

**Brinton & Fujiki**  
**Brigham Young University**  
**Social Communication Intervention Script for story book, *Knuffle Bunny***

***Knuffle Bunny* by Mo Willems, 2004, Hyperion Books for Children, New York.**  
**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.

**Brinton & Fujiki  
Brigham Young University  
Social Communication Intervention Script for story book, *Knuffle Bunny***

***Knuffle Bunny* by Mo Willems, 2004, Hyperion Books for Children, New York.**

### **Concepts to stress**

- 1. Anticipating the emotions that a situation may elicit:** happy, mad, sad, frustrated, scared, worried, relieved, upset, confused, guilty
- 2. The importance of reading facial expressions of emotion**
- 3. Define frustrated**
- 4. Understanding mixed emotions—e.g., frustrated and angry**
- 5. Sometimes a person cannot express him/herself**
- 6. Sometimes we have to work hard to be understood**
- 7. Prosocial behavior: persistence in problem solving/communicating**
- 8. Structural: complete simple sentence forms, complex sentences with causal connections (but, if, so, because)**

**Intro: Cover and Title Page— Look, this is book about a little girl named Trixie. Trixie is so little that she cannot talk yet. Trixie has a toy bunny named Knuffle Bunny. We will learn about how Trixie feels when something bad happens. We will learn about how Trixie tries to ask her dad for help even though she cannot talk. Let's think about how Trixie and her dad and mom feel in this story.**

### **Page 1 (Title Page)**

Look at these pictures. What can we tell about these people? (A man and a woman got married and had a baby. The baby has a bunny.)

This baby's name is Trixie.

### **Page 2-3**

Read: "Not so long ago..."

Do you know what an errand is? (Define.)

What is Daddy carrying? Can you guess what Daddy's errand is? (Laundry.)

Maybe Daddy is going out because he needs to wash the clothes (do the laundry).

Look at Trixie. How does she feel? (Happy/excited.)

Why do you think that Trixie feels happy/excited? (Trixie feels excited because...)

Can you make a face like Trixie's? (Use mirror.)

How about Daddy?

How about Mommy?

### **Page 4-5**

Read: "Trixie and her daddy..."

How does Trixie feel?

Why? (Trixie feels happy because she is outside with her daddy.)

How about Daddy? (Daddy feels happy to be with Trixie.)

### **Page 6-7**

Read: "past the school..."

Do you know what a laundromat is? Have you ever been to a laundromat?

Now we know why Trixie's dad was carrying a basket of clothes. He is going to the laundromat to wash the clothes.

### **Page 8-9**

Read: "Trixie helped her daddy..."

Look at Trixie. What is she doing?

How does she feel? (Happy, excited.) Why? (Trixie is excited because she is playing with the clothes.)

Can you make a face like Trixie's? (Use mirror.)

Is Trixie really helping Daddy?

Where is Knuffle Bunny?

Why is Knuffle Bunny in the basket? (Trixie put Knuffle Bunny in the basket so she could play with the clothes.)

What do you think might happen? (Speculate what might happen and how Trixie might feel.)

### **Page 10-11**

Read: "She even got to..."

What is happening now?

How does she feel? (Happy, excited.)

Why? (Trixie is excited because she got to put money in the washing machine.)

Look in the washer, what do you see? (Knuffle Bunny.)

How does Trixie feel? (Happy.)

Do you think Trixie knows that Knuffle Bunny is in the washer?

What do you think will happen? (Prompt for complex sentence linking emotion and source.)

What would you say to Trixie's Daddy? (Prompt for something like, "Don't forget the Knuffle Bunny or Trixie will be very sad.")

### **Page 12-13**

Read: "But a block or so later..."

Look at Trixie's face here (p. 12). How does she feel? (Happy.)

Wow! Look at her face here (p. 13) What does Trixie realize? (Trixie knows she does not have her bunny.)

How does she feel now? (She feels scared/upset/sad—maybe all at once.)

Trixie is upset because she does not have Knuffle Bunny. She is afraid that Knuffle Bunny is lost.

If you were there, what would you say to Trixie? (Prompt for complex form linking emotion with source.)

What would you say to Daddy? (Prompt for complex form linking emotion with source.)

### **Page 14-15**

Read: "Trixie turned to her daddy..."

What does Trixie try to tell her daddy? (She does not have Knuffle Bunny. "We need to go back because I don't have Knuffle Bunny.")

How does Trixie feel? Why?

What does Trixie's daddy think she said? (He thinks she said, "We're going home.")

Why can't Daddy understand Trixie? (Daddy cannot understand Trixie because she cannot say words yet.) (Ask child if he/she has been around a toddler who babbles but does not talk yet.)

Oh dear, Daddy does not understand Trixie. How does Trixie feel about that? (p. 15)

Can you make a face like Trixie's? (Use mirror.)

Have you ever felt that way?

If you were there, what would you say to Trixie/Daddy? (Prompt for complex form linking emotion with source.)

### **Page 16-17**

Read: "Aggle..."

On wow, what is happening here? (Trixie is trying to tell her daddy that Knuffle Bunny is gone.)

Look at Trixie. (Point to each picture on p. 16-17.) How does she feel? (Upset/scared, worried, sad.)

Why does Trixie feel \_\_\_\_\_? (She is trying to tell Daddy that Knuffle Bunny is gone, but he does not understand her.)

Look at Daddy, how does he feel? (Confused/puzzled.) Why? (He can't understand her.)

I think that Trixie is feeling frustrated. I feel frustrated when I try to do something again and again and it does not work out. I feel frustrated when I try and try and I can't do something. (Give a personal example.)

What would you say to Trixie?

What would you say to Daddy?

Have you ever felt frustrated? Tell me about it.

### **Page 18-19**

Read: "Now please..."

What does Daddy want here? (Daddy wants Trixie to calm down.)

But how does Trixie feel? (Sad on p. 18, upset/mad/frustrated on p. 19.)

What does she do? (Bawl/cry and go boneless—Define what is meant by boneless here—demonstrate.)

Why does Trixie cry and go boneless? (Trixie is trying to tell Daddy that Knuffle Bunny is gone.)

What does Daddy think? (He thinks Trixie is being naughty.)

How does he feel? (A little mad.)

What would you say to Trixie/Daddy? (Prompt for complex form linking emotion with source.)

### **Page 20**

Read: "She did everything she could..."

What is Trixie doing here? (Yelling, crying, throwing a tantrum--define tantrum.)

Why is Trixie doing that? (She is trying to tell Daddy that Bunny is gone.)

How does Trixie feel? (Upset/mad/frustrated. Talk about multiple emotions at once—give a personal example and ask for an example.)

What does Daddy think? (He thinks she is just fussing.)

How does he feel about that? (He is embarrassed and he is getting mad. Talk about the fact that Daddy is embarrassed because the people are looking at them. What might those people be thinking?)

If you were there, what would you say to Trixie/Daddy? (Prompt for complex form linking emotion with source.)

## **Page 21**

Read: "By the time..."

Look at Daddy's face—how does he look?

So, Trixie is scared that she will lose her bunny. Trixie also feels very frustrated and mad because Daddy does not understand.

Daddy feels frustrated and mad because Trixie is yelling and fussing. He does not know why Trixie is so upset, does he?

## **Page 22-23**

Read: "As soon as..."

What does Mommy realize? (Mommy knows that Knuffle Bunny is gone.)

How does Mommy feel? (Mommy is afraid/scared that Knuffle Bunny might be gone.)

How does Daddy feel about that? (Now he feels a little scared that Bunny is gone.)

Maybe Daddy feels a little guilty too. (Define guilty—when you have done something wrong and you feel bad about it.)

Maybe Daddy feels guilty because he left Knuffle Bunny. He may also feel guilty because he did not understand Trixie. He just thought she was being bad/naughty.

But how does Trixie feel? (A little mad.) She may feel mad and frustrated that Daddy did not understand her.

Can you make a face like Daddy's?

Can you make a face like Trixie's? (Use mirror.)

## **Page 24-25**

Read: "The whole family..."

What did the family do? Why?

Look at their faces. How do they feel? (They feel worried/scared that Knuffle Bunny might be lost. Try to contrast the previous mad and sad faces with the scared faces. Have the child practice both using the mirror.)

They all feel scared because Knuffle Bunny is gone.

Look at the people watching them. How do they feel? (They are puzzled or confused wondering why the family is running.)

## **Page 26-27**

Read: "They zoomed past..."

What is happening here?

How do they feel? (Scared, worried.)

What do you think will happen?

## **Page 28-29**

Read: "Trixie's daddy looked..."

What is happening here?

Look at Mommy and Trixie (p. 28). How do they feel? How can you tell? (They look scared and worried, and Trixie is sucking her thumb and holding Mommy's hand.)

How does Trixie feel here (p. 29)? (Sad and about to cry.)

If you were there, what would you say to Mommy/Trixie/Daddy? (Prompt for complex form linking emotion with source.)

What do you think will happen?

## **Page 30-31**

Read: "So Trixie's daddy..."

Look at Daddy's face here (p. 30). How does he look?



I think he looks determined. (Determined is when you are going to try really really hard to do something. Give an example.)

Then what happened (p. 31)?

How does Trixie feel? (She is so excited and happy because they found her Knuffle Bunny.)

How do Mommy and Daddy feel? (Happy and relieved—Define relieved: when you know that something bad will not happen. Give an example.)

Wait, Trixie said Knuffle Bunny! She has not said any real words before, has she?

## **Page 32**

Read: “And those were...”

Trixie finally said some words, didn't she?

How does she feel? (She feels very happy and relieved because she found her bunny.)

## **Summary:**

(Use cloze procedures so child can help summarize.)

**Trixie loved her Knuffle Bunny. When she realized that her bunny was gone, she was very scared. She was scared because she might lose her bunny. She tried and tried to let Daddy know that the bunny was gone. Daddy did not understand Trixie because she could not say real words. Trixie felt mad and frustrated because Daddy did not understand. Then Daddy felt mad and frustrated because he thought Trixie was just being bad. When Daddy realized why Trixie was fussing, he felt guilty. They all ran to the Laundromat. They found Knuffle Bunny. Trixie was so excited that she said her first words, *Knuffle Bunny*. Trixie was so happy and relieved to have her bunny back.**

## **Follow-up probes**

**Probe #1, p. 6,** Look at Trixie. How does she feel?

Why does she feel\_\_\_\_\_?

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

OR, she might feel happy. Trixie is happy because she is going out with her daddy.

**Probe #2, p. 13,** Look at Trixie. How does she feel?

Why does she feel\_\_\_\_\_?

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

OR, she might feel scared. Trixie is scared because she does not have Knuffle Bunny.

**Probe 3, p. 18,** Look at Trixie. How does she feel?

Why does she feel\_\_\_\_\_?

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

OR, she might feel sad. Trixie is sad because her bunny is gone.

**Probe # 4, p. 20,** Look at Daddy. How does he feel?

Why does he feel\_\_\_\_\_?

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

OR, he might feel mad. Daddy is mad because Trixie is fussing.

**Probe #5, p. 23,** Look at Trixie. How does she feel?

Why does she feel\_\_\_\_\_?

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

OR, she might feel mad. Trixie is mad because Daddy did not understand her.

**Probe #6 p. 24** Look at Trixie. How does she feel?

Why does she feel \_\_\_\_\_?

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

OR, she might feel scared. She is scared because her bunny is lost.

**Dialog/enactment activity:**

**Help the child enact the story using simple props. Or, guide the child in a modified “readers’ theater” where the child voices one or more characters. Adjust as needed for the individual child.**

**Example:** “Trixie could not talk yet, could she? So, she didn’t say many words. Let’s go back in this book and you tell me what Trixie was trying to say. Tell me what Trixie was feeling too. We can write what Daddy was thinking too.”

On as many pages as possible, have the child write/dictate dialog or thoughts for the characters. Emphasize what the characters are feeling and why. In some instances, you might use a thought bubble, on others a dialog bubble. (For example, on the early pages, Trixie could be thinking, “I feel happy because I am going on a walk with Daddy.” On p. 13, she might think “OH NO!!! Knuffle bunny is gone. I am so scared that Knuffle Bunny is lost!”) “Translate” Trixie’s babble into words.

The next session, try reading the book again using the dialog bubbles. Have the child say as many of the lines as possible. (This entire activity can serve as the enactment.)