Social Narratives for Autistic Persons

Module developed by Dr. Marjorie Bock, Ed.D. & Dr. Jessica Stallings, ATR-BC, LIMHP, LMHC
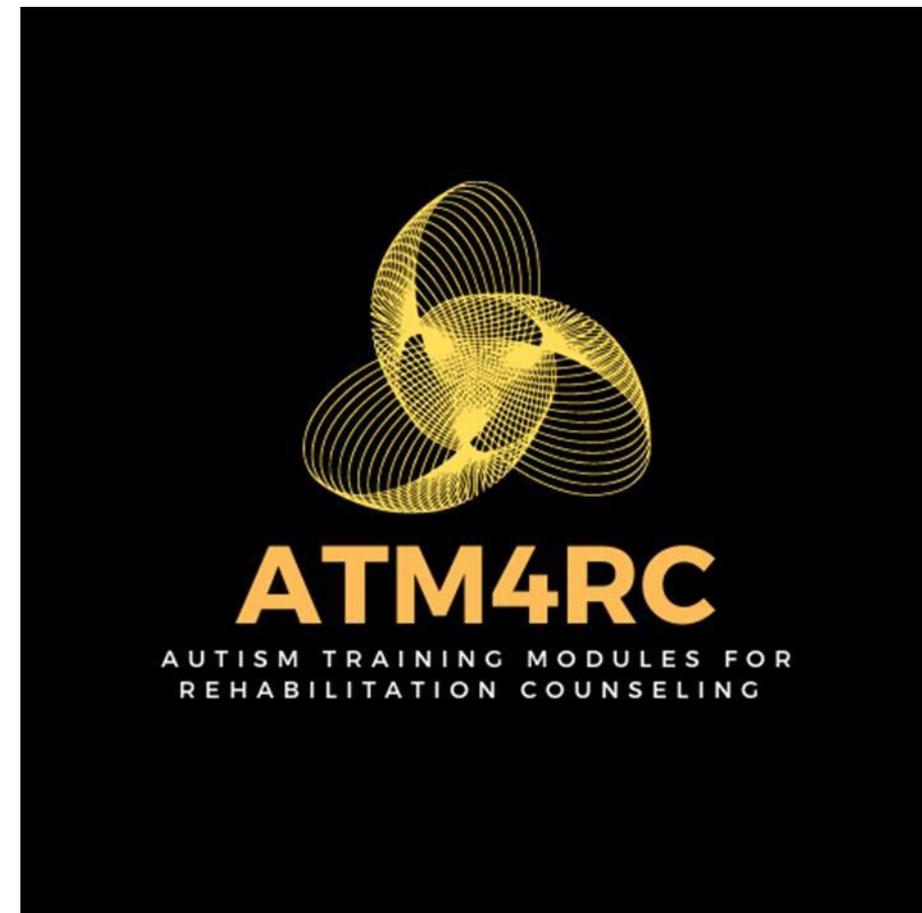
Module Objectives
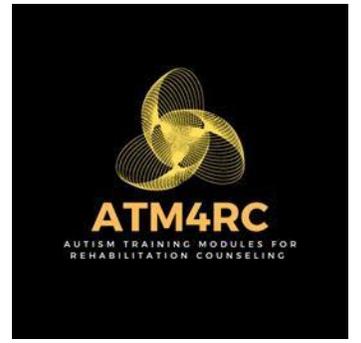
By the end of this module, participants will be able to:

1. Define what social narratives are and why they are used.
2. List the different types of narratives (e.g., comic strip conversations).
3. Identify which of the social narrative types are evidence-based practices.
4. Identify which of the social narrative types have research supporting use with autistic persons ages 15 through 22.
5. Identify steps used to develop, implement, and evaluate efficacy of one social narrative type identified as effective for autistic persons ages 15 through 22.

Social Narratives: Introduction

All persons, including autistic persons, experience socially awkward situations. However, autistic persons often struggle with social interactions (American Psychiatric Association, 2022). They often respond less frequently to social initiations and engage in shorter interactions. Social narratives help autistic persons navigate these challenging situations through use of text and images to highlight important elements and rules in social situations.

Social Narratives: An Evidence-Based Practice for Persons with Autism
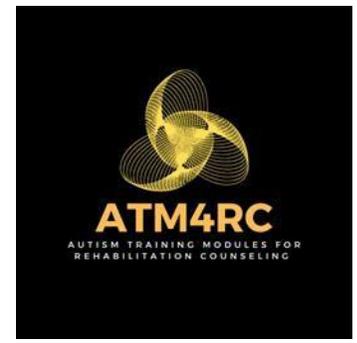
- Social Narratives are an evidence-based practice supported by 21 studies.

- Evidence based practice studies have focused on ages 3 through 22 and the use of Social Stories ™ and Power Cards.

- Social Narratives have improved the social, communication, behavior, cognition, motor, play, adaptive self-help, self-determination, vocational, and mental health for autistic persons.

- Most of the studies involving adolescents/young adults utilized Social Stories ™ to assist with social communication and to address behavioral needs (Steinbrenner et al., 2020)

- For an overview of types of social narratives and their creation watch https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7sZxatDZ_m8
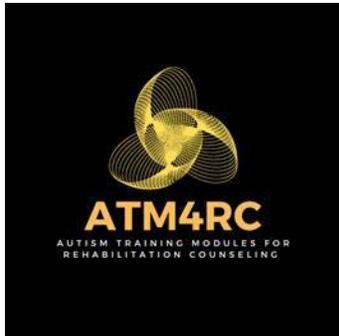
The Benefits of Social Stories ™

- Development of social communication skills

- Teach unwritten social rules

- Encourage empathy and perspective taking

- Allow for pre-teaching to reduce anxiety and improve self-regulation

- Help to develop self-awareness, self-esteem and problem-solving skills

(Gray, 1998, 2000, 2004, 2014, 2015; The National Autistic Society, 2024)

Social Story™ Examples for Adults
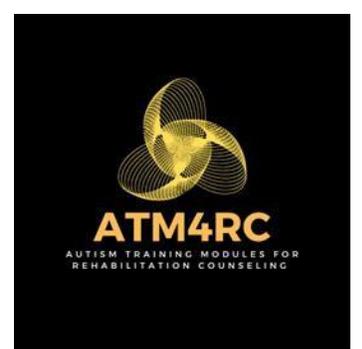
- We R Aspies, a self-advocacy group for adults with autism, created this Social Story ™ for adults with autism.
- Their website has Social Stories ™ for adults with autism.

Review the Going to a Wedding Social Story™ at

http://weraspies.weebly.com/uploads/6/8/5/9/6859492/going_to_a_wedding_ceremony.pdf

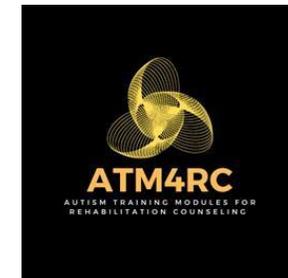Review the Lunchtime in the office Social Story™ at Lunchtime in the office.
http://weraspies.weebly.com/uploads/6/8/5/9/6859492/lunchtime_at_work_social_story.pdf

Additional Examples of Social Stories™ for Teens and Adults
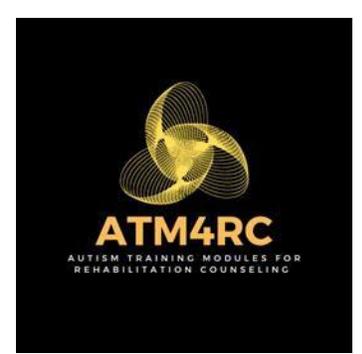
- A Social Story™ about internet safety by Autism Behavior Services https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DidqX2muXXM

- Social Stories about Uber and Lyft Trips by Autism Services Education, Resources, and Training Collaborative (follow link below or see next slide) https://paautism.org/resource/social-stories/public-transportation/

- For more visit https://carolgraysocialstories.com/social-stories/social-story-sampler/

Uber and Lyft Trips: A Social Story ™

UBER & LYFT TIPS

When I need a ride somewhere, I can use the Uber or Lyft apps for public transportation.

Once I request my ride, I will wait inside and stay aware of my surroundings.

I will move away from the crowd when the driver arrives so they can easily spot me.

Before I talk to the driver, I will make sure the license plate number, the color of the car, and the type of car match the information on the app.

I will ask the driver "who are you picking up?" to make sure this ride is for me. If they say any other name than my own or refuse to answer the question, I will not get in the car.

"Who are you picking up?"

I will only sit in the back of the car and get in and out on the passenger side.

UBER & LYFT TIPS

For my safety, I will always wear my seatbelt and make sure the door remains unlocked. If the child lock is on, I will ask the driver to unlock the car.

If I am alone, I will make sure the person I am meeting or any friend/family member has my ride information and details.

If I am anxious, I will call a friend/family member in the car so I feel less alone.

If I think I'm an emergency situation, I will call 911 or use the panic button on the Uber and Lyft apps that call 911.

I will watch the GPS feature on the app to make sure my driver stays on route.

When we arrive at my destination, I will ask my driver to park in a well-lit, safe area and then exit.

ASERT PAautism.org
bringing autism resources together

Pennsylvania's leading source of autism-related resources and information
877-231-4244

The ASERT Collaborative is funded by the Office of Developmental Programs, PA Department of Human Services.

Autism Services Education, Resources, and Training Collaborative (2024)

Practice Activity #1

- Social Stories ™ : One type of social narrative, increase social interactions and communication as well as decrease challenging behaviors and anxiety.
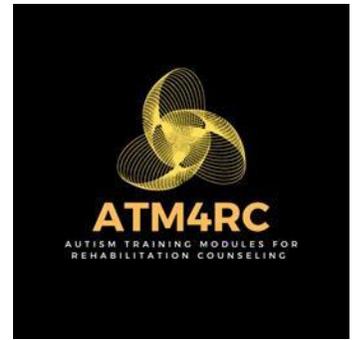
Directions:

- Create a list of 10 workplace challenges autistic adults often experience that would benefit from implementation of a Social Story ™ . (Watch the YouTube video. That may give you a few ideas of some of the workplace challenges persons with autism experience.)
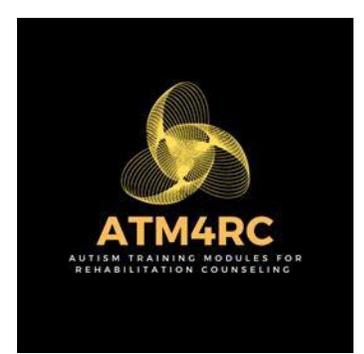
Follow this link or watch the video imbedded in this slide

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c_o5shDrPiM

Writing Social Stories ™

- Written in first person using the perspective of the autistic adult
- Use positive, reassuring language to answer the who, what, when, where, and why of the situation and/or target behavior
- Use descriptive and directive sentences (may also use perspective and affirmative sentences
- Use 2 to 5 descriptive sentences for every directive sentence
- Read How to Write a Social Story™ at https://vkc.vumc.org/assets/files/tipsheets/socialstoriestips.pdf

(Gray, 1998, 2000, 2004, 2014, 2015; Vanderbilt Kennedy Center, n.d.)

Writing Social Stories™ (cont.)

- Descriptive sentences provide the key elements of the situation.
- Directive sentences describe desired responses to the social sit. They give choices and are worded beginning "I may . . . " or "I will try . . . " or "I will . . . "
- Perspective sentences describe others' feelings, thoughts, or Beliefs.
- Affirmative sentences reassure by highlighting common values and meaning tied to a specific culture.

(Kansas Technical Assistance System Network, 2023; Nebraska Autism Spectrum Disorders Network, 2024)
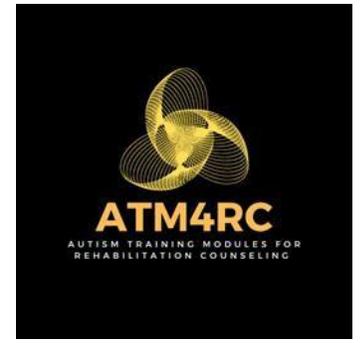
Directions: Identify the types of sentences in the Social Story ™ on the following slide. Then answer the following questions:

- Is this Story written in first person from the perspective of the autistic adult?

- Does this story use positive, reassuring language to answer the who, what, when, where, and why of the situation and/or target behavior?

- Does this story use descriptive and directive sentences?

- Does this story include perspective and affirmative sentences?

- Does this story Use 2 to 5 descriptive sentences for every directive sentences?
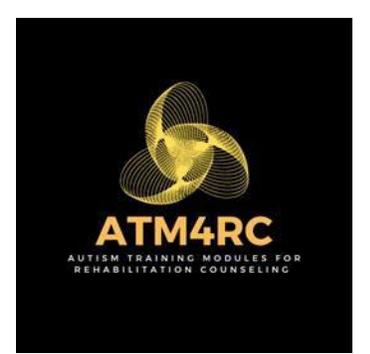
Schedule Changes at Work

Sometimes I get angry when schedules change. My Boss usually tells me before things change. But sometimes my boss cannot tell me before things change. I will ask my boss what to do if I am confused about the changed schedule, instead of raising my voice and walking away. Then I will try to understand and respect what my boss says. Schedules can be changed, and it is okay to follow a new schedule. When the schedule is changed, I will follow the new schedule.

How to Create a Social Story ™
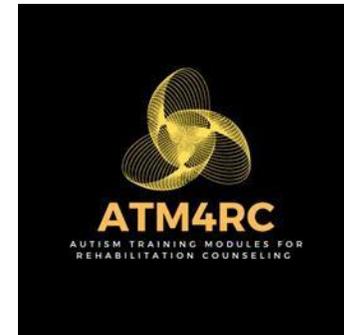
1. Identify Goal

- Main goal to teach social rules & cues

- Story must provide accurate information and descriptions of the social situation & the concepts to be taught

2. Gather Information

- When and where does the situation occur

- Who is involved in the situation

- What do those involved say and do before, during, and following the situation?

- Why do those involved behave the ways they do?

Kansas Technical Assistance System Network (2023)

How to Create a Social Story™ (cont.)

Individualized Text & Pictures

- Write an introduction, a body, and a conclusion.
- Include accurate information for the "wh" questions the story addresses.
- Write in first person.
- Use positive language
- Use 2 to 5 descriptive sentence for each directive sentence.
- Use literal and accurate words.
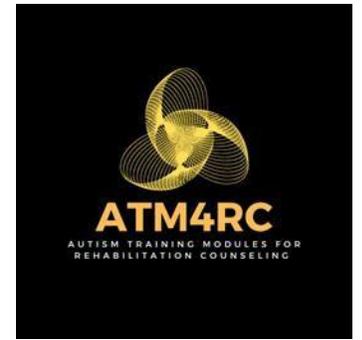- User age-appropriate pictures and icons.

Story Title

- Concise.
- Matches language level of autistic person for whom story is written.
- Identifies core concept of the story.

Kansas Technical Assistance Support Network (2023)

Social Story™ Implementation

- Sit with your client.

- Tell your client that you have a story you would like to share with them. (Note: Many clients prefer to watch a video version of the story.)

- Discuss key information as you read or watch the story.

- Review key information after you have read or watched the story. Be sure to answer any questions your client may have about the story.

- Help your client set up self-monitoring to document: (a) how many times they watch or read the story and (b) How many times they did what the story advised.

(Gray, 1998, 2000, 2004, 2014, 2015; Kansas Technical Assistance System Network, 2023; Nebraska Autism Spectrum Disorders Network, 2024; Vanderbilt Kennedy Center, n.d.)

# Practice Activity #3: Social Story™ Teaching Demonstration (1 of 2)
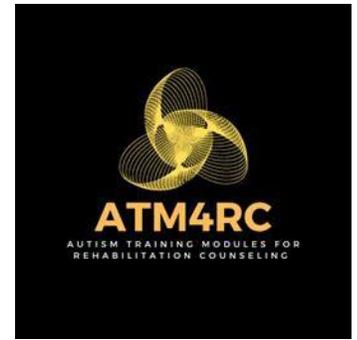
Directions: After reviewing the video on the next slide answer the following questions:

- How did the adult introduce the Social Story™ to Amanda?

- What Did the adult do to keep Amanda engaged as she shared the story?

- How often would you read the story with Amanda?

- Finally, what sorts of data would you collect to determine if the story is making a difference in Amanda's greeting skills? Would you involve Amanda in the data collection? Why or why not?

# Practice Activity #3: Social Story™ Teaching Demonstration 2 of 2
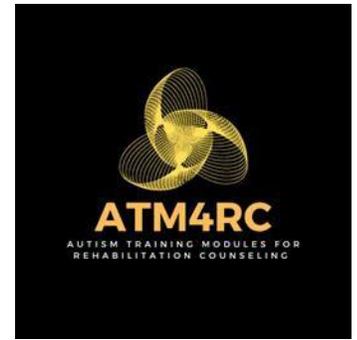
- Amanda is a high school student with autism. This is her Social Story™ about how to greet someone.
- Visit https://vimeo.com/181568541 to watch this video and see a transcript.

Video Credits: Platte Canyon

High School, Mt. Evans BOCES, Bailey Colorado

(Nebraska Autism Spectrum Disorders Network, 2024)

SODA Strategy
A Social Behavior Learning Strategy for Instructing Autistic Persons (15-22)
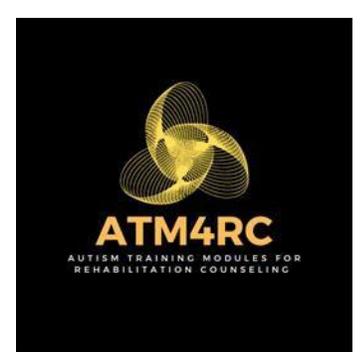
SODA Strategy

Stop:
1. Where should I go to observe?
2. What is the room arrangement?
3. What is the routine or schedule?

Observe:
1. What is/are _____ doing?
2. What is/are _____ saying?
3. What happens when _____ say(s) and do(es) these things?

Deliberate:
1. What would I like to do?
2. What would I like to say?
3. How will _____ feel when I do and say these things?
4. How will _____ act when I do and say these things?
5. Why will _____ act this way?
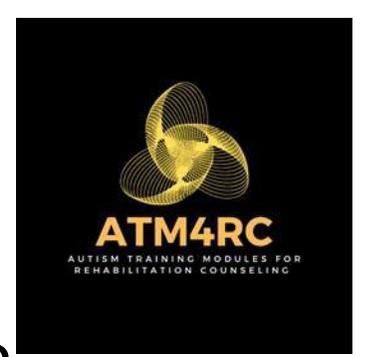
Act:
When I go to _____ I plan to
(a)
(b)
(c)
(d)

The SODA Strategy combines several Evidence-Based Practices and provides a structure for social interactions:

- Social Narratives (Soda Social Story ™ Training Script)

- Visual supports (SODA icons & graphic organizer)

- Cognitive Behavior/Instructional Strategies (SODA Learning Strategy)

(Bock, 2007)

SODA Strategy Slide 2

Stop:

1. Where should I go to observe?
2. What is the room arrangement?
3. What is the routine or schedule?

Observe:

1. What is/are teacher/person/class doing?
2. What is/are teacher/person/class saying?
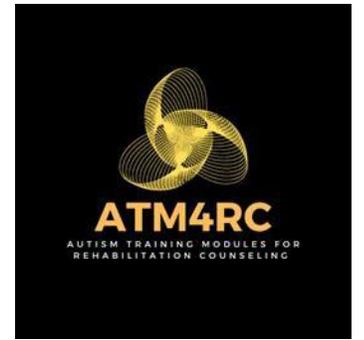3. What happens when teacher/person/class says and does these things?

Deliberate:

1. What would I like to do?
2. What would I like to say?
3. How will they feel when I do and say these things?
4. How will they act when I do and say these things?
5. Why will they act this way?

Act:

When I go to (place/event, etc) I plan to:

(Write plan)

(Bock, 2007)

Helpful Tips

When creating social narratives for young adults ages 15-22:

- Use age-appropriate icons.

- Use pictures, either color or black and white.

- Create social narratives which can be accessed via smart phones or tablets. These are portable and age-appropriate for young adults across all settings.

- Create video social narratives.

- Incorporate other evidence-based practices (e.g., visual supports, task analysis) with the social narrative.

(Bock, 2007)

Implementation Steps

| Plan	Use	Monitor
• Identify Social situation • Write Social Story™ following criteria • Design appropriate display for Social Story™ (pictures, icons, display type) • Identify times or activities for implementation	• Introduce to client • Rehabilitation counselor or client reads Social Story™ • Review key concepts with client • If appropriate discuss story and role plays of the social situation	• Collect data on target behavior and use of Social Story™ • Adjust implement of Social Story™ to assure implementation fidelity , if needed • Determine next steps

Sam & AFIRM team (2015)

Implementation and Assessment
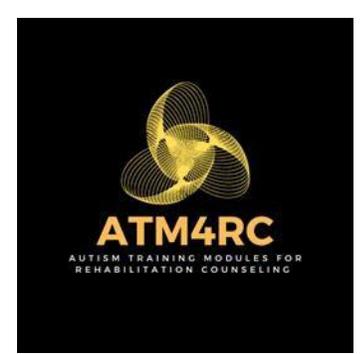
- For more ideas for implementation and assessment visit and read:
  - Sam and AFIRM team (2015) https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED595405.pdf
  - Wragge (2008) https://autismpdc.fpg.unc.edu/sites/autismpdc.fpg.unc.edu/files/SocialNarratives_Steps_0.pdf
  - Vanderbilt Kennedy Center (n.d.) https://vkc.vumc.org/assets/files/tipsheets/socialstoriestips.pdf
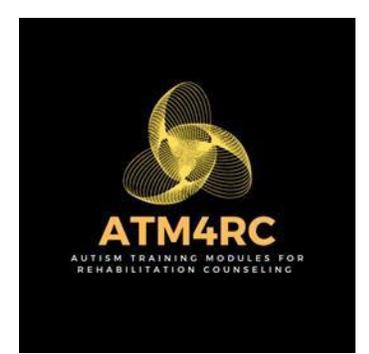
Practice Activity #4: Write a Social Story™
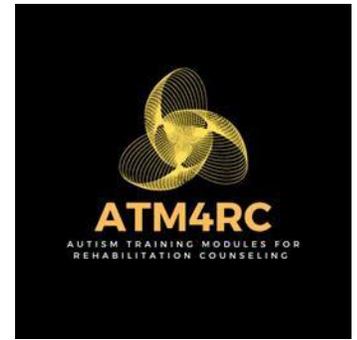
Directions: Think of a client you work with:

- Write a social story for that client following the steps and information provided in the slides above.

- Consider using other EBPs such as visual supports while constructing this story.

- Share that story with them and get their feedback.

- American Psychiatric Association (2022). Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders (5th ed, text rev) (DSM-5TR). American Psychiatric Association Publishing.

- Autism Services Education, Resources, and Training Collaborative (n.d.). Uber and Lyft Trips. https://paautism.org/resource/social-stories/public-transportation/

- Bock, M. A. (2007). The impact of social-behavioral learning strategy training on the social interaction skills of four students with Asperger syndrome. Focus on Autism and Other Developmental Disabilities, 22(2), 88-95. https://doi.org/10.1177/10883576070220020901
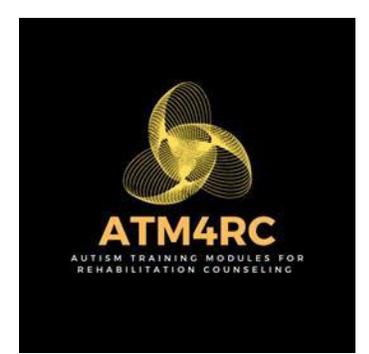
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- Gray, C. (2015) The new Social Story book: 15th Anniversary Edition. Future Horizons Firm

- Gray, C. (2014). Social Stories 10.0 to 10.2. https://carolgraysocialstories.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/Social-Stories-10.0-10.2-Comparison-Chart.pdf

- Gray, C. (2004). Social Stories 10.0: The new defining criteria and guidelines. Jenison Autism Journal, 15, 2–21.
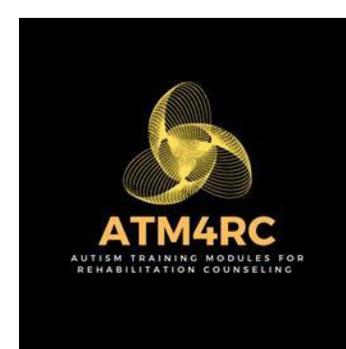
- Gray, C. (1998). Social Stories and Comic Strip Conversations with students with Asperger Syndrome and High Functioning Autism. In: E. Schopler, G. Mesibov & L. Kunce (Eds.), Asperger Syndrome or High Functioning Autism? (pp. 167-198). New York: Plenum Press.

- Hume K, Steinbrenner JR, Odom SL, Morin KL, Nowell SW, Tomaszewski B, Szendrey S, McIntyre NS, Yücesoy-Özkan S, Savage MN. Correction to: Evidence-Based Practices for Children, Youth, and Young Adults with Autism: Third Generation. J Autism Dev Disord. 2023 Jan;53(1):514. doi: 10.1007/s10803-022-05438-w. Erratum for: J Autism Dev Disord. 2021 Nov;51(11):4013-4032. PMID: 35059951.
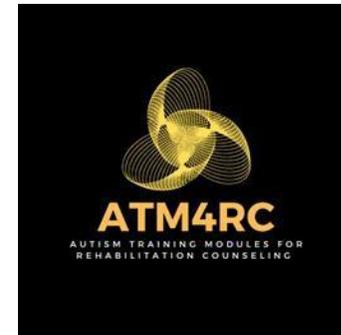
- Kansas Technical Assistance System Network (TASN). (2023). Social Stories ™. https://www.ksdetasn.org/resources/943

- Nebraska Autism Spectrum Disorders Network. Social Stories ™. (2024). https://www.unl.edu/asdnetwork/virtual-strategies/social-stories#:~:text=A%20directive%20sentence%20describes%20desired,the%20possibility%20of%20literal%20interpretation.

- Olcay-Gul, S., & Tekin-Iftar, E. (2016). Family generated and delivered social story intervention: Acquisition, maintenance, and generalization of social skills in youths with ASD. Education and Training in Autism and Developmental Disabilities, 51(1), 67-78.
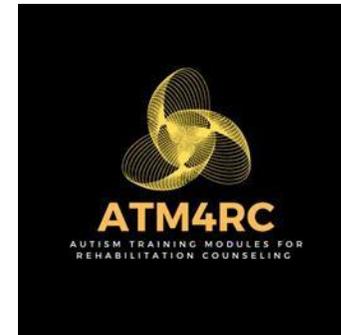
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- Shore, S. (n.d.). Autism Interview #5: Dr. Stephen ShoreOn autism and Education Part 2. Learn From Autistic People. https://learnfromautistics.com/autism-interview-5-dr-stephen-shore-on-

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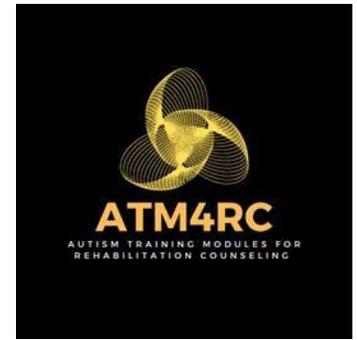
- Steinbrenner, J. R., Hume, K., Odom, S. L., Morin, K. L., Nowell, S. W., Tomaszewski, B., Szendrey, S., McIntyre, N. S., Yücesoy-Özkan, S., & Savage, M. N. (2020). Evidence-based practices for children, youth, and young adults with Autism. The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute, National Clearinghouse on Autism Evidence and Practice Review Team.

- We R Aspies. (n.d.). Lunchtime in the office. http://weraspies.weebly.com/uploads/6/8/5/9/6859492/lunchtime_at_work_social_story.pdf

- Vanderbilt Kennedy Center. (n.d). https://vkc.vumc.org/assets/files/tipsheets/socialstoriestips.pdf

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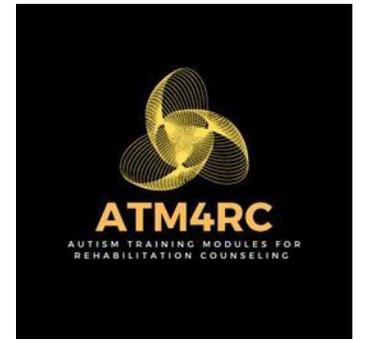
- Wragge, A. (2008). Social narratives: Online training module. (Lincoln, NE: Nebraska Department of Education). In Ohio Center for Autism and Low Incidence (OCALI), Autism Internet Modules, www.autisminternetmodules.org. Columbus, OH: OCALI.
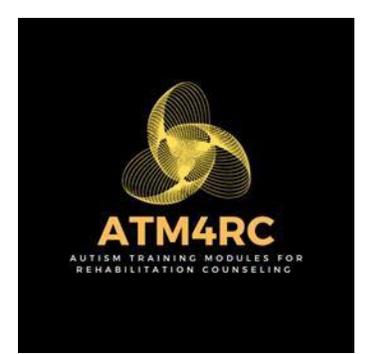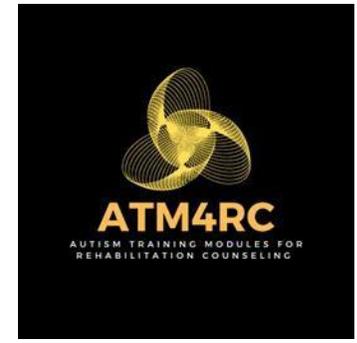
Additional Resources

Autism Focused Intervention Resources & Modules (AFIRM)

- This interactive module provides in-depth training on Social Narratives for autistic persons.

- The module is an Open Educational Resource (Sam & AFIRM Team (2015) http://afirm.fpg.unc.edu/social-narratives

Implementation Checklist for Social Narratives OCALI

- https://csesa.fpg.unc.edu/sites/csesa.fpg.unc.edu/files/ebpbriefs/SocialNarratives_Checklist_0.pdf

- AutismAsperger.net is the web home of Stephen Shore, author of Beyond the Wall: Personal Experiences with Autism and Asperger Syndrome. AutismAsperger.net serves to build greater awareness of the autism spectrum, and particularly Asperger Syndrome. https://www.autismasperger.net is the web, and in particular, Asperger Syndrome.

- The Autism Services, Education, Resources, and Training Collaborative (ASERT) is a statewide initiative funded by the Office of Developmental Programs (ODP). The goal of the ASERT Collaborative is to provide streamlined access to information for Pennsylvanians living with autism. https://paautism.org/
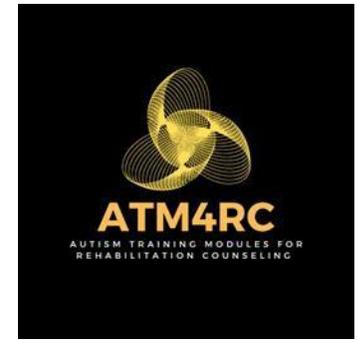
Additional Resources: Websites (2 of 2)

- The We R Aspies Web site has developed social stories within the following areas: Family Social Situation, Errands, and Work Situations. The work situations are of immense importance to those in the ASD community. http://weraspies.weebly.com/social-stories.html

Additional Resources: Apps

I Create…Social Stories

http://igetitapps.com/app/i-create-social-skills-stories/

An app with the ability to customize sequential steps of a storyline for individuals that need help building their social skills. The app is designed to make unlimited personalized social skill story books by importing personal photos, adding titles, text and audio to unlimited pages in the story.

Creative Book Builder

tps://edshelf.com/tool/creative-book-builder

Creative Book Builder enables everyone to create, edit and publish ebooks in a few minutes on the go. All published ebooks can be read by any ePub reader including iBooks.