



Carol's Club

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

CAROL GRAY
SOCIAL STORIES

WATCH - LISTEN - MOVE CLOSER - EASE IN:
The Most Requested Social Story™ in History Returns

The Request

Hi Carol -

Our family goes camping every year in August. When we camp, there are kid groups that just *sort of happen*. There's an empty campsite in the morning and a group of kids playing makeshift softball or other activity (well, sort of, but it works) in the afternoon. I'd love to see the time-lapse on how these "alliances" between kid campers develop. My son, Shawn is nine years old and has Asperger's Syndrome. Over the years I think he's joined two of these groups.

I just signed up for Carol's Club because I would like to know if there is a Social Story about how to join a group of kids. Or can you write one for my son before August?

Thank you,
Rebecca

The Project

Hi Rebecca,

Yes! I have two Stories for you about joining kids at play - as well as camping experience and some ideas for you!

The most requested Social Story in history, "Watch - Listen - Move Closer - Ease In" first appeared in the fall 2002 issue of the Jenison Autism Journal. The Story was part of a book review of "The Friendship Factor: Helping Our Children Navigate Their Social World - and Why It Matters for Their Success and Happiness" by Dr. Kenneth Rubin (2002). The book was the inspiration for the Story; it was Dr. Rubin's research that identified the four steps most likely to be effective when joining a group - watching, listening, moving closer, and easing in. Dr. Rubin was

consulted at every stage of Story development to ensure that the content and illustrations were consistent with his research. Demand for the Story resulted in an unprecedented second printing of the issue that sold out faster than the first. All copies were sold before they left the printers - with requests continuing for several years. "Watch-Listen-Move Closer-Ease In" was never published on its own.

In addition to "Watch - Listen - Move Closer - Ease In," I strongly encourage you to read the accompanying book review of "The Friendship Factor." It's on my website under "Articles and Newsletters." I have placed it in the Clubhouse as part of this project as well, with a link in your MailChimp email. Here is the Clubhouse address for the fall 2002 issue of the Jenison Autism Journal: <https://carolgraysocialstories.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/Fall-2002-ISSUE-with-appendix.pdf> You will find the article on pages 11-17 and the Story on pages 18-27.

I think the original version of the Story may be "too young" for Shawn, so I have created a second version of the Story for a middle childhood audience. You have the link for that in your MailChimp email also. Here is the Clubhouse address: <https://carolgraysocialstories.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/STORY-Watch-Listen-Move-Closer-Ease-In.pdf>

A campground is a unique social context for all of us. If your family is not camping with friends, you're surrounded by new and transient neighbors. You've never met them before. They may be gone tomorrow. I've ideas to support your son's effort to connect with fellow kid campers:

- Talk to your son or write a Social Story about how camping families come and go. In other words, the fun kid that arrives in the campsite next to yours may leave before your family.
- Check the activity board early in your stay for fun events and go to them - especially those in line with your son's interests - where other children with similar interests may be found.
- Be very friendly. This is no time to be shy. Say hello to other adult campers within ten minutes of their arrival. The more time that passes, the harder it is to extend a greeting. Especially if they have children. That may help to lay the groundwork for a playmate. The good first activity may be two families making s'mores together.
- Camping is a relaxed and often unstructured activity. It's still okay to arrange a playdate - with a start and stop time. Structuring time with new friends makes an otherwise open-ended interaction far more predictable.
- Bring a few fun and unique activities with you to become the center of the action. It doesn't have to be much - a book of unique paper airplanes, game, craft, etc. - that will be interesting to your son and other kids that may be nearby.
- We tend to notice groups of kids - and want our child to be in the mix. The best playmate for any child in a campground may be that one eight-year-old camper with similar interests. One interesting person to hang out with may be more socially durable than the mix and match ever-changing kid groups.
- Keep in mind that a shared interest may be more important than being the same age or gender in finding a campground buddy.

Rebecca, I wish you the very best camping experience this coming August, with no rain! Thank you for your Carol's Club request. I hope that it will be helpful to you and other members. Safe travels.

