

Social Stories: Getting Along With Others

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 playing, sharing, and being with other people. Each describes the situation, explains how the other person feels, and offers a friendly response the student can practise.

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Taking Turns

When I play with other people, we take turns.

Taking turns means I go, then someone else goes, then I go again.

When it is not my turn, I wait and watch.

Waiting for my turn can be hard, but my turn will come.

When I take turns, my friends have fun, and they want to play with me again.

Taking turns is a friendly thing to do.

For the adult: Practise turn-taking with a preferred game first, where the motivation to keep playing supports waiting.

When I Lose a Game

When I play a game, sometimes I win and sometimes I lose.

Everybody loses sometimes. Even grown-ups lose games.

When I lose, I might feel disappointed. That feeling is okay.

When I lose, I can take a breath and say, "Good game."

Losing a game does not mean I am bad at it. I can try again next time.

When I lose calmly, my friends still want to play with me.

For the adult: This is one of the most-requested stories. Practise losing in low-stakes games first, and reinforce calm losing more than winning.

Sharing

Sometimes I share things with other people.

Sharing means letting someone else have a turn with something.

When I share, the other person feels happy.

Sharing can feel hard, especially with something I really like.

I can share for a little while, and I will get my turn back.

When I share, I am being a kind friend.

For the adult: Sharing a highly-preferred item is hard; start with neutral items and keep sharing periods short and predictable.

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Personal Space

Everybody has personal space. Personal space is the room around a person's body.

When I stand too close, the other person might feel uncomfortable.

I can keep about an arm's length between me and other people.

If someone steps back, it means they need more space. That is okay.

Giving people space helps them feel comfortable around me.

I am learning to notice personal space.

For the adult: Use a concrete measure — an arm's length, or a hula hoop during practice — to make an abstract concept physical.

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Joining a Group

Sometimes I want to play with a group that is already playing.

I can watch first to see what they are doing.

Then I can ask, "Can I play too?"

Sometimes they say yes, and I join in.

Sometimes they say not right now. That can feel disappointing, and it is okay.

If they say not now, I can find another group or another activity.

For the adult: Teach a specific entry script and rehearse it. Also prepare the student for a 'no' so a refusal doesn't escalate.

When a Friend Says No

Sometimes I ask a friend to play, and they say no.

When a friend says no, it does not mean they do not like me.

Maybe they are busy, tired, or want to play alone right now.

When a friend says no, I can say "Okay" and find something else to do.

There are many people to play with and many things to do.

I can ask my friend again another time.

For the adult: Rejection often triggers big reactions. Reinforce the 'okay, find something else' response heavily.

Using Kind Words

The words I use can make people feel happy or sad.

Kind words are words like "please," "thank you," and "good job."

When I use kind words, people feel good and want to be around me.

Sometimes I feel like saying unkind words when I am upset.

When I feel that way, I can take a breath instead of saying something unkind.

Using kind words helps me make and keep friends.

For the adult: Notice and name kind words the student already uses, so the story reinforces an existing strength.

Listening When Someone Talks

When someone is talking to me, I can listen.

Listening means my body is calm, my eyes are near the person, and my mouth is quiet.

When I listen, the other person feels respected and important.

Sometimes I want to talk before the other person is done. I can wait.

When the person finishes, then it is my turn to talk.

Listening is a way to show I care about what someone says.

For the adult: "Eyes near the person" respects students for whom direct eye contact is uncomfortable. Adjust to the student's needs.

Working With a Partner

Sometimes I work with a partner on a task.

Working with a partner means we both help and we both share ideas.

My partner might have different ideas than me. That is okay.

I can listen to my partner's idea, and my partner can listen to mine.

If we disagree, we can take turns or ask an adult for help.

When I work well with a partner, we get the job done together.

For the adult: Assign clear roles for partner work at first, so 'sharing the task' is concrete rather than open-ended.

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.

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