

Comic Strip Conversations™

A. Description and Purpose:

“A Comic Strip Conversation is a conversation between two or more people which incorporates the use of simple drawings. These drawings serve to illustrate an on-going communication, providing additional support to individuals who struggle to comprehend the quick exchange of information which occurs in a conversation.” (C. Gray, 1994)

Comic Strip Conversations take a social exchange and slow it down, make it visual, and make it less socially demanding; therefore it becomes more understandable to the individual. Just like a typical comic strip, this format systematically identifies *what people say and do* as well as highlighting *what people may be thinking*.

B. Equipment Needed:

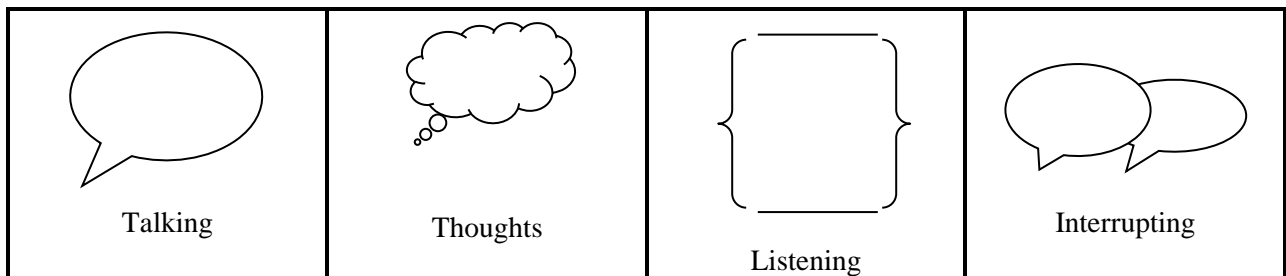
Comic Strip Conversations can be done on any writing service, with any writing materials, just keep in mind the following:

- The strip needs to be portable and permanent so the individual can take it with them.
- Different colors choices may need to be available with which to draw and write.
- Respect the privacy of individual, the strip should not be visible to others.
- Consider the ease of making changes to the strip, as this will be important in the writing process.

C. Setting it Up:

Participants in a comic strip conversation draw as they talk. The goal is to assist the individual in understanding and expressing their own ideas, while the adult acts as the *guide* providing ongoing encouragement. Initially, the format often takes the form of an interview with the adult asking the questions. The goal is to move to a more natural conversational interaction.

This strategy consists of using **symbols** to represent specific words and concepts. Here are some examples:



The use of **color** also helps to identify emotional content such as motivation behind a statement, thought or a question. The following color guidelines are provided, however, an individual may want to identify their own personal categories.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Green good ideas, happy, friendly | Red bad ideas, teasing, anger | Blue sad, uncomfortable |
| Brown comfortable, cozy | Purple proud | Yellow frightened |
| Black facts, things we know | Orange questions | Combinations of colors confused |

D. Implementation:

- Introduce the idea matter-of-factly. “We are going to draw while we talk today”.
- Start with “small talk” like something that happened over the weekend or a scene from a favorite video.
- Decide who will draw. It does not matter who draws the strip, initially the individual may want you to draw until they become comfortable with the process.
- Gather information and draw it. You can use very simple line and stick figure drawings to represent the situation.
 - Use a series of questions (“Where were you?”, “Who was with you?”) or statements (“Draw the people who were with you.”, “I would like to know what he said.”) to gather information.
 - Provide structure to the sequence of events by using a series of comic strip boxes. You can also number the boxes if this helps the individual.
- Summarize the key points in the strip. Identify where there may have been misunderstandings or incongruencies.
- Identify new solutions and create a plan with individual for the future. You can draw these possible solutions in strip form as well to help the individual process and evaluate them.

E. Evaluation:

When gathering information, take baseline data as to how often the target behavior is occurring (or not occurring). Take follow-up data at regular intervals after implementation of the Comic Strip to see if it has been effective in behavior change.

F. Teaching Tips:

- While this technique will eventually be useful for the individual in examining challenging social situations, it is very important to introduce this technique in a fun and non-confrontational manner around situations that are more neutral in nature.
- Comic strip conversations often lead to the development of a social story.
- A **personal symbol dictionary** can be used as well. This is a collection of symbols that represent specific people, places, and concepts that are part of the individual’s world.

G. Resources:

- www.thegraycenter.org
- Gray, C. (1994) *Comic Strip Conversations*. Future Horizons: Arlington, TX.