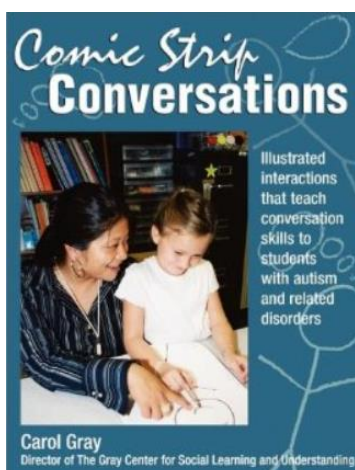


## **FAQ –Comic Strip Conversations**



The outreach team often recommend Comic Strip Conversations. This strategy involves using stick figures and cartoon symbols to visually support an interaction and to encourage young people to make guesses about the thoughts and motivations of other people. This help sheet is a summary of the questions we are asked most often. It will not tell you how to create or use Comic Strip Conversations; we would recommend that you buy the book and/or attend some training.

**Carol Gray's book: Comic Strip Conversations** by Carol Gray (1994) EDS Publications

For information about training in the south of England visit the Freemantles website:  
<http://www.freemantles.surrey.sch.uk/Accredited-Social-Stories-Training/>

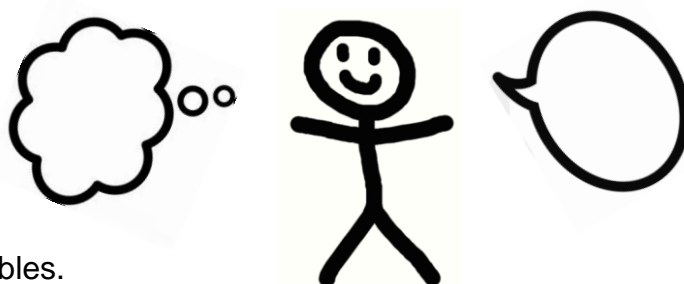
You will also find a lot of useful information on Carol Gray's website;  
<http://carolgraysocialstories.com/>

### **When should I use Comic Strips Conversations?**

Comic Strips can be used to unpick tricky social situations, to find out how problems occurred or to find out a young person's opinions. Comic Strips may also be useful in literacy lessons, when exploring character feelings and motivations. They can be used with a young person or adult of any age, whose verbal ability allows them to recall and retell their experiences. Many young people with autism struggle to understand the feelings and emotions of others, so Comic Strips can be a vital part of teaching social understanding.

### **I'm not good at drawing; can I use Comic Strips?**

Yes! Simple really is better when it comes to comic Strip Conversations. If we add lots of detail this tends to distract the young person and they may begin to question e.g. 'My hair is straighter than that..' Ideally we just need stick figure people (perhaps with names or initials to identify), speech bubbles and thought bubbles.




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## **What if I don't know what to ask / what to say?**

The conversation can be as simple or as complex as is needed. The key questions to start with are;

Who was there

What did he/she say?

What did you say?

What were you thinking?

Can you guess what he/she might have been thinking/feeling?

Sometimes it is then appropriate to talk about what happened next and how the situation could be handled differently next time.

## **How is colour used?**

Comic Strips are often drawn very simply in black and white and that is fine. Colour can play a valuable role for young people who are able to understand the concept. Some preparation work needs to be done in deciding which colours a young person associates with which emotions, perhaps just two to begin with and building up. Coloured pens can then be used to write thoughts and words e.g. Kind words in green, angry words in red.



## **What if the situation is complicated?**

A Comic Strip can become far too complex if the situation was lengthy or multi-part. Each time the narrative moves to a new location, or new time, the author should move onto a new sheet of paper. A word, or little stick picture in the top left corner will make it clear.

## **How do I teach a young person to use Comic Strips?**

While learning to use Comic Strips the focus may be a fictional situation from a book or TV show. This gives stress-free opportunity to explore the different aspects of a comic strip and to begin working on emotional understanding. This learning time can be useful to provide practice for the leading adult too!

## **What do I do if the young person is remembering the situation differently?**

We often need to use Comic Strips in situations which are emotionally difficult for the young person. As result, some of our young people will be reluctant to talk as they perceive that we want them to own up to 'doing something wrong'. Others may struggle to recall correctly, due to high levels of anxiety or simply poor memories. It is important that we do not argue perception and do not tell young people that they are 'wrong'. Acknowledge what the young person wanted to write and add a second thought/bubble of your own to suggest an alternative e.g. 'Or maybe it was...' Without pressure, the young person may begin to accept an alternative point of view.

Edited March 2020. The above advice is based on our experiences of working with young people who have autism and related difficulties, as well as the knowledge and training of the Freemantles Social Stories™ Satellite School, who work directly with Carol Gray.

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