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Introduction to Narrative Therapy

The ability to tell stories is a central component of everyday communication. An effective storyteller conveys meaning to a listener, clearly and precisely. We tell stories to one another when we talk about what happened at school, on holiday or at home, or when recounting recent events from our favourite soap opera on TV. However, the ability to construct age-appropriate narratives is a skill that some children find difficult to master. This is due in part to the many 'levels' of skill required. Narrative competence requires a child to be able to understand, remember, organise, process and relate a message to another, taking into account the social context, that is, listener knowledge – all skills that are essential to mainstream classroom learning.

Miniscalco et al. (2007) argue that narrative is a complex skill, as it requires a child to combine linguistic, cognitive and pragmatic (social) abilities in addition to the individual's knowledge of the world. Further to this, Wetherell et al. (2007) state that the ability to use narrative is also 'integral to creating and maintaining social relationships between individuals from childhood to adulthood'.

The development of a therapy approach that uses a highly structured framework to create narratives (Catherall 1998) has proved effective and enjoyable for many children. This pack of reproducible resources, aimed at developing children's speaking and listening skills through narrative, provides both Speech and Language Therapists (SALTs) and teachers with an approach that is:

- highly structured, including clear lesson plans and follow-on activities
- designed to address many aspects of language and communication including: attention, listening, receptive and expressive language skills
- based on meaningful activities that are common to many classrooms
- flexible and adaptable for different age groups
- appropriate to use with individuals, small groups and whole classes
- complementary to Literacy Hour activities.
Week 1: Introduction to Narrative
Sample Session Plan

Establishing group rules and introducing good listening visual cue cards.
Using the cue cards on pages 12–19 reinforce how the children can demonstrate good listening skills e.g. putting their hand up to answer a question, taking turns to talk, looking at the person they are talking to. Both male and female versions of the cue cards are provided. The pages of smaller cue cards can be cut up and given to individual children to highlight/reward good behaviour.

These cue cards can then be used as part of every session when the children need to be reminded of the good listening rules.

Story Components
The main focus of this session is to familiarise the children with all of the story component cards that are going to form the basis of each subsequent session. It is useful at this stage to laminate a set of these cards.
Using the story cards, introduce the story components one at a time Who, Where etc. taking time to focus on the colour, sign and symbol attributed to each story component.

Active Listening Story
Carry out this activity as described on page 20.

Matching components to colour, sign and symbol activity
Place the story component cards, Who, Where etc. around the room. Say, ‘Run to Who’, ‘Find me Where’ and the children have to locate the correct component card.
Alternatively, give each child in the group a story component card and say, ‘stand up if you have a Who’ and so on. Remember to use the corresponding signs.

Vocabulary Activity
Generate vocabulary for each component, by for example, saying ‘Can anybody think of a who’?
Ask a variety of simple questions that relate to the children’s daily lives, holding
Good Sitting

Hand up to Speak

Good Listening

Good Sitting

Good Looking

Good Taking Turns

Listener is a Good Listener

Listener is a Good Listener

Reward Card

Reward Card
Who gives us presents at Christmas?

Who makes you better when you are poorly?

Who has four legs and gives us milk?

Who is black and white and likes the cold?

Who helps us look after our teeth?

Who has wings and a wand?

Who kicks a ball and tries to score a goal?

Who do many people have as a pet?

Who lotto boards

Who gives us and gives us a pet?
Underline the Where word in red and/or write the word in the space provided at the end of the sentence.

1. The children lined up by the door.

2. ‘Please put the chairs in the hall.’

3. ‘Did you leave your jumper at school?’ asked Mum.

4. Mina looked in all of the cupboards.

5. Dad had to climb to the top of the ladder to rescue the cat.

6. Dan said he had seen my shoes outside the back door.

7. Our cat always sits under the table.

8. I would go to the moon if I had a space rocket.

9. We had a great time at the caravan.

10. Lili went to the zoo for the first time.

11. He saw the children playing in the park.

12. They drove to the cinema early so that they could get good seats for the film.

13. Our car broke down in the middle of the road.

14. On Saturday, we are going to the shops.
Which pictures go with rainy day?
Which do not?
Story Planner

When

Who

Where

What happened

The End
6. The delivery man brought a parcel to the door. John tried to lift the box to take it inside but it was too heavy for him, so…

7. One morning Lili’s mum walked into Lili’s bedroom and saw that Lili’s face was covered in spots, so…

8. Dougie and Cooper were going swimming after school. When they got into the changing rooms they realised that they had forgotten their swimming trunks, so…

9. Dad had just finished washing the floor after lunch, when the dog ran into the kitchen and…

10. The children opened the curtains in the morning and saw that it had been snowing outside overnight, so…
What happened next?

The End.