

**Brinton & Fujiki**  
**Brigham Young University**  
**Social Communication Intervention Script for story book, *The Pigeon Wants a Puppy***

***The Pigeon Wants a Puppy* by Mo Willems, 2008, New York: Hyperion Books for Children.**

**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:** excitement, happiness, sadness, anger, frustration, surprise/shock, fear
- 2. Anticipating an event and the emotions it elicits**
- 3. Anticipating how one would feel in a situation that is unfamiliar (The pigeon is not good at this.)**
- 4. Anticipating events and responsibilities**
- 5. Anticipating the needs of others**
- 6. Losing control—tantruming—possible social effects**
- 7. Mixed emotions—changing one’s mind**
- 8. Prosocial behavior: conversational “politeness,” responsiveness, understanding reasons why an adult might deny a request**
- 9. Structural: complete simple sentence forms, complex sentences with causal connections (but, if, so, because)**

**Intro, Cover and Title Page— This is a story about Pigeon. In this story, Pigeon really wants something—a puppy. Let’s see how Pigeon feels about that. Let’s see if you think it’s a good idea for Pigeon to have a puppy.**

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

(Read title.)

What is Pigeon doing here? (He is making a list of things he wants.)

(Read some of the items.)

Hmm... why do you think Pigeon wants these things?

What do you think will happen?

### **Page 2**

Read: "Oh, hello."

What do you say when someone says "Hello"? (You might say, Hi.)

### **Page 3**

Read: "How are you?"

What would we say to Pigeon? (Fine, good, etc.)

What else could we say? (Try to guide child to "How are you?")

### **Page 4**

Read: "I'm fine..."

Pigeon is being very polite, isn't he?

It makes people happy when we are polite.

### **Page 5**

Read: "By the way..."

What do you think that Pigeon wants? (If the child says, "Puppy"—say, "Yes, I think so too.")

### **Page 6-7**

Read: "What I've wanted..."

How long has Pigeon wanted a puppy? (First he says a very long time--"forever" and then "since last Tuesday.")

Do you think that it is a good idea for Pigeon to have a puppy? Why? (Or Why not?)

How do you think Pigeon would feel if he had a puppy?

### **Page 8-9**

Read: "A puppy..."

Wow, how does Pigeon feel? (Very excited.)

Pigeon is very excited about getting a puppy.

Do you think Pigeon wants a puppy a lot or just a little?

Pigeon is so excited that he is jumping all around.

Let's think for a minute. If someone gets a puppy, what do they have to do? (Talk about the fact that you have to take care of a dog. Ask the child if she/he has a pet. Ask who takes care of it.)

If you were there, what would you ask Pigeon? (Try to guide child to ask if Pigeon would take care of a puppy.)

## **Page 10**

Read: "Oh, don't worry..."

Do you think that Pigeon can take care of a puppy?

## **Page 11**

Read: "I promise..."

Hmmm.... What will Pigeon do? (Water the puppy once a month.)

Wait, will that be enough water for a puppy? (Talk about how people and animals need water every single day.)

Do you think that Pigeon knows how to take care of a puppy?

What else would a puppy need? (Food, exercise, to be cleaned, etc.)

You tell Pigeon what a puppy would need. (Guide child to say food, etc.)

Tell the pigeon why the puppy would need those things. (Try to elicit complex sentences., e.g., A puppy would need food so it could grow.)

## **Page 12-13**

Read: "What?" ...

Look at Pigeon's face (p. 14). How does he feel? (He looks surprised to find out that a puppy needs food, etc.)

What does Pigeon think a puppy needs?

Do you think that Pigeon could take care of a puppy?

I am very worried that Pigeon does not know how to take care of a puppy.

Tell Pigeon what he needs to do to take care of a puppy. (Guide the child to tell Pigeon several things that he needs to do. If it works better, try to get the child to tell Pigeon, "You don't know about puppies.")

### **Page 14-15**

Read: "Oh, I get it..."

What does Pigeon think? (Pigeon thinks we are being mean.)

Why does he think that? (Pigeon thinks we are being mean because we told him he needs to do lots of things to take care of a puppy.)

Look at Pigeon's face (p. 16). How does he feel? (Pigeon is mad because he thinks we don't want him to have a puppy.)

What do you think about that?

(Talk about the idea that Pigeon does not know about puppies. He is mad because he does not have a puppy right now. But what would happen if he had a puppy? Try to get the child to understand that Pigeon is mad for the wrong reason—this may be challenging. Introduce the idea that Pigeon does not think about "reasons" that others might have.)

### **Page 16-17**

Read: "You don't want me..."

What does Pigeon want to do? (Take a ride on a puppy or play tennis with a puppy.)

Can Pigeon do those things? Will those things work? (Talk about why Pigeon's ideas are silly.)

What do you think would happen if Pigeon got a puppy?

Let's think about how Pigeon might feel if a puppy did not want him to ride on his back.

Let's think about how Pigeon might feel if a puppy did not play tennis with him. (Try to elicit complex constructions like, "If a puppy did not play tennis, pigeon might feel angry/disappointed.")

### **Page 18-19**

Read: "You just don't understand..."

Look at Pigeon's face here (p. 19). How does Pigeon feel? (Sad.)

Can you make a sad face? (Use mirror.)

Why does Pigeon feel so sad? (Pigeon is sad because thinks we don't want him to have a puppy.)

How does Pigeon feel about puppies? (He loves them—or he thinks he does.)

Do you think that Pigeon has ever been around a puppy?

If you were there, what would you say to Pigeon?

### **Page 20-21**

Read: "Awww..."

How does Pigeon feel about puppies?

How would Pigeon feel if he had a puppy? (He would be very happy if he had a puppy—or he thinks he would be happy.)

What do you think will happen?

### **Page 22-23**

Read: "I want a puppy..."

How does Pigeon feel now (very angry/mad/frustrated)? Talk about the fact that Pigeon is throwing a tantrum because he does not have a puppy.)

Can you make a really mad face like Pigeon's?

Do you think Pigeon should have a puppy? (Why or why not?)

### **Page 24-25**

Read: "Woof!..."

Look at Pigeon here (p. 25). How does Pigeon feel? (Pigeon is startled/surprised.)

Why is Pigeon so surprised? (He surprised because he hears a puppy bark.)

What does it mean for dreams to come true? (Give an example—ask child for an example.)

What do you think will happen?

### **Page 26-27**

Read: "Woof?..."

Wow, look at Pigeon!

How does Pigeon feel? (When Pigeon sees the puppy, Pigeon is very scared/frightened.)

Can you make a face like Pigeon's? (Use mirror.) Make a really really scared face.

Look at the puppy. How does the puppy feel? (Happy, friendly.)

Why do you think Pigeon is so scared/afraid?

Wait, I thought that Pigeon loved puppies. But how does Pigeon feel about the puppy?

Why?

### **Page 28-29**

Read: "It's HUGE!..."

Look at Pigeon's face (1<sup>st</sup> pic). How does he feel? (Very surprised and shocked.)

This is not a good surprise.

What is Pigeon afraid of? (The teeth, hair, etc.)

Look at the last picture—how does Pigeon feel? (worried/scared/afraid.)

Pigeon said he loved puppies, but how does he feel now? (Emphasize fact he is changing his mind because he did not know about puppies.)

Hah! You were right—Pigeon didn't know anything about puppies before, did he?

### **Page 30-31**

Read: "I've changed my mind."

Look at the Puppy, how does he feel? (Happy.) The puppy is happy to see Pigeon.

What do you think the puppy wants to do? (Play with Pigeon.)

Look at Pigeon.

How does Pigeon feel now? (He is scared of the puppy.)

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

Does Pigeon want to play with the puppy?

Pigeon has changed his mind. (Talk about what it means to change your mind, especially to change your feelings. Give a personal example. Ask the child for an example.)

### **Page 32-33**

Read: "I want a walrus!"

Look at Pigeon here (p. 32). How does he feel? (Relieved/glad because he is going away from the puppy.)

But how does Pigeon feel here (p. 33)?

What does Pigeon want?

Wait, walruses are huge—much, much bigger than puppies. How do you think Pigeon would feel if he saw a walrus?



What do you think would happen if we told Pigeon, "You cannot have a walrus!"? How would he feel? (Try to get child to see that Pigeon would probably be mad. Conclude with idea that Pigeon is silly/has bad judgment/doesn't think about things.)

**Summary:**

(Use cloze procedures so child can help summarize.)

**Pigeon is funny, isn't he? Pigeon really, really wanted a puppy. He was very mad when he thought we did not want him to have a puppy. But Pigeon did not know how to take care of a puppy. He was mad anyway. Pigeon gets mad when he does not get what he wants. Then Pigeon saw a puppy. Pigeon was so scared of the puppy that he went away. Then Pigeon said he wanted a walrus. Pigeon is so silly!**

**Probe #1, p. 8,** Look at Pigeon. How does he feel?

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

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

OR, he might feel excited/happy. Pigeon is excited about a puppy.

**Probe #2, p. 16,** Look at Pigeon. How does he feel?

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

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

OR, he might feel sad. Pigeon is sad because he does not have a puppy.

**Probe #3, p. 23,** Look at Pigeon. How does he feel?

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

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

OR, he might feel mad. Pigeon is mad because he does not have a puppy.

**Probe # 4, p. 24,** Look at Pigeon. How does he feel?

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

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

OR, he might feel surprised. Pigeon is surprised because he heard a puppy bark.

**Probe #5, p. 27,** Look at Pigeon. How does he feel?

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

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

OR, he might feel scared. Pigeon feels scared of the puppy.

**Probe #6 p. 31,** Look at Pigeon. 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 pigeon is scared of the puppy.

**Dialog/enactment activity:**

**Look, I have a Pigeon like the one in the book. Let's read the book again. You pretend like you are Pigeon. You be Pigeon, and tell me what you are thinking on every page, okay. Try to tell me how you feel about a puppy. (Repeat with roles reversed.) Try to get the child to extend the story by elaborating on the walrus—try to introduce the same issues (he could not take care of a walrus, walruses are huge and scary, walruses are wet and have slobber, etc.)**

**If preferred, guide the child in a modified “readers’ theater” where the child voices Pigeon. As an alternative activity, on as many pages as possible, have the child say or dictate dialog or thoughts for Pigeon. Emphasize what he is feeling and why. Create a thought bubble or a dialog bubble attached to the**

**page with a sticky note. When finished, read the story again including the dialog bubbles. Adjust as needed for the individual child.**