



Carol's Club

*Custom Social Stories™ Resources
Requested by Members and Created
by Carol Gray*



Social Stories About Divorce

This week's Carol's Club project is a set of Social Stories about divorce for Logan, age six, diagnosed with autism. Before writing, I gathered information from Logan's mom and other resources. I discovered helpful resources via a specific Google search: *Explaining divorce to young children*.

The recommendations to divorcing parents are consistent from one website or to another. In very general terms (and not to discredit the importance of paying attention to the individual details), a young child needs to 1) know that he is and will always be loved and cared for by both parents, 2) have information about who is moving out, where they are going and where they will live, and 3) understand that he will have contact with the displaced

parent. It's also important for a child to understand that he did not cause the divorce and that there is nothing that he can or needs to do to reverse it. Parents are advised to keep their statements short, listen for their child's questions or comments, and to keep their responses relevant and brief. (A Social Story may be an effective follow-up to a child's question, placing your answer in writing, in a three-ring binder with related Stories.) For parents of a child with autism, the task is to merge what is known about talking to young children about divorce with what will make the information most meaningful. That's where the Social Story criteria may serve as a reassuring guide - in the Stories that you write *and* in conversations.

Logan's mom asked for a Story that will reassure her son that he is loved by Mom and Dad, and to explain the upcoming changes in living and sleeping arrangements. I indicated that I'd give it a try by writing a Story that many parents may be able to use as well. At the same time, I stressed the need for personally meaningful text, photos, drawings, or other visual aids, to which Logan's Mom enthusiastically agreed.

There are a variety of commercially available books about divorce for children, for example, "I Have a Question About Divorce: A Book for Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder or Other Special Needs," by Arlen Grad Gaines and Meredith Englander Polsky (Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2018). Like many of the books for children about divorce, this one is too advanced for young children, but it has an interesting "voice" and format and may be useful as a model.

Story Notes: Where Will We Sleep (After Mom and Dad Divorce)?

- People often refer to young children as egocentric. I prefer to regard them as in awe of the new things that they discover they can do each day. It's important to respect their focus-on-self. In doing so, we can hold their attention.
- Young children often count days in "sleeps." Knowing where people sleep is essential. This Story covers a lot of territory, describing not only the upcoming change in the sleep routine, but also identifying where Dad will live and how contact will be maintained, with reassurances of each parent's love for Logan. There are many other aspects to each of the topics mentioned in this Story - all worthy of expansion in one or more Stories of their own.
- Experts stress the importance of keeping the divorce between the parents. That impacts how the word 'divorce' is used in Social Stories. You will notice that whenever the word 'divorce' appears, 'parents' or 'Mom and Dad' accompany it to underscore this critical concept.
- Social Stories for young children are short, complete in three to twelve sentences. Authors are encouraged to omit commas in favor of simple, short sentences. For this reason, there are two versions of this Story. The first is complete on one page. It is under the recommended twelve-sentence maximum but contains several commas. The second version uses two Stories with shorter sentences and paragraphs, to cover the same content.
- There will be other Stories as a child's abilities and understanding advances regarding what revised routines, visitations, feelings, how to get answers to questions, and much more! I do hope that this Story serves as a starting block for Logan's mom and other authors, and that I can be of continuing assistance in the future.

Where Will We Sleep? (After Mom and Dad Divorce)



My name is Logan. This is a picture of my house. This is where I eat and sleep. I have a bedroom here.



After Mom and Dad divorce, they will each have a house where they will love and take care of me. Mom will eat and sleep here.



This will be Dad's house. Dad will eat and sleep here. His bedroom will be here. I will have a bedroom here, too. Sometimes, I will eat and sleep at Dad's house.



Where Will We Sleep (After Mom and Dad Divorce)?

My name is Logan. This is a picture of my house. This is where I live. My bedroom is here. This is where I eat and sleep.

My mom and dad will divorce soon. They will each have a house.

Mom will live with me in this house. She will eat here. She will sleep in her bedroom. This is where Mom will love and take care of me.



Where Will Dad Sleep (After Mom and Dad Divorce)?

My mom and dad are getting a divorce. This is a picture of the house where my dad will eat and sleep.

My dad has a bedroom. I will have a bedroom at Dad's house, too. Sometimes, I will eat and sleep in Dad's house.

Dad loves me. Dad will take care of me when I eat and sleep in his house.

