

Social Stories: My Body & Self-Care

9 social stories. Read one-on-one when the student is calm, not during a hard moment. First person, positive, and true for this student.

Nine stories for appointments, hygiene, and taking care of my body. Many of these situations involve new people and being touched, which can feel hard — each story explains what will happen and what helps.

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Going to the Dentist

Sometimes I go to the dentist. The dentist helps keep my teeth healthy.

At the dentist, I sit in a big chair that leans back.

The dentist looks in my mouth with a small mirror and a tool. It might feel strange.

This might feel new or a little worrying. I can hold something or squeeze my hands.

The dentist is gentle and works quickly.

When we are done, I get to go home. Taking care of my teeth is important.

For the adult: Preview with photos of the specific office if possible. Ask the dentist about accommodations like a slower pace or a fidget.

Getting a Haircut

Sometimes I get a haircut. A haircut keeps my hair neat.

At the haircut, I sit in a chair and someone cuts my hair with scissors or clippers.

The clippers can buzz and the hair can feel ticklish on my neck.

These feelings might bother me. I can tell the grown-up if I need a break.

The haircut does not hurt, and it is over soon.

When it is done, my hair looks neat, and I feel proud that I sat calmly.

For the adult: The buzzing sound and neck sensation are common triggers. A cape, headphones, or a mirror to watch can help.

Going to the Doctor

Sometimes I go to the doctor. The doctor helps keep my body healthy.

At the doctor, I might get weighed, get my temperature taken, and get checked.

The doctor might use a cold tool to listen to my heart. It might feel cold or strange.

I might feel worried at the doctor. My grown-up stays with me.

I can ask the doctor what they are going to do next.

When the check-up is done, we go home. The doctor is helping me stay well.

For the adult: A predictable order and a familiar adult reduce anxiety. Ask the office to explain each step before doing it.

Washing My Hands

Washing my hands keeps me healthy and stops germs from spreading.

I wash my hands after using the bathroom, before eating, and when they are dirty.

To wash my hands, I use soap and water and rub for about twenty seconds.

Then I rinse and dry them.

Clean hands help me and the people around me stay healthy.

Washing my hands is a good habit.

For the adult: Pair with a visual step sequence at the sink. Sing a 20-second song to make the timing concrete.

Brushing My Teeth

I brush my teeth to keep them clean and healthy.

I brush in the morning and before bed.

I put a little toothpaste on my brush and brush all my teeth gently.

The toothpaste might taste strong or feel foamy. I can pick a flavour I like.

Then I spit and rinse with water.

Brushing keeps my teeth strong and my breath fresh.

For the adult: Sensory issues with toothpaste are common; let the student choose flavour and texture. A visual sequence helps.

Wearing the Right Clothes

Every day I choose clothes to wear.

The clothes I wear depend on the weather and what we are doing.

When it is cold, I wear warm clothes like a coat. When it is hot, I wear cool clothes.

Sometimes clothes feel scratchy or tight. I can pick clothes that feel comfortable.

If my clothes bother me, I can tell a grown-up.

Wearing the right clothes helps my body feel just right.

For the adult: Honour sensory clothing preferences where possible (tagless, soft fabrics). Offer weather-appropriate choices, not open-ended ones.

Trying a New Food

Sometimes there is a new food I have not tried before.

New foods can look, smell, or feel different than what I usually eat.

I do not have to eat a lot. I can take one small taste, or just smell it.

If I do not like it, that is okay. I do not have to finish it.

Trying new foods helps me find new things I might like.

It is okay to go slowly with new foods.

For the adult: Never force food. 'Smell it' or 'touch it' are valid first steps. Reinforce any interaction, not just eating.

Getting a Shot

Sometimes at the doctor I need a shot. A shot helps keep me from getting sick.

A shot is a quick little poke in my arm or leg.

It might pinch for a second, and then it is done.

I might feel scared before a shot. Lots of people do.

I can look away, squeeze my grown-up's hand, or take a deep breath.

The pinch is quick, and I am brave. Then it is over.

For the adult: Be honest that it may pinch — false promises break trust. Offer a concrete coping action and let them choose.

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Using the Bathroom at School

At school, I use the bathroom when I need to.

The school bathroom might sound different, with loud toilets or hand dryers.

The loud sounds might bother me. I can cover my ears if I need to.

I go into a stall, use the toilet, and then wash my hands.

If I need help, I can tell a grown-up.

Using the bathroom is a normal part of my day.

For the adult: Loud auto-flush toilets and hand dryers are frequent triggers. A pre-visit and permission to cover ears help.

How to Use a Social Story

A social story is not a behaviour contract. It describes a situation and a positive response, so the student knows what to expect and what to do.

Read it before the situation, not during it

A social story works as preparation. Read it in a calm moment before the assembly, the fire drill, or the dentist visit — not in the middle of an escalation, when no new information can get in.

Read it more than once

One reading rarely changes behaviour. Most stories need to be read daily for a week or two, then faded to before the specific event. Consistency is what makes the response automatic.

Make it true for this student

If a line is not true — "I stay calm at the dentist" for a student who never has — change it to a goal the student can actually reach: "I am learning to stay calm at the dentist." A story the student knows is false teaches them to ignore it.

Keep more description than direction

Research on social stories suggests most sentences should describe the situation and how others feel, with only a few telling the student what to do. A story that is all instructions reads as a lecture.

Personalise it

Add the student's name, a photo, or the specific people and places involved. The more it looks like the student's real life, the more it transfers to real life.

Tired of rebuilding these forms every year?

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