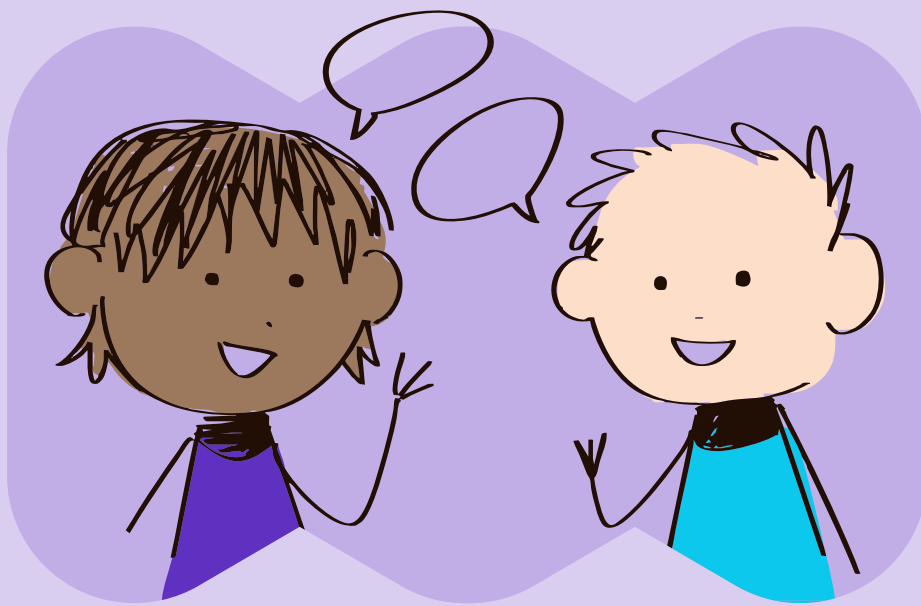


My Voice Matters Social Story: Parent Guide

When your young person has therapy or other support services, it is important that they feel safe, respected, and empowered. A “social story” is a tool that can help them understand their rights and how they can share their ideas and feelings during these sessions.



What is a Social Story?

A social story is a short, simple story written from your young person's perspective. It describes a social situation, explains what to expect, and provides guidance on how to respond. The language is positive, supportive, and easy to understand. A “My Voice Matters” social story can help them learn:

- What to expect from a therapist or support person
- That they have a voice and their feelings are important
- That they have the right to feel safe and comfortable
- What to do if they feel uncomfortable or confused.

Use the story as a guide, but feel free to change it so it is meaningful for your young person. Adapt the words and ideas to their age and communication style. If you are unsure how to change the story, talk to their therapist or intervention professional.

How to Use the Social Story with Your Young Person

1

Prepare Your Environment

- **Choose a calm time:** Find a moment when your young person is relaxed and not rushed.
- **Minimize distractions:** Turn off the TV, put away tablets, and sit in a comfortable, quiet space.
- **Have props ready:** If your young person uses visual aids or other supports, have these available to them.

3

Reinforce and Celebrate

- **Praise their efforts:** When they try to use a word or a gesture to make a choice, celebrate it! "I love how you told me you wanted the ball. That was using your voice!"
- **Prompt gently:** In their therapy or support sessions, if they seem hesitant, you can gently prompt them. "Remember what we talked about? You can tell Sarah if you like the game or not." You can also point to a visual if you are using these (see Participation Visuals).
- **Talk about it afterwards:** After a therapy session, ask them, "Did you get to do something you liked today?" or "Did you tell the therapist what you wanted?"

2

Read the Story Together

- **Read it slowly and clearly:** Use a gentle, positive tone. Point to words or pictures as you read.
- **Pause and check for understanding:** After a key sentence, you might ask, "Do you understand what that means?" or "How do you feel when you go to therapy?"
- **Connect it to their life:** Use their actual therapist's name or the name of a specific activity they do. For example, "Remember when we go to see Sarah for speech therapy? We can talk about what games we want to play."
- **Use it in everyday situations:** Support them to practice using their voice with you at home. "Do you want to wear the red shirt or the blue shirt?" "Do you want to play with the blocks or read a book?" This builds their confidence over time to do it in other settings.
- **Use it with other family members:** Encourage siblings or grandparents to ask open-ended questions that require a choice too, so they are getting experience with different people.

Final Thoughts for Parents

Remember, the goal is not perfection, but progress. Some young people will take a long time to feel comfortable using their voice. The most important thing is to show them they are valued, their feelings are valid, and their opinions matter.