

Brinton & Fujiki
Brigham Young University
Social Communication Intervention Script for story book, *Let's Sing a Lullaby with the Brave Cowboy*

***Let's Sing a Lullaby with the Brave Cowboy* by Jan Thomas, 2012, New York: Beach Lane Books.**

Sharing a Story to Facilitate Social and Emotional Learning

Many children with disabilities such as developmental language disorders, language-learning disorders, social communication disorders, or autism spectrum disorders have difficulty with aspects of social and emotional learning. These children often need explicit, repeated instruction designed to facilitate emotion understanding, conversational ability, and language comprehension and production skill. The following informal script is designed to help interventionists (caregivers and professionals) focus on and emphasize important concepts.

The following storybook has been selected because it has a well-defined story structure, clear language, rich emotion content, and engaging illustrations. A script is provided to guide interventionists as they share this book. Initially, concepts are listed that this book is particularly well suited to teach. These include social and emotional knowledge, interactional skills, vocabulary, and language structure.

Following the list of concepts, a series of prompts is provided for each story page. These prompts include questions, comments, and brief activities (e.g., making a facial expression in a mirror) designed to teach specific concepts. The interventionist may read the story text for each page and then present any of the prompts they feel would be most appropriate. The script is designed to be flexible and adjusted to each child's needs.

At the conclusion of the story script, a series of questions is provided to probe how well children understand and identify emotions that story characters experience. If desired, these questions can be used to evaluate how well children grasp the emotion content of the story.

Following story sharing, the interventionist may guide children to enact the story using simple props. This activity facilitates story comprehension by assisting children to understand the internal states and motivations of characters. Older children may prefer a readers' theater format or choose to provide additional text or dialog to the storybook by using attachable note paper.

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Concepts to stress

- 1. Emotions experienced:** afraid/scared, confused, surprised, embarrassed, happy, relieved
- 2. An individual's experienced emotion depends on how they perceive the situation (e.g., Cowboy is afraid because he *thinks* there is a spider, etc.).**
- 3. Anticipating how others will feel in certain situations**
- 4. Pro-social: friends try to comfort friends who are scared or upset.**
- 5. Prosocial: sometimes people you think might be mean are actually friendly if you get to know them.**
- 6. Structural: complete simple sentence forms, complex sentences with causal connections (but, if, so, because)**

Intro: Cover and Title Page— We are going to read a book called *Let's Sing a Lullaby with the Brave Cowboy*. This book is about a cowboy and two cows. The cowboy wants the cows to go to sleep, so he sings them a lullaby. But there is going to be a problem. The cowboy is going to get scared. I want you to think about what the cowboy and the cows are thinking in this story. Think about how they feel in this story. Let's see what happens.

Look at these pictures. (Show pictures of actual faces showing happy, sad, scared, surprised/shocked, as available). The cowboy and cows are going to have some of these feelings in the story. Let's see what happens.

Page 1 (Title Page)

(Look at picture on cover and picture right inside cover.)

I wonder what this book is about?

What do you think? (Let child look at cover.)

Now let's look at it together.

Page 2-3

Look, this cowboy is going to sing a lullaby to the cows.

Read: "It's time for little cows..." (Sing the lullaby if you are comfortable with it.)

Why did the cowboy sing to the cows? (The cowboy sang a song so that the cows would go to sleep.)

Look at the cows. How do they feel? (Happy and sleepy.)

Has your mother or dad ever sung to you at night? How did you feel when they sang? (Give a personal experience.)

Do you think the cows will go to sleep now?

Page 4-5

Read: "Eeeeeek!"

Look at the cowboy. How does he feel? (Very scared.)

How can you tell? (Screaming, facial expression, hat, dropped guitar, etc.)

(Show pictures.) Which of these people feels scared like the cowboy?

Can you make a scared face like the cowboy? (Use mirror.)

How about the cows? Look at their faces. (The brown cow looks a little confused or surprised and the tan cow looks scared. These pictures are complex because the cow on the right looks shocked/bad surprised and scared. Analyze this face, talk about bad surprise/shock, and explain how it can be mixed with fear.)

Why do you think the cowboy is scared?

How about the cows? Why are they scared/confused/surprised? (They are probably scared/confused/surprised because the cowboy screamed.)

Pretend your mom is singing you a lullaby. You are happy and sleepy. Then your mom screams. How would you feel? (Startled, bad surprised, scared.)

Page 6-7

Read: "Is that a huge hairy spider..."

Look at the cowboy. How does he feel? Why is he so scared? (He is scared because he thinks there is a huge hairy spider.)

How would you feel if you saw a huge hairy spider?

How about the cows. How do they feel? (They look confused—they do not know what is going on, but they do not look very scared.)

Do you think there is really a spider? (Talk about the fact that the cowboy thinks there is a spider but the cows are not so sure.)

If you were there, what would you say to the cowboy?

Page 8-9

Read: “It’s just a flower...”

What did the cows do? (The cows went closer to the spider. Because the cows went closer to the spider, they found it was only a flower.)

How do the cows feel? (Happy.)

The cows knew the cowboy was afraid and they tried to make the cowboy feel better. Friends try to help friends feel better when they are scared.

How does the cowboy feel? Do you think he might feel embarrassed? (Define embarrassed—when you do something kind of silly and other people see you.)

(Show pictures including an embarrassed face.) Which of these people feels embarrassed like the cowboy?

Can you make a face like the cowboy’s? (Use mirror.)

Have you ever felt embarrassed? Tell me about it. (Give a personal experience.)

Now wait a minute. This book is called “The Brave Cowboy.” Is this cowboy brave so far? Who has been brave? (The cows.)

Page 10-11

Read: “Well, let’s try...”

How does the cowboy feel now? (happy.) Why? (He feels happy because he is not afraid of a spider anymore.)

How about the cows? (They look happy. They look like they might laugh.)

What do you think that the cows are thinking?

Do you think the cows might think that the cowboy is funny? Why?

What do you think will happen?

Page 12-13

Okay, the cowboy is going to sing a lullaby to the cows.

Read/Sing: "It's time for little cows..."

Look at the cows. How do they look? (happy and sleepy.)

Do you think the cows will go to sleep now?

What do you think will happen?

Page 14-15

Read: "Eeeeeek!"

Look at the cowboy. How does he feel? (Very scared.)

How can you tell? (Screaming, face, hat, dropped guitar, etc.)

How about the cows? Look at their faces. (The tan cow looks a little confused and the brown cow looks scared. Here again, the brown cow looks a little shocked/bad surprised.)

(Show pictures.) Which of these people feels scared like the cowboy?

Can you make a scared face like the cowboy? Show me. (Use mirror.) Now make a surprised/shocked face like the cow.

Why do you think the cowboy is scared?

How about the cows? Why are they scared/surprised/confused? (They are probably scared/surprised/confused because the cowboy screamed.)

Why do you think the cowboy screamed this time?

Page 16-17

Read: "Is that a slimy slithering snake..."

The cowboy called that a slimy, slithering snake. Let's talk about what those words mean.

How does the cowboy feel? Why? (The cowboy feels afraid/scared because he thinks there is a snake.)

How do the cows feel? (They are not sure. They look a little confused.)

Do you think that the cows think there is a snake?

Do you think there is a snake?

Why not? (Discuss the fact that the cowboy thought the flower was a spider and it was just a flower. He might think something is scary when it is not.)

Page 18-19

Read: "It's just a stick, Cowboy..."

What did the cow do? (The cow went closer to the snake. Because the cow went closer to the snake, he found it was only a stick.)

How does the cow feel? (Maybe a little confused.)

What do you think that the cow is thinking? (Try to elicit a complex sentence.)

Wait a minute. I thought that cowboys were supposed to take care of cows. Is this cowboy taking care of the cows? (No, the cows are taking care of him.) No wonder the cow is confused.

But the cow knew the cowboy was afraid and he tried to make the cowboy feel better. Friends try to help friends feel better when they are scared.

How does the cowboy feel? (Embarrassed? —define again if necessary.)

(Show pictures.) Which of these people feels embarrassed like the cowboy?

Why is the cowboy embarrassed? (He is embarrassed because he was afraid of a stick. He was afraid because he thought the stick was a snake.)

Have you ever been afraid because you thought there was something dangerous or scary and then it wasn't? (Give a personal example.)

Page 20-21

Read: "But is there a large..."

What does lumbering mean? (Walking with slow and heavy steps.)

How does the cowboy feel? Why? (He feels scared/afraid because he thinks there is a big bear behind him.)

Look at the cow. Does the cow think there is a bear?

How about you? Do you think there is a bear?

What do you think is going to happen here?

Page 22-23

Read: "It just me..."

How does cowboy feel? (Maybe embarrassed.)

How about the cows? (They look confused because they do not know why the cowboy is afraid of so many things.)

Hmmmm, I still wonder why this book is called The Brave Cowboy!

Page 24-25

Read: "Hey, I see how this works..."

Whoa, look at this!

How does the cowboy feel? (He looks happy.)

He thinks that (point) looks like a shaggy gray wolf. But does he look scared? (No.) Why not? (He is not scared because he thinks it will be like the spider, the snake, and the bear.)

But look at the cows. How do they feel? (They look scared/afraid.)

(Show pictures.) Which of these people feels scared like the cows?

Show me a scared face like the cows. (Use mirror.)

Why do you think the cows look scared/afraid now? (They may be scared because they think there is really a bear.)

What do you think?

Page 26-27

Read: "And it may sound..."

What is the cowboy thinking? (He thinks there is not really a wolf.)

How does the cowboy feel? (He feels happy because he thinks there is nothing to be scared of.)

But what about the cows? (They look scared. They are running away because they think there is really a wolf.)

Why do the cows think there is a wolf? (They think there is a wolf because they can hear the growl.)

What do you think?

Page 28-29

Read: "But it's probably just..."

Whoa, this is different, isn't it?

Look at the cowboy, how does he feel? (He looks happy. He is not afraid because he does not think there is a wolf.)

But look at the cows. How do they feel? (They feel really scared because they know it is a real wolf.)

How does the wolf feel? (Mean or mad.)

(Show pictures.) Which of these people feels scared like the cows? Which feels mad like the wolf?)

Can you make scared and mad faces? (Use mirror and help child contrast.)

What do you think will happen?

Page 30-31

Read: "Um, do wolves like..."

How does the cowboy feel? (Scared.)

Why does the cowboy ask if wolves like lullabies? (He wants to sing to the wolf so that the wolf will go to sleep.)

Do you think the cowboy has finally done something brave? (Yes, talk to the wolf.)

What do you think will happen?

Page 32-33

Read: "Like 'em..."

How does the wolf feel?

Why does the wolf feel happy? (The wolf is happy because he loves lullabies and wants to hear one.)

Wait, I thought the wolf was going to be mean and eat the cows and the cowboys. Now I am surprised at this page! How about you? (Make surprised expression.)

How do you think the cowboy will feel? Maybe he will feel surprised. But it will be a good surprise.

Page 34-35

Read (and sing) "Well all righty then..."

How does the cowboy feel?

How do the cows and the wolf feel?

Do you think they will go to sleep now?

Page 36-37

Read: "Good night."

What happened? (The cowboy and the cows fell asleep.)

Summary:

(Use cloze procedures so child can help summarize.)

The cowboy wanted the cows to go to sleep. So, he sang a lullaby for them. But then the cowboy thought there was a spider, so he was scared. The cows showed him that it was really a flower. Then the cowboy thought there was a snake, so he was scared. The cows showed him that it was really a stick. The cows helped the cowboy feel better. Then the cowboy thought there was a bear, so he was scared. It was really just another cow. Finally, the cowboy thought there was a wolf. But then the cowboy thought it would just be a bunny rabbit. This time, the cows KNEW it was really a wolf and they were scared. The cowboy found a way to solve the problem. He asked the wolf if he'd like to hear a lullaby. Even though the wolf looked mean and scary; he was very nice after all.

Follow-up probes

Probe 1, p. 4, Look at the cowboy. How does he feel?

Why does he feel_____?

Ask both questions, but if the emotion response is wrong, say:

OR, he might feel scared. The cowboy is scared because he thinks there is a spider.

Probe 2, p. 9, Look at the cowboy. How does he feel?

Why does he feel_____?

Ask both questions, but if the emotion response is wrong, say:

OR, he might feel embarrassed. The cowboy is embarrassed because he was afraid of a flower.

Probe 3, p. 13, Look at the brown cow. How does he feel?

Why does he feel_____?

Ask both questions, but if the emotion response is wrong, say:

OR, he might feel shocked/surprised. The cow is shocked because the cowboy screamed.

Probe # 4, p. 18, Look at the cowboy. How does he feel?

Why does he feel_____?

Ask both questions, but if the emotion response is wrong, say:

OR, he might feel embarrassed. He might be embarrassed because he was afraid of a stick.

Probe #5, p. 28, Look at the wolf. How does he feel?

Why does he feel_____?

Ask both questions, but if the emotion response is wrong, say:

OR, he might feel mad. The wolf might be mad at the cowboy.

Probe #6 p. 35, Look at the cows. How do they feel?

Why do they feel_____?

Ask both questions, but if the emotion response is wrong, say:

OR, they might feel happy. The cows are happy because Cowboy is singing them a lullaby.

Dialog/enactment activity

I have some props here. We have a cowboy, cows, a flower, a stick, and a wolf. Which character(s) would you like to be? Let me know what the cowboy/animals are thinking and saying on each page of the book. (Try to elicit complex sentence forms linking emotion with the source that elicits it. Emphasize the emotion that the cowboy experienced initially was not based in fact.)

If preferred, guide the child in a modified “readers’ theater” where the child voices one or more characters. On as many pages as possible, have the child write/dictate dialog or thoughts for the characters. Emphasize what the cowboy and cows are feeling and why. In some instances, you might use a thought bubble, on others a dialog bubble. Emphasize the fact that the cowboy thinks there is a spider, etc., and that is why he is afraid. By the same token, the cows are not so sure, so they are rather confused. The cows also trust the cowboy less as he “cries wolf” several times. In the last scenario, however, stress the fact that the cows are aware and the cowboy isn’t.

The next session, try reading the book again using the dialog bubbles. Have the child say as many of the lines as possible.