



Carol's Club CAROL GRAY SOCIAL STORIES

Custom Social Stories™ Resources Created by Carol Gray for Members

This project includes welcomed and appreciated contributions by Dr. Siobhan Timmins

Introduction

My experiences with people with autism have heightened my awareness of all that we take for granted, and all that we take for granted interferes with our ability to recognize all that we have to teach. Many examples come to mind; the issues surrounding lines, or queues, stand out. It's not surprising that the first two-part Carol's Club project is about lines. None of us like lines to begin with! Add autism to the equation and the potential for difficulty is as broad and unique as autism itself, with issues rooted in sensory and cognitive differences. That is not to say that people with autism can't, or don't, use lines effectively. They do. It's that the task is on average likely to be more uncomfortable, unpredictable, and irritating than it is for those of us without autism. I am merging my experiences with students with autism and lines in schools, with current observations of lines in the community to renew my commitment to provide relevant resources on this topic for children, adolescents, and adults with autism.

It was a request from J.T., a Carol's Club member, to provide feedback on a Social Story that initiated this project. The first half part of this project was placed in the ClubHouse on January 1, 2019. It focused on "being first" and presented three solutions. First, the teacher is almost always first in line, not the students (with a Social Story, "Mrs. Woods is Almost Always First in Line"). Understanding that it is not possible for a student to be first may lessen competition for the position. Second, throughout my career, I have stood in several lines of children to gather information for Social Stories. Kids wiggle, etc. and make unintentional contact with peers in line. As promised, there's a Story about that in this half of the project. Finally, Mr. Jeff, a third-grade teacher, transformed lines into a team sport for his 24 students. His efforts minimized the desire to be first with predictable structure and creative performance-quality line formations and behavior.



Lines as a Lifelong Curriculum

Lines are a popular group behavior of both humans and wildlife, a central part of how things are accomplished on Planet Earth (See Appendix B: "Animals and People in Line"). Today I had seven errands to complete. They took two hours, with time for lunch at Panera Bread. I paid close attention to every line, defining "line" as a configuration (one of them was a group) of two or more people that required me to wait for a turn or achieve my current goal.

Including lines that I encountered while driving, I counted the number of times I was in a line. My errands included:

- 1-2. Dropping off two bags of clothes: One at Goodwill and the other at the dry cleaners;
3. Mailing an antique cocoa set to my daughter;
- 4-5. Buying gas and groceries;
6. Returning a vest to Kohl's department store; and
7. Taking a short video at McDonald's for an upcoming presentation.

As I left home, my guess was that I would participate in fifteen lines. The total was almost double my estimate. I was in twenty-seven lines within my two hours of errands; one line every 4.444 minutes. I am convinced that the ability to understand, identify, and effectively participate in lines is a central, not-to-be-avoided and teachable life skill. And it isn't one skill.

Every line that I encountered required seemingly similar - but different - concepts and skills. Right off the bat, I discovered another driver who hasn't mastered one of them. Tailgaters are a pet peeve of mine. When will all drivers understand that it's impossible to drive faster than the car in front of you? It can't be done. I drive within five miles of the speed limit. And my speed does not fluctuate with the mistakes of those around me. With driving, the consequences for a line error can be irreversible. It requires an understanding of laws mixed with continual judgment and prediction of another driver's behavior that is based upon on our past experience as well as interpretation of contextual factors.

Driving lines are different than those entered on foot. In the Panera Bread line, my awareness of people waiting *behind* me had relevance and kept me focused on placing my order. All bets were off at Kohl's. Several people had items to return, but there was no clear line. I had to ask. The customers before me said they were confused as well, and told me that we were in a "mental line." It worked, especially since I was happy to provide line orientation to those who joined after me. A few of the other lines that I encountered after that didn't work as well. Lines are unpredictable. The ones that I thought would be short were long. The check-out lines at the grocery store were so long that my first reaction was to abandon the task. I weighed the importance of getting the items on my list against my available time and re-sequenced subsequent errands.



Community vs. School Lines

Before proceeding further, I want to mention one difference between school lines and those in the community that I think may have implications for students with autism, and for the Stories that we may develop. Community lines contain people seeking the same goal; a goal that holds each person in place. We voluntarily join lines because we want or need something. And, as I experienced in the grocery store, community lines have an inherent option to exit. If we decide that the goal is no longer worthy of our time - or we've another errand and not enough time for both - we are free to go.



In contrast, school lines - their destinations, purposes, and the time that they occur - are dictated. There's no choice. Any child may want to remain with their current activity, especially if they are not keen about where the line is going to take them. For a child with autism, lining up - and the loss of control and "switching gears" that it inherently requires - may be exponentially more difficult. For example, Darcy is six and working comfortably at her desk on a math assignment that she enjoys. This makes it that much harder to enter a line that is headed for one of Darcy's undesirable activities like art or physical education class. Leaving is a loss of "getting it right" and a sense of predictability, of things going well and knowing what's next. For this reason, I've included two Stories about this "loss factor" in Appendix B. (See "A.O.K. Ways to Finish My Work" and "Lining Up is On Our Schedule.")

The involuntary nature of school lines over those in the community is just one of many factors. The key is to assume nothing, to observe without preconception. A concern with a child's line behavior can lead us to believe that we will ultimately be writing a Story about lines. Investigating a child's difficulty with lines may lead to a surprising insight into his perspective and a unique topic that makes perfect sense to us now, but that we never would have guessed.

Lines Aren't Always Lines

Lines are so commonplace that we don't take note of the lines that aren't lines at all; like the line at the Kohl's service desk. Lines often bend, twist, or go back and forth. Standing in lines is common but not required. People may sit in



a row of chairs or in random chairs in a waiting room with their names on a list, perhaps for a flu shot, interview, or medical test. They will arrange their cars at a drive-through, or camp in line for hot concert tickets. A line can be twenty or a hundred people thick. Ask any one person in a chair-based line, camping for tickets, or listening to their car radio at the McDonalds' drive -thru, or in an amusement-park-gate mass of people, "Are you in line?" and they'll say "Yes." Lines aren't always lines. But we know one when we see one (See Appendix B: "Three Kinds of Lines").

How do we know all that we know about lines? There's a multi-faceted concept of lines at our immediate disposal. It simultaneously considers relevant contextual factors so that we can recognize a line, figure out where to stand, sit, or camp, access information when confused, move when it's time to move, stop when it's time to stop, and leave before the next person in line loses patience with us.



If we think that lines are an easy skill to teach, we will make mistakes in our efforts to teach it and lose valuable time. A day's worth of line participation is likely to involve a multitude of concepts and skills, among them:

- It's close to a universal rule: equitable turn-taking almost always applies in every public place where more than one person seeks the same service or goal (respected and demonstrated by most, but not all, people)
- Lines are not always lines
- The information needed to use lines successfully varies from one line to the next
- Prioritizing and sequencing
- Simultaneous consideration of several factors
- Time estimation/judgment
- Prediction
- Emotion regulation

It requires us as parents and professionals to line up the concepts and skills that lines require and teach them as children grow (See Appendix B: "The Line Games.")

This second half of the two-part Carol's Club project on lines threatens to be "all over the place" with Stories, ideas, and strategies. To bring organization to impending chaos, I have lined them up in Appendix A, a list of strategies and solutions, followed by Appendix B with several Social Stories organized by level of difficulty.

Appendix A: Strategies and Solutions

Start Young and Don't Stop



I applaud the efforts of parents online who routinely and intentionally involve their toddlers with autism in daily errands, even when it's easier to just run to the store and leave Johnny at home with the other parent. They turn every line into a teaching opportunity. Beginning at an early age, these parents are the world's best social coaches, sharing information with varying results, of course. Sometimes it works, sometimes it doesn't. I applaud their vision and commitment to a long-range goal.

Think Out Loud

Share what you know with those in your care. If you are a parent and anticipating a line, mention that many people may also want ice cream and you think there may be a line. Make it a game - how many people might be in the line as you walk up to it? Ten minutes later? Connect past-present-future as you voice factors that lead to a decision to exit a line, concluding with when (if ever) you will return: "I thought we needed milk, we've enough until tomorrow, the parking lot is full, and lines may be long. We'll be back tomorrow on the way home from school."



Visiting Disney?



The holidays are over, the snow is colder than before, and families are adding details to their plans for Spring Break. Disney parks are a popular destination. There's a helpful article by Karen Rosenberg titled, "Understanding the Disney DAS Pass with Kids on the Autism Spectrum" that describes how to use Disney's DAS Pass. Here are the web addresses for Karen's article <https://walkingontravels.com/disney-das-pass/> (Rosenburg, 2017) and Disney's DAS card fact sheet <https://disneyparks.disney.go.com/blog/disney-parks-disability-access-service-card-fact-sheet/>.



Line Up, Legos!

Dr. Siobhan Timmins, a physician in England who has written Social Stories for her son with autism, Mark, for most of his life, and author of the “Growing Up with Social Stories” series of books (Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2016-2018), describes how she used Legos to help Mark with lining up after recess (playtime), in combination with Social Stories. (See “What is lining up?” in Appendix B.)

Mark did not respond to the whistle during or at the end of playtime and appeared to be unaware that the procedure had anything to do with him. I wanted to share social information around lining up with him and so I wrote two Social Stories, one about the meaning behind the whistle and the other about the purpose of lining up and walking in lines.

To begin with, I explored this at home with a series of drawings showing Mark how moving in lines stopped children bumping into each other. As he disliked being bumped into and preferred personal space around him he was particularly engaged with this new idea. I also described in a drawing that in order to move in a line the children had to form a line first. Then I showed him a line of three Lego ® figures going into a doll’s house through the front door and up and down the stairs, and how two lines of figures could pass by comfortably. As he seemed interested I then extended the example into real life demonstrating that if he and I walked side by side through a doorway we would bump into his brother coming the other way, but if we went in a line, one behind the other, we could pass by without touching (Timmins, p. 195).

Appendix B: Social Stories



[Animals and People in Line](#)

A beginning Story about animals and people using lines to move smoothly and safely. Caregivers may expand the concept by photographing or pointing out lines that they encounter when out and about, and their purpose.

Here's the link: <https://carolgraysocialstories.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/Animals-People-in-Line.pdf>

[Kids May Move in a Standing Line](#)

This Story describes how children may touch one another when standing in a line. The first page of the Story opens in the child's first-person voice. If you choose to use the text as a model, describe behavior that your child might display in line with corresponding photos.



I wanted to keep the Story short and on topic; I do not mention intentional touching. If touching is intentional and negatively motivated, using this Story or a similar version with a class as a whole may lay some groundwork. If it doesn't, a Story might describe how to report to adults. If adults are uncertain whether a child is reporting intentional or accidental touching, casual observations (watching the accused perpetrator) isn't likely to reveal much). A Comic Strip Conversation can add detail to a child's report and help to identify subtle but essential information, or shed light on unintentional touching that is misinterpreted due to sensory or cognitive differences. Here's the link:

<https://carolgraysocialstories.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/Kids-May-Move-in-a-Standing-Line.pdf>

Lining Up is On Our Schedule



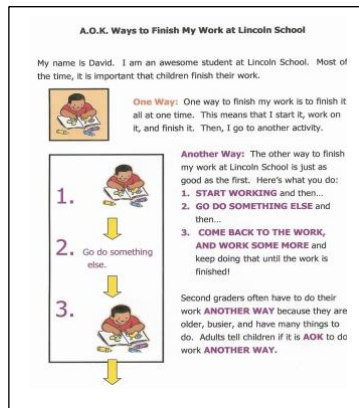
We're lining up? It's not on the schedule!

Lining up to go from one place to another is a part of the school day. Why isn't it on the schedule? To bring predictability and a sense of control to lining up, it only makes sense to share what we already know! We will be lining up.

This doesn't require a total re-making of the classroom schedule currently on display. A symbol or a few words placed on lines between - or in the middle of - activities is all that is needed. Placement can be changed to suit the details of each day.

This Story is included as a sample, the illustrations need to be tailored to the Story audience and improved. Here's the link: <https://carolgraysocialstories.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/Lining-Up-is-On-Our-Schedule.pdf>

A.O.K. Ways to Finish My Work

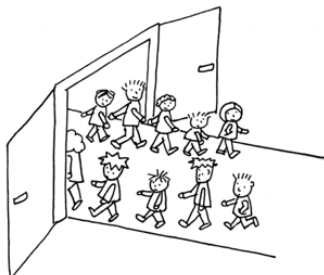


The hardest part about getting into a line may be leaving something that is not yet finished. This Story first appeared in "Gray's Guide to Loss, Learning, and Children with ASD (Gray, 2003). The Story puts format to work to add meaning, using yellow arrows and a step by step approach in an effort to build predictability into a potentially upsetting situation. A picture of a child drawing with crayons appears twice to emphasize return to the original activity, with an broad reference to "going to do something else" to support generalization.

I have made a few revisions to the Story. The original title is, "AOK Ways to Work at Lincoln School." I deleted "...at Lincoln School" from the title, as well as all person-specific text, so that the Story may be used "right out of the box."

Here's the link: <https://carolgraysocialstories.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/AOK-Ways-to-Finish-My-Work.pdf>

What is lining up? by Dr. Siobhan Timmins (Timmins, pp 197-200)



Dr. Siobhan Timmins wanted to help her son, Mark, understand lining up after recess. A previous Story, "What does the whistle mean at break time?" (Timmins, 190-193) describes how his teacher uses a whistle to signal her class at break time. "What is lining up?" covers the reasons behind lining up, and includes step-by-step information on how to do it. Here's the link: <https://carolgraysocialstories.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/What-is-lining-up.pdf>

[Learning to Take Turns Being First in Line](#) by J.T.



As I mentioned earlier, J.T. asked me for feedback on this Story and initiated this extensive two-part Carol's Club project! I am very grateful. J.T. knows her way around the Social Story block! In her original Story, I love the use of photos of her student, as an individual and in classroom lines. To protect confidentiality, I changed the name of the student, replaced his photo with one from Depositphotos.com, and removed other illustration that is referred to in the text.

Regarding feedback, I'd caution J.T. to shorten or break up sentences in places and shift the affective focus to minimize references to "mad" to maximize descriptions of the benefits of being calm and how to maintain comfortable feelings. For example, I'd revise the fourth paragraph to read, "Sometimes children feel mad or sad when they don't get to be first. With practice, as children grow, they learn that being first isn't important. Taking turns being first in line is important." If my math is correct, this Story has a Story Rating that is a whopping 26, which means the Story is highly descriptive. Excellent Story! Here's the link:

<https://carolgraysocialstories.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/Learning-to-take-turns-being-first-in-line.pdf>

[Standing in Line at School](#) by Mark Hutton, M.S. (Hutton, 2011)



This is different! At first, I didn't know what to think - I was a little horrified actually - so I ran it past my friend and colleague, Dr. Siobhan Timmins. She liked it, as did her adult son with autism, Mark. The narration is so very close to meeting the current Social Story criteria and covers many concepts (with one sentence that I question). Perhaps it's just that I am unaccustomed to Golden Retrievers as narrators! A word of caution: Consider whether your audience understands the use of fictional characters and this sort of animation. Here's the link:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NfjKnRBC71c>

[Three Kinds of Lines](#)



There are three common kinds of lines: Basic Lines, Stand Wherever it Works Lines, and Name Lines. This Story describes them all and includes a coloring page as an illustration. This Story could be made simpler by shortening the content, enlarging the text, and additional illustration. Here's the link:

<https://carolgraysocialstories.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/Three-Kinds-of-Lines-1.pdf>

Line Games



Line Games describes how to play seven line games. The topic of this story made it difficult to write it according to the Social Stories 10.2 defining criteria. As a result, it may not be a genuine Social Story, but it comes as close as the content would allow.

These games are not entirely new to me. Many of them I played with my own children when they were younger. Just a note: The second game listed, the “Name Game,” is based on the previous Story in this Appendix, “Three Kinds of Lines.” Like all of the Stories in this project, “Line Games” is intended as a sample, a starting point for Stories and ideas suited to the interests, age, abilities and talents of those in your care. Here’s the link:

<https://carolgraysocialstories.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/Line-Games.pdf>

If you would like me to send you any of the Stories in this project as a WORD file, I’m more than happy to do that (for any number of Stories). Keep in mind that the text and illustration will likely shift in transit and require a little repair at your end. Simply send me an email to TakeThisToCarol@gmail.com. I will make every effort to respond quickly!

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