

Carol's Club CAROL GRAY SOCIAL STORIES

Custom Social Stories™ Resources Created by Carol Gray for Members - September 17, 2019



Stories About Preschool Snack Theft: Are They Social Stories?

This is a Carol's Club project that initially took me in one direction and ended in another. I received a request from B.G., a Carol's Club member. She is new to writing Social Stories, having attended my keynote and break-out sessions at a conference this past summer. B.G. has asked for assistance to ensure that her first stories are Social Stories. I am always appreciative of project requests like B.G.'s; impressed by those who seek to write Social Stories right. They help to ensure the quality and integrity of the approach. B.G. is concerned about Addie, a preschooler who is taking her classmates' snacks. In the course of simultaneously reviewing her stories and learning more about Addie, I ended up writing a new set of Stories.

Paraphrased from J.B.'s project request form:

I wrote these two stories for a child who steals food from other children during meals and snacks. We are limited in what we can offer her in terms of seconds as we are constrained by the school lunch program. Can you offer any suggestion and let me know if I am on the right track? It is my first social story. I attended your workshops in San Antonio in August and found your training so very useful and enlightening. I really want to get this right for this little girl. Thanks, B.G.

B.G. attached her stories:

My Food	Food That is Not Mine
<p>My food belongs to me. It is mine. I know it is my food because it was put on my plate by my teacher or my mother or another adult who is taking care of me. Sometimes I really like my food. Sometimes I don't like my food. This is okay.</p> <p>Sometimes I eat my food. Sometimes I don't eat my food. This is okay.</p> <p>I can ask for more food and someone will give me more food on my plate for me to eat.</p>	<p>There is food that is not mine. This is okay.</p> <p>I know the food is not mine because it is on someone else's plate and it wasn't given to me.</p> <p>Other children have their own food given to them by their teacher or mother or whoever is taking care of them. Sometimes they eat their food and sometimes they don't. This is okay.</p> <p>It is my choice to eat the food on my plate or to not eat the food on my plate.</p>

About Addie

B.G. is committed to developing genuine Social Stories for Addie. Her stories are not Social Stories. This is okay!
B.G. is following the Social Story process to the letter! We'll look at that process first, and create a few Social Stories later!

Every Social Story begins with gathering information about the intended audience in relation to a concept, skill, or situation. Addie is verbal and follows directions well. When food is involved, instructions need to be repeated. The preschool staff are constrained by the amount of food that they can give to each child. To ensure that Addie has had



enough they try to give Addie seconds whenever they can. Addie is also drinking excessively. Addie's mother reports that she overeats and drinks a lot at home, too.

Addie will occasionally take toys or stickers from her classmates but quickly returns them. She seems to prefer it when others prevent her from taking their things. One theory is that she may see it as a game.

This is a project where questions lead to additional questions. More information is needed about Addie's excessive eating and drinking for her team to effectively address this issue.

It's essential to consult with a physician to rule out any possible medical or emotional causes for Addie's excessive eating and drinking. In addition to shedding light on Addie's physical health, it may help to answer other questions as well. For example, is there a connection between Addie taking food from others, and taking their things? Is one based in hunger or medical factors and the other socially motivated? Where does that leave us in terms of B.G.'s original desire to write Social Stories for Addie? Is there still one or two Stories here, regardless of what we may learn from her doctor?

Repurposing J.B.'s Stories for Addie

Possession is an intangible concept that eludes many young children with autism. I have worked with many children who take things from others and observed children in classrooms for hours in search of an answer.



First, we need to be careful with the words that we use. Stealing requires a pre-requisite understanding of many concepts. *Stealing* is how *it looks to us*, but gives us little information as to what a child understands about ownership. Stated in reverse, it's impossible for a child to steal without a practical understanding of possession.

To Addie, taking a classmate's apple may be as straight forward as reaching for an item that is within her reach. Reminders that the apple "...is Charlie's" will make little

sense if she is "blind" the personal boundaries of ownership. Similar to taking Addie to a physician to rule out any medical factors that may explain her thirst and appetite, it is equally critical for her team to determine if she understands the practical day-to-day ins and outs of preschool possession.

Even though we do not yet have all of the medical information that we need, we *do* know is that it is "socially expensive" for Addie to *take* food that belongs to another child. Taking food from a classmate can cost Addie a potential playmate or friendship. Notwithstanding the etiology behind Addie's thirst and hunger, we have concepts to teach and meaningful boundaries that we can put into place now.

If it's feasible to use a Comic Strip Conversation with Addie to determine what she does know about snack time possession, we're miles ahead. That's frequently not possible with young children. We can still write a Social Story based upon the information that we've gathered so far, to describe to Addie the transient and elusive concept of snack time ownership.

A Social Story for Addie

The stories, “My Food,” and “Food That is Not Mine,” work together to describe how children may not eat part of their snack, and this is okay. I like how the former covers Addie’s snack experience first and then applies that to the snack experience of classmates in the second story. I mentioned that they aren’t Social Stories. Here’s why:

- We can’t use the phrase, “I know…” in a Social Story if we’re not sure if Addie *knows* or not, or to describe what we are hoping she knows. Nor can we assume that if we write, “I know…” that Addie will practically apply that information from that point forward. Hidden just behind the “I know” statements are the concepts that we have to help Addie understand. There lie our Social Story topics.
- There are three themes in the stories that we may see as related – but Addie may not. The first being that, “It’s my food because it was given to me;” the second, “Sometimes I don’t eat all of my food and that’s okay;” and the third, “When someone leaves food behind, that does not mean that it is okay for me to take it.”

Narrowing the topic to whose-food-is-it at snack time establishes important information that Addie may be missing. (It’s a starting point, not to suggest that it is the entire solution.) To do that, create snack time placemats and an accompanying Social Story. To begin:

1. Take a headshot of each child and print several wallet-size copies of each.
2. Each child decorates a placemat, or staff-students arrange and paste photos of typical snacks around the border of each placemat. Wallet-size headshot photos from step 1 above are placed in each corner on the front.
3. Laminate the placemats and remaining headshots.

Develop a series of Stories that logically and describe the use of the placemats. See the samples in Appendix A.

Appendix A

The Stories in this appendix are based on each child having a placemat as described above. The placemats will serve as illustrations, in some cases along with snacks that are mentioned in the text. The Stories are intended as a starting point. I have placed them in a sequence from easy to more difficult, recognizing that they may be used in isolation or an alternate order. I can also see how the classroom placemats and a few snacks could be the basis of a fun activity without any Story. I look forward to learning about what Addie’s team decides to do, and I welcome the opportunity to share additional ideas as time goes on.

It's on My Placemat. It's My Snack.

I have a placemat with my picture in every corner. Sometimes Mrs. Brown puts a snack on my placemat. That means the snack is for me and no one else.

Mrs. Brown put broccoli on my placemat. The broccoli is for me and no one else. No one may take my broccoli.

Mrs. Brown put some cereal on my placemat. The cereal is for me and no one else. No one may take my cereal.

Mrs. Brown put three crackers on my placemat. The crackers are for me and no one else. No one may take my crackers.

Mrs. Brown put a birthday cupcake on my placemat. The cupcake is for me and no one else. No one may take my cupcake.

It's on My Placemat. Whose Snack Is It?

I have a placemat with my picture in every corner. Sometimes Mrs. Brown puts a snack on my placemat. That means the snack is for me and no one else.

Mrs. Brown put an apple on my placemat. The apple is for me and no one else. Can Charlie take my apple?

Mrs. Brown put some cereal on my placemat. The cereal is for me and no one else. May Andy take my cereal?

Mrs. Brown put three crackers on my placemat. The crackers are for me and no one else. May Allison take my crackers?

Mrs. Brown put a birthday cupcake on my placemat. The cupcake is for me and no one else. May Victoria take my cupcake?

This Placemat Belongs to...

This is _____'s placemat. If Mrs. Brown puts a snack on it, the snack is only for _____.

(Could add: "It's _____ snack" at the end of each section.)

This is _____'s placemat. If Mrs. Brown puts a snack on it, the snack is only for _____.

This is _____'s placemat. If Mrs. Brown puts a snack on it, the snack is only for _____.

This is _____'s placemat. If Mrs. Brown puts a snack on it, the snack is only for _____.

This is _____'s placemat. If Mrs. Brown puts a snack on it, the snack is only for _____.

There's a Snack on _____ Placemat. Whose Snack is It?

There's a snack on my placemat. Whose snack is it? It's _____ snack (Or name the specific snack, as in, "It's _____ raisins."). It is (The raisins are) for _____ and no one else.

There's a snack on Parker's placemat. Whose snack is it? It's _____ snack. It is for _____ and no one else.

There's a snack on Mia's placemat. Whose snack is it? It's _____ snack. It is for _____ and no one else.

There's a snack on Chloe's placemat. Whose snack is it? It's _____ snack. It is for _____ and no one else.

There's a snack on Jackson's placemat. Whose snack is it? It's _____ snack. It is for _____ and no one else.

