

Carol's Club CAROL GRAY SOCIAL STORIES

Custom Social Stories™ Resources Created by Carol Gray for Members - December 24, 2019



Social Stories™ to Help Moms and Dads Stay Fit?

December 24, 2019

Can a Social Story help people lose weight and stay fit? Sure! At least, indirectly. I received a request for Stories to help children understand their time in a supervised play area while their caregivers work out. It's an ideal set up – parents may place their children in on-site daycare while they use the gym equipment or attend an exercise class. It works well until a child feels confused or overwhelmed, and refuses to stay. Parents may decide that "...it's not worth it..." and abandon the routine. I was asked to write Social Stories about Kids Zone, a place for kids to play within the Bradley Wellness Center in Dalton, Georgia. I sent the Stories along with several ideas for the staff of Kids Zone.

Social Stories for Kids Zone

The Bradley Wellness Center and Kids Zone is a specific context with factors that determine Story length, format, and content, long before any words hit the page! This is a gym with busy people who have succeeded in scheduling time for exercise into their day. I decided that short one-page Stories would be the easiest to handle and review. The result is three Stories that work together.

Our Work Out and Playtime Story: A Split-Section Social Story

In a split-section Story, the Story format works with the text and illustration to further demonstrate when people are together or apart. This Story is organized into three columns. The first and last columns describe times when parent and child are together. A horizontal bar divides the middle column to illustrate that parent and child are in different locations.

My Kids Zone Story

This Story describes Kids Zone. I felt it had to be general, but with enough information to familiarize a child with the setting and its routines. The Story may be personalized to a child's favorite toy or activity on site. A popular toy may require a strategy similar to the one listed in "Other Ideas" (#3, following this section). The sentence, "My time in Kids Zone ends when my mom or dad come to get me," is accurate, but quite general. It may be revised to include more specific information, as in, "My time in Kids Zone ends at about 5:12 p.m."

What Is My Mom Doing When I Am in Kids Zone?

This Story shares information that we often overlook in a Social Story. A parent knows in general what their child is likely to be doing in Kids Zone. Kids benefit from that sort of information. The Story explains why children cannot be in the work out room and reassure a child that "...my mom knows where I am..." and will return when she is done.

Other Ideas

1. From Dr. Siobhan Timmins: Often, gym daycare provides lots of stimulating play areas, but maybe not a quiet place. A child may be reluctant to stay there if it is uncomfortable for them. Parents could add a sentence to a Story suggesting that the child take a 'transitioning' item or a calming activity to Kids Zone.

We always had a little drawstring bag for Mark with his soft hanky, a copy of his favourite book, and some earphones, so he knew he could make himself comfy.

2. When parents join the gym and have their photos taken for their ID card, Kids have a Kids Zone ID taken as well. This remains at Kids Zone and can be used in a variety of ways, for example....
3. Whose turn is it? Sometimes there is a popular item, like a computer. Instead of a random “when the kid currently using it leaves it is up for grabs” system, create a line chart where kids place their ID photo to hold their place in line waiting for their turn; or
4. The ID card is placed in their personal Play Plan to indicate that it is theirs. A child may be overwhelmed by the vast number of colorful choices. Instead of a child selecting one activity when he comes in, he has the option to choose three or four from those that are available and places them in a plastic bin. That’s his collection of toys to play with while at Kids Zone. It personalizes his time there – gives him a set of toys that are his while he is there and eliminates conflicts regarding possession. All kids could do this – a sort of “personal playpen” that takes the anxiety out of wondering if favorite toys will be available. Materials that are always in plentiful supply, like crayons and paper, may be listed on a piece of paper in the child’s bin. Toys are returned to their original place when the child is finished using them, at which time he may select another toy.
5. [The “Amazing Paper Chain” returns!](#) I am thinking most moms or dads will be gone for about 45 minutes to maybe an hour and a half. Make that time visual in ten-to- fifteen-minute segments. For example, a mom provides the staff with her “worst-case scenario” as to the amount of time she will be gone, say perhaps, 50 minutes. With wide strips that have already been cut, a child’s “timer chain” is quickly created. Four (each representing 15 minutes) or 5 (each representing 10 minutes), are stapled together. The younger the child, the shorter the time that each segment represents. The child is invited to remove a link to mark the conclusion of each time segment. This increases a child’s sense of control; she can “see” that the amount of time left in Kids Zone is getting shorter. Mom or Dad removes the final link when they return.
6. Accomplish the same thing as #5 (above) with several time timers available, one for each child (easier on staff time and coordination) or encourage Mom or Dad to arrive 5 minutes earlier than their class or workout to create the chain with their child.

I wish you all a safe and memorable holiday season and new year! Thank you for being a part of Carol’s Club!

