

Everybody will be happy and I might win next time.

References:

Gray, C. (1993) Social Stories: Improving responses of children with autism with accurate social information. *Focus on Autistic Behaviour* **8**, pp1-10