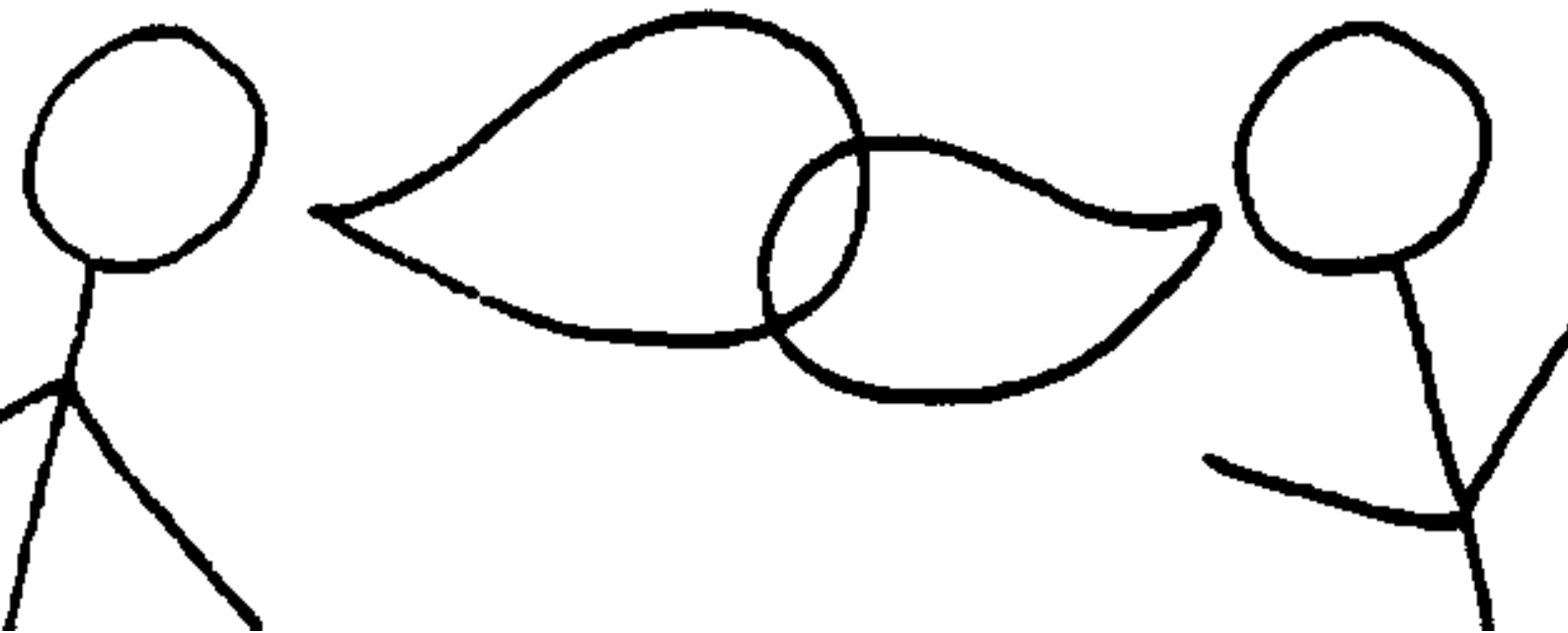


Comic Strip Conversations

**Guidance for using Comic Strip Conversations
produced by Kent Educational Psychology Service.**



What are comic strip conversations?

Comic strip conversations were created by Carole Gray. They use simple drawings to visually represent a social situation or conversation that a child or young person has experienced. This supports the child or young person to explore their thoughts and feelings about the situation. It also enables the adult to gain an insight into how the child or young person perceives the situation. Comic strip conversations can show:

- What was said during the conversation
- How people might have been feeling
- What people's intentions might have been

The use of comic strip conversations supports children and young people to understand more about the way they, and others communicate and why a misunderstanding may have occurred. They are also a helpful tool for supporting children and young people to solve social problems and consider new or different ways of communicating or approaching a situation.

Comic strip conversations provide visual representations of the different levels of communication that take place in a conversation. This enables some of the abstract elements of social communication (for example recognising the feelings and intentions of others) to be made more concrete and therefore easier to understand.

What do comic strip conversations look like?

Comic strip conversations use stick figures, speech bubbles, thought bubbles and other symbols to visually represent social interactions and abstract aspects of conversation. Ideas of additional symbols which may be helpful can be found in the appendix of this document. Colours can also be used to represent the emotions being expressed, for example Gray (1994) suggested the following:

Green: Happy, friendly, good ideas

Red: Anger, unfriendly, bad ideas

Blue: Sad, uncomfortable

Yellow: Frightened

Black: Facts, truth

Orange: Questions

Brown: Comfortable, cosy

Purple: Proud



Why use a comic strip conversation?

- To help a child or young person to share their feelings and perceptions of a situation.
- To encourage reflection in a safe space and non-threatening manner.
- To break down a conversation, enabling time to process the information and consider the situation.
- To support a child or young person to engage in problem solving or conflict resolution when a social situation has been difficult or unsuccessful.
- To help a child or young person to understand why things went wrong and what they could do in the future to successfully negotiate a similar situation.
- Comic strip conversations can be used as part of the repair cycle for the child or young person, supporting them to understand communicative breakdowns and enabling explicit teaching of social expectations as preparation for future situations.
- The comic strip conversation can be referred to in the future, promoting learning and understanding.
- Comic strip conversations can also be used to create a plan for a future situation that may be causing anxiety.

How to use a comic strip conversation

Comic strip conversations are created with the child or young person to illustrate a conversation or social situation that they have experienced. For the technique to be effective, both the child or young person and the adult need to be calm and if possible, in a quiet space. To introduce the child or young person to the technique, use a social situation or conversation that went well. This will help the child or young person to feel comfortable drawing and talking about an interaction.

Steps for creating a comic strip conversation:

- Draw who was involved, what was happening and use speech bubbles to record what was said. Technology such as word processing applications can also be used.
- Use thought bubbles to identify how people were feeling during the interaction. The child or young person may require support to consider this.
- Guide the child or young person throughout the drawing process by asking questions to help them consider the event. Examples of helpful questions are included below.
- Summarise the situation or event using the drawings as a guide.
- Consider how any problems or concerns that have been identified could be addressed. This could involve drawing out other possible scenarios and exploring the possible outcomes.
- Develop an action plan for similar situations in the future.

Remember to focus on the things the child or young person did well, not just the bits that did not go according to plan!

Useful guiding questions:

Where were you?

Who else was there?

What were they doing?

What happened?

What did you say?

What were you thinking when you said that?

What do you think the other person was thinking when you said that?

How did you feel at the time?

How do you think the other person felt?

Gray (1994)



Further Resources

These resources provide further guidance and information related to comic strip conversations:

<https://www.autism.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/topics/communication/communication-tools/social-stories-and-comic-strip-conversations>

Comic Strip Conversations: Illustrated interactions that teach conversation skills to students with autism and related disorders, by Carol Grey.

Further advice can also be sought from Kent Educational Psychology Service

References

Gray, C. (1994). *Comic strip conversations: Illustrated interactions that teach conversation skills to students with autism and related disorders*. Future Horizons.

Appendix

Comic Strip Conversation Symbols Dictionary (Gray, 1994)

