

Carol's Club CAROL GRAY SOCIAL STORIES

Custom Social Stories™ Resources Created by Carol Gray for Members - January 7, 2020



Why Do Chores?

No matter what our child's level of ability, he will do best in the future if you help him develop practical skills now (Baskin & Fawcett, 2006).

Working in the field of autism for several years has allowed me to know students through much of their lifespan, meeting them as children and connected with them as adults. My experience suggests that routine participation in family chores contributes to a child's happiness and success as an adult. Researching a request for a Social Story about chores underscored the importance of "pulling one's weight" as a member of the family. This is the first of two projects about chores: Social Stories about why we do them.

Many online articles about chores and children with autism echo the expert advice for parents of all children diagnosed with autism or not: Start young. Working with Carol's Club member, Jodie, mom of Parker, almost four years of age, the Social Stories in this project are our best effort to describe why people do chores to a preschooler. The next project will look at this topic from a broader perspective for a wider audience, with several ideas and Stories to minimize the stress of assigning chores and maximize their short-and-long-term benefits. What follows is a description of the Stories in this project.

The Social Stories

I had two goals with this project: 1) equip Jodie with Social Stories to introduce chores to Parker, and 2) create a "generic" set of Stories for Carol's Club. Parker's Stories are similar but personalized and illustrated with photos from his home. I also wanted the Stories to stay close to the topic with limited mention of related expectations (i.e., the Story audience will do daily chores for the remainder of his childhood and adolescence!). These Stories are models to teach the concept of chores to a young child. As with every project, if you need assistance to tailor them to your situation, I'm happy to help at TakeThisToCarol@gmail.com.

A "heads up" about the word, "chore." Somewhere along the line, it has acquired a bad reputation, especially with kids, as in "something to be avoided." It's an excellent idea that is best when resisted and avoided, like brushing teeth. According to a children's online dictionary, "Kids.Wordsmyth" (as well as many other dictionaries on my shelf), "chore" has two meanings. The first meaning is, "A routine task around the house or yard." The second is negative, referring to an "unpleasant" job, followed by this sample sentence, "Gardening is a hobby for some people, but a chore for others." The first listed meaning of "chore" provides an example of its use in a sentence, too, also with a negative twist: "Taking out the garbage is her least favorite chore." Jodie and I debated whether to avoid "chore" altogether, replacing it with "job" or "task." We decided to go with "chore" because, as Jodie pointed out, "It's the default term for stuff we have to do around here." In these Stories, we use "chore" with caution to offset its negative reputation with a more objective – if not positive - frame of reference.

To clarify my comment in the above paragraph, toothbrushing is not a household chore. My advice to Social Story authors, and particularly parents, is to stick close to the first meaning of "chore" (a routine task completed for the good of the group) and steer clear of its second meaning (something you find difficult or don't like to do). My rationale is simple: Keep "chores" tangible, limited, clear and doable (folding clean dish towels and bringing dirty dinner plates to the kitchen counter). For the same reason, as a child grows, do not use "chore" to refer to other undesirable responsibilities like homework or a dentist or doctor appointment.

You will notice common elements in the Stories in this project. The Stories are short with respect for a young attention span. The vocabulary is intentionally consistent. For example, since chores contribute to the “common good” of the family or a group, terms like “family” and “our” (joint ownership) are frequently used in place of singular references. As with all Social Stories, literally accurate words and phrases ensure clear meaning. As an example, in the Story, “My Family’s Dish Towel Story,” the size of a pile of eight clean dish towels is compared to the same towels folded and stacked. My first draft of that Story contained the sentence, “Folding and stacking dish towels makes them smaller.” OOPS. It doesn’t! Folding a dish towel doesn’t make it any smaller than it was before you started! It’s still the same size, arranged to fit in a smaller space. I corrected that error in the final draft.

[#1: Together With My Family](#)

People often complete chores at home. This Story establishes that context with a description of things that a family does together, including chores.

[#2. Washing Clothes Makes Them Clean - #3. Dad Takes Care of Our Clothes](#)

There’s a theme that begins with these Stories: Chores make things better. These Stories are about doing laundry. In this family, Dad completes that task. The photos in both Stories are identical. The text is different. Keeping an element, like illustration, the same in a set of Stories “pulls them together” to teach a concept.

[#4. Washing Dishes Makes Them Clean \(Dishes\) - #5. Washing Dishes Makes Them Clean \(People Washing Dishes\)](#)

The photos vary in this Story pair; the text is the same. Illustration matters, especially with young children, Story #4 may be better for some children, while #5 may be more effective with others.

[#6. My Family’s Dish Towel Story - #7 My Family’s Dish Towel Story \(Shorter Version\)](#)

Parker loves to measure. Jodie and I decided to incorporate measurement into a Story about folding dish towels. The unexpected outcome: Parker immediately asked if he could fold the dish towels each week. He’s been doing it ever since, measuring and recording the pile versus the stack as well. I have included a shorter version of Parker’s Story, minus the math!

[#8. Bert Needs Our Family \(Couldn’t forget the dog!\)](#)

Work on the next project about chores is underway. As I mentioned earlier, it will be broader in scope and applicable to a wider audience. Look for it on January 21st!

References

Baskin, A. & Fawcett, H. (no date). Teaching Important Life Skills: Start as Early as Possible! Autism Speaks website. Retrieved online <https://www.autismspeaks.org/teaching-important-life-skills-start-early-possible>

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