



## 8 Idiom Coloring Stories

Every language has thousands of idioms. They create anxiety.

We have to begin somewhere!

**Carol's Club**  CAROL GRAY  
**SOCIAL STORIES**

Custom Social Stories™ Resources Created by Carol Gray for Members - February 26, 2019

### The Project

An idiom is a collection of words that together have an acquired meaning that is undiscernible if the words are considered individually. Every language has thousands of them. In English, we've everything from "down to the wire" to "catch you later" to "driving someone up the wall." We use idioms every day without "so much as a second thought." For many years, I have been aware of the misunderstanding that idioms cause, leading me to assume that idioms are potentially confusing for children, adolescents, and adults with autism. Carol's Club members have clarified my awareness of the immediate threat or fear that many children, adolescents, and adults with autism experience. They may interpret idioms *without* the interfering *benefit* of uncertainty and its important subsequent

questions that lead to an explanation of what a phrase means. In other words, on the autism side of the social equation, a message interpreted and accepted at face value may lead to unfiltered anxiety that has detoured confusion altogether.

I have a theory that Coloring Stories may reduce the intensity of anxiety-producing topics, like idioms. I introduced Coloring Stories in the previous Carol's Club project, placed in the Clubhouse on February 12 of this year. I'm intrigued by the research on the therapeutic benefits of coloring, how the repetitive up and down strokes involved in coloring a picture quiet the amygdala and stimulate the cerebral cortex. Both the cerebral cortex and the amygdala have received attention in autism research. Working from the idea that using coloring pages may be an excellent complement to the patient and reassuring format and text that is characteristic of every Social Story, I included a sample of a Coloring Story, "The Colors are Up to Me." in the project. If you missed that project, it contains additional detail on the research that I am referring to, and the implications that it may hold for Social Stories.

Coloring Stories are not the only project that applies to the current discussion. Thinking Stories (and Thinking Articles for adults) use speech and thought bubbles to describe what people may be thinking or feeling when they make statements that have no accurate literal interpretation. Thinking Stories may also include information about when people are likely to use the phrase and common response options. If you are new to Carol's Club or Thinking Stories, you'll find an article and two examples in "Stories About Thoughts Difficult? Think Again," posted in the Clubhouse on July 29, 2018. Those of you familiar with them may find it interesting to compare the Thinking Stories format with the one used for the eight Stories in this project.

There's only one way that I am able to develop eight Social Stories in a relatively short amount of time: One of them serves as a StoryMaster for the others, a master file that is used to create similar - but not identical - versions of the original Story. Using a StoryMaster with this project also helped me to build familiarity and predictability for the Audience from one Story to the next. I wanted to demonstrate that - despite their variety - all of these Stories have a common thread. For this reason, you will notice that all of the Stories use a similar two-page format with one or more of the following similar elements:

1. To introduce the implausibility of each idiom, the first page includes a colorful illustration of the literal meaning of the phrase (most illustrations retrieved from Depositphotos.com).
2. First-page text affirms the possibility of a face value interpretation and uses respectful humor to discuss and challenge the illustration.
3. An identical illustration in black and white appears on the second page to create a coloring opportunity.
4. Accompanying second page text shares accurate information, including the historical roots (if available) and current meaning of each phrase.

5. Identical statements appear in most Stories to build predictability into a potentially anxiety-producing topic while reinforcing concepts.

I debated about the word “silly” used throughout this project. In a Social Story, I would never use the word “silly” in reference to a person or group of people. In these Stories, “silly” refers to the things that people say, as in “Sometimes people say, ‘It’s driving me up the wall!’ This may seem like a silly or confusing thing to say. Driving up a wall is impossible.” I wanted to systematically describe “the confusion step” as a part of situations where the message doesn’t seem quite right, as I believe it is a step that may be missing for some people with autism. I tried other words that didn’t seem to work as well. I finally decided to go ahead with “silly,” as I have had so many of my students and clients happily conclude that, “Well, that’s silly!” in our discussions of idioms. I welcome feedback on this, as well as any comments anytime!

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As with every project, I hope you will be able to use this project, and specifically the Idiom Coloring Stories below, to benefit those in your care. If you need a Story in WORD format, send me an email to [TakeThisToCarol@gmail.com](mailto:TakeThisToCarol@gmail.com), indicate that you are a Carol’s Club member, and request the titles of the Stories that you would like or “ALL 8” - I’m happy to send them to you! They are listed and linked below in alphabetical order:

1. [Driving Me Up the Wall!](#)
2. [Hang in There!](#)
3. [Hold Your Horses!](#)
4. [It’s Raining Cats and Dogs](#)
5. [Money Doesn’t Grow on Trees!](#)
6. [On the Ball](#)
7. [On Thin Ice](#)
8. [Sleep On It](#)