

Social Narratives for Safe/Not Safe

Three versions:

Each of the three versions below have their own operating assumptions.

Version 1 of this social narrative assumes that your child is not ready to understand the concept of others' emotions beyond positive/negative. (Understanding "happy" and "sad/mad" are the first to develop.) So, Version 1 keeps it simple.

Version 2 will give the same social narrative as above, but with a quick and dirty "worried" definition embedded in it. For a longer version of a social narrative delving deeper into the concept of "worried," contact me.

Version 3 of this social narratives assumes that your child knows what "worried" means.

See beneath all 3 versions of the narrative so that we can talk about my thought processes behind the way that I chose to draft these narratives.

Version 1: BEING SAFE (without the concept of others being worried about me)

BEING SAFE

Sometimes I am safe.

Mom and Dad are happy when I am safe.

Sometimes I am in my house.

I am safe.

Sometimes I am in my backyard.

I am safe.

Sometimes I am in my school.

I am safe.

Sometimes I am on the playground with a friend.

I am safe.

Sometimes I am outside. I can see my mom.

I am safe.

But sometimes I am outside and I cannot see my mom.

This is not safe.

I can try to stay in a place that I can see my mom.

I will try to be safe.

Mom and Dad are happy when I am safe.

Version 2: with a quick & dirty teach of worried

BEING SAFE

Sometimes I am safe.
Safe means Mom and Dad do not feel worried about me.
Worried might mean feeling afraid I will get hurt.
Worried might mean feeling afraid someone else will get hurt.
Mom and Dad are happy when I am safe.
Sometimes I am in my house.
I am safe.
Sometimes I am in my backyard.
I am safe.
Sometimes I am in my school.
I am safe.
Sometimes I am on the playground with a friend.
I am safe.
Sometimes I am outside. I can see my mom.
I am safe.
But sometimes I am outside and I cannot see my mom.
This is not safe.
I can try to stay in a place that I can see my mom.
I will try to be safe.
Mom and Dad are happy when I am safe.

Version 3: with understanding of “worried”

BEING SAFE

Sometimes I am safe.
Safe means Mom and Dad do not feel worried about me.
Mom and Dad are happy when I am safe.
Sometimes I am in my house.
I am safe.
Sometimes I am in my backyard.
I am safe.
Sometimes I am in my school.
I am safe.
Sometimes I am on the playground with a friend.
I am safe.
Sometimes I am outside. I can see my mom.
I am safe.
But sometimes I am outside and I cannot see my mom.
This is not safe.
I can try to stay in a place that I can see my mom.

I will try to be safe.
Mom and Dad are happy when I am safe.

The Thought Process Behind the Decisions I Made in these Social Narratives (so you can learn)

- 1) Reminder: I wrote this as an example social narrative for a generic child who has a tendency to wander in “outside” areas alone. Social narratives should be customized though to your child’s individual behaviors. If you have specific safety concerns about your child, please talk to your child’s teacher and/or therapist about how to address the specific situation.
- 2) Defining “hurt”—How to define “safe” for your child can and should be modified to be meaningful to your individual child’s developmental level, comprehension, and behaviors. In writing a generic definition of “safe,” I could have defined safe as being “I will not get hurt”. However, that’s not necessarily true. You could be running in your backyard (safe) and fall down (get hurt). So, we always want to stick with sentences that are true in all cases. I didn’t want to get into “you are less likely to get hurt”, “you probably won’t get hurt,” etc. It’s too much to process. Here, I chose to simplify the concept of being “safe” by defining it as “Mom and Dad do not feel worried about me.” Whether they can show it or not, I truly believe all kids with ASD have empathy...and understanding that if someone else is worried, and worried is a negative emotion, the kids don’t like it. At the end of the day, all kids want their parents to be happy. So, that’s how I chose to address this. If your child has a lot of behaviors that are unsafe, such as running into the street, running in parking lots, swimming unattended, you can modify this safety social narrative to cover those.
- 3) Perspective--I have been careful to stay only in the perspective of the child. For kids with ASD, it can be very hard for them to know what another person can see. Therefore, I focused on “I can see my mom/dad/nanny” (choose what is appropriate) under the assumption that if they can see you, you can see them. IF your child happens to be good at understanding perspectives, you can switch these statements out to be “if my mom/dad/nanny can see me” type statements. Otherwise, stick with the perspective of your child.