



Carol's Club

*Custom Social Stories™ Resources
Created by Carol Gray for Members*



Helping Children with Autism Understand Tragedies

To Carol's Club Members,

I've been reading a children's book, "Bad Stuff in the News: A Guide to Handling the Headlines" by Rabbi Marc Gellman and Monsignor Thomas Hartman. I planned to review the book as an extra project so that you would know that it is available. After turning on the news yesterday evening and watching the coverage of the school shooting in Florida where 17 people lost their lives, I decided now is the time to share "Bad Stuff in the News" and two Social Stories that may be helpful for those in your care.

Bad Stuff in the News: A Guide to Handling the Headlines

I am a long-time fan of Rabbi Marc Gellman and Monsignor Thomas Hartman, a rabbi and priest also known as "The God Squad." Their concern for the welfare of children and adolescents, and their incredibly clear, honest, and sincere text and illustrations are in my opinion unequalled in children's literature. I was introduced to them via one of their earliest books, "Lost & Found: A Kid's Book for Living Through Loss." I refer to it often in my work.

What struck me when I read "Lost and Found" was how close the text came to complying with many of the criteria that define the Social Story format.

For this reason, I see their books as highly valuable to parents and professionals who work on behalf of children and adolescents with autism.

I haven't finished reading "Bad Stuff in the News." It's about bad news - the worst news. There are descriptions of hunger, abuse, terrorism, addiction, when "kids kill kids," airline crashes, and more. All accurately presented by two caring adults talking to kids. As I mentioned earlier, I wanted to share this book with you because I think it could be a valuable guide for a clinician and client, or parent and child.

Social Stories

I am often asked to write Social Stories about disasters and tragedies. Two of them are on my website in the Social Story Sampler. To make them simpler to retrieve, I include them with this project in PDF format. And, to make them easier for you to revise and personalize, I am also going to share the WORD version. Please note that some of the text and illustrations may shift in that format.

["What is a Tragedy?"](#) introduces and defines key vocabulary, like *tragedy* and *survivor*, explains the events surrounding a tragedy, describes efforts to assist survivors, and encourages the audience to ask questions of trusted adults.

["Watching a Tragedy on Television"](#) clarifies the confusing aspects of watching a newscast about a disaster on television. It reassures children throughout, opening with a news bulletin that interrupts regular programming. The Story covers several concepts, including but not limited to: the distinction between what is happening on the screen versus the safety of home; how a single event may appear on television for many days (making it seem like a tragedy is reoccurring); and how a family's typical routine usually resumes shortly, with the example of eating dinner. The Story closes with mention of efforts to help survivors.

I wanted to get this project to you quickly. Please excuse any typos!

The final chapter of "Bad Stuff in the News" is "Life Isn't Perfect Yet." The description reads, "When you finally understand that life isn't perfect and that this is perfectly okay." It's only two pages long with passages like this one: "Maybe in our lifetime, or maybe in yours, or maybe in the lifetime of the children of your children's children, there will come a day when justice will flow like a river and kindness will be like a well that never runs dry" (p.116). Their message is to never to feel too small to make a difference and always keep trying. Back to work, right?