

Carol's Club CAROL GRAY SOCIAL STORIES

Custom Social Stories™ Resources Created by Carol Gray for Members - July 23, 2019



Tailoring Social Stories for a Smooth Move

We're still talking about moving! This past spring, I received a record number of requests asking for help with Stories about moving. The first project, "We've Found Another Home! When We Move, the Words That We Use Matter" (posted in the Clubhouse on July 2, 2019), discussed how the intended meaning of words and phrases that we use when moving might be understood differently by people with autism and social-communication differences. The following project, "Prerequisite Social Stories About Moving: We're not even using the word "moving" yet!" "poured the foundation" to introduce the concept that people often live in a series of homes. (As noted in the first project about moving, the average American moves 11.7 times a lifetime. An additional note: We move about nine times after the age of 18). This project narrows down the twenty or more meanings of "move" and "moving" with a few sample Social Stories, including suggestions for developing Stories of your own on the topic.

Before getting to the Stories, I noticed in the online Merriam Webster Dictionary that in Britain the term “move house” is often used in reference to a family’s plans to “change one’s residence.” I haven’t heard that phrase used in the United States. I can see where it may be confusing for a child who interprets information literally. Or downright reassuring: same house, bedroom, kitchen, living room, etc. We’re taking it with us! It *is possible* to physically move a house (though not all), but it is a rare occurrence, and likely not the intent of the British phrase “move house.” Thus, if you are a Carol’s Club member in England (and perhaps throughout the U.K.?) take note: There’s a Social Story that you may need to write explaining what is meant by “move house”).

Brief Suggestions for Busy Parents Developing Social Stories About Moving

#1. There’s a lot of topics out there. Narrow them down.

Moving creates a plethora of additional chores and activities that, in turn, minimize available time. Admittedly, there is a long list of possible topics. In five minutes, I listed 52 of them. I am hoping the sample Stories in these projects will help to save time – but keep in mind that your child may benefit from Stories on other topics. Identify the issues that are the most important to your child.

Chelsea is one of the Carol’s Club members who initiated this series of projects. She has a 26-month-old son, Oscar, recently diagnosed with autism. Her biggest concern is the stress that Oscar may feel as moving day approaches. We’ve spent a lot of time emailing back and forth – the result is a real-time Social Story that she will be reading over several successive nights before the move, as well as on the morning of their moving day. More on Oscar’s Story in “Guide to the Stories.”

In contrast, I have also been working with another Carol’s Club member, Grandpa, who contacted me on behalf of his busy daughter and son-in-law. They need a more general Story about moving for their eight-year old-son, Jess. Jess was diagnosed with autism at age six, and is entering third grade this fall. Grandpa is writing the Story for Jess. It’s very similar to the one included with this project, and like Oscar’s Story, is described and linked in more detail later.

#2. Carefully consider vocabulary

A carefully selected word may dramatically improve the odds that a Social Story will be “a perfect fit” for your child, or as we might say in the United States, “...hit a home run!” See [“We’ve Found Another Home! When We Move the Words That We Use Matter.”](#) posted in the ClubHouse on July 2, 2019.

#3. Include a pre-requisite Story to lay relevant groundwork

It's helpful for a child to know that many people relocate, and quite frequently, especially if this is the child's first move. Check out ["Prerequisite Stories About Moving: We're not even using the word "moving" yet!"](#) posted on July 16, 2019.

#4. Details are important

Most people think in terms of concepts. We readily regard "moving" with inclusion of its many variations. Children with autism often excel in the details, without access to information that others take for granted. Think details as you develop each Story. For example, on moving day, are you waking up in one home and falling asleep in the next? Or, are you waking up in your current home – living with your mother- and-father-in-law for two weeks – and finishing the move a week later in your new home?

#5. Stuck? Consider using my "default" moving Story

For years I've had a "default" Social Story about moving. The text is quite repetitive and the photos do "all of the talking." It requires photos of a child's current home and places in the community that are *important to her*, as well as pictures of the child's next home and the same places. The text is simple and experience suggests, especially effective with text-pairs placed on either side of each open page. For example:

My mom and dad have found our next home.

(Left side of open page) This is a photo of my home in Memphis, Tennessee.

(Right side of open page) This is a photo of my next home in Piperton, Tennessee.

This is a photo of my back yard in Memphis, Tennessee.

This is a photo of the back yard in my next home in Piperton, Tennessee.

And so on... you get the idea! Focus on home and community elements that are valued by your audience. If he loves to explore a nearby swamp, find one in Piperton! I've used this format several times with parents reporting a lot of success – in addition to their child suggesting additional pages. If a child visits the next home before the move, photos that include the child may provide easy and meaningful illustration.

This project includes two sample Stories. The first is for Oscar, a Story that I developed with his mom, Chelsea. Jess's grandfather wrote the second Story, incorporating some of my suggestions and feedback.



[Five *Nights Until Our Next Home](#)

have often said that the simpler, shorter Stories are the most difficult to write. Despite its short length, this brief Story has been through several drafts and revisions. To build continuity and emphasize the similarities on either side of Oscar's move, Chelsea (Oscar's mom) and I decided to repeat one photo of Oscar sleeping throughout (I used a photo from Depositphotos.com for this version.). Oscar LOVES to count, so the text is a backward "countdown" of the number of days to the move. Oscar also loves his train car bed sheets, and they are pictured with him throughout his version of the Story. Assembling Oscar's bed and making it up with his favorite sheets is high on the list of priorities for the first night in the new home!

Chelsea is a creative thinker! In terms of implementation, Chelsea plans to read only the pages of the Story that are "real-time relevant" each night. What this means is that she will be arranging the pages of the Story in accordance with each night. First, Chelsea has created five title pages. On the first night, the title of the Story will be, "Five Nights Until Our Next Home." The following night, the title will read, "Four Nights Until Our Next Home," and so on.

The first night Chelsea will read the title page and pages 1 and 2. The original page 3 will be deleted the following evening, with the Story describing how "There are four nights until our next home. 1-2-3-4." And so on, each subsequent night.

There are two Story pages that will be reviewed first thing in the morning on moving day, with the final page added to that Story when the last three pages of the Story are read as Oscar is tucked into bed that night.

It's the first real-time-review Social Story that I'm aware of – a to-the-point Story that takes several nights to read! Chelsea has promised to share the results.



[What Moving Means to Kids](#)

Describing this Story is very straightforward compared to Oscar's! Grandpa's version is slightly different from mine. Grandpa chose the title, "What Moving Means to Me," and has included personal details for Jess. Also, this Carol's Club version includes photos of a variety of families for generalization, whereas Grandpa is using photos of Jess in his current – and future - home!

In Closing

As with every project, I am more than happy to answer your questions, or brainstorm ideas on any issue! My direct email is TakeThisToCarol@gmail.com. If you'd like the PPT version of either Story, send me an email indicating that you are a Carol's Club member and the title of the Story that you would like.

I wish you all the very best with your move!

Best wishes as you prepare to move – or as you support others who are relocating,

Carol

*According to WORD spellcheck, "nighttime" is not a word or there's something wrong with using it. The Merriam-Webster online dictionary defines it. I wanted it for this Story, and thus, Merriam-Webster rules.