

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:

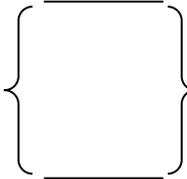
Comic Strip Conversations can be done on any writing service, with any writing materials, just keep in mind the following:

- 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:

 Talking	 Thoughts	 Listening	 Interrupting
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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.