

Instructions

(These pages are for instructions only and should not be included with the final story.)

Information is a powerful ally in creating a comfortable beginning for a person on the Autism spectrum. It is also helpful for many other people who like predictability. By creating the following story about Sunday School, Vacation Bible School, Girls' Club, Boys' Club, or other church groups or activities, you allow the individual to practice the upcoming routine, as well as the names and faces of people who will be part of the setting.

The first pages tell you what words to fill in within the story and what photos to include. Try to have this story prepared at least a week prior to the individual beginning the new group or activity. Send the story home and allow the person to learn about the new group or activity before attending the first session through this personalized story several times. Some people need a new story for each class or setting. Feel free to add pages to best tell about your setting.

This story can be printed as a book, viewed as a PowerPoint slideshow presentation (saved and shared using Google drive, Dropbox or other online methods), or exported as a video (mp4 file) and shared as a movie. For some, it may be most helpful to have it as both a printed book and a video. It can be made public, if you have permission to share the images publicly, or kept private for use only by the individual, family, or within your congregation.

For the PowerPoint template (.potx file you can save and download to your *custom office templates*) and a video tutorial on how to use it, see allbelong.org/ChurchWelcomeStory.

Once you have written your first story, you will begin to see the many ways you can use informational stories or social stories throughout your ministry. You can write about the worship service, the potluck dinner, the Christmas

program, or the area for cookies and juice. The possibilities are endless. By utilizing our PowerPoint template, you can add animation to the images and words, transitions to the slides, background music for the slideshow or video, insert video clips of activities and services and more.

Most individuals find these stories helpful because they give predictability to a new setting. Although these information packets have been helpful for many people, others may require additional opportunities to create a good beginning. Some enjoy visiting the church space when there are no other people present. Others enjoy observing a video of the event prior to beginning. This book, however, is one tool that has helped many children and adults adjust to new settings at church.

May God bless your efforts to carve out a secure place of belonging for each individual in your congregation.

Barbara J. Newman & Victoria White

Story Text and Directions

On the template and in these directions, you will see where blue, bracketed text appears in italics. This is inserted to mark where you insert the personalized information of the individual. Your text should be black, non-italicized and the brackets deleted.

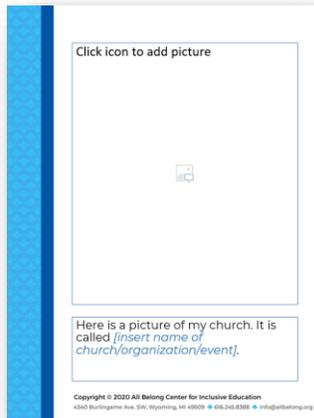


Title slide/page 1: add the individual's name



Slide/page 2: Insert a picture of the individual

My name is *[insert name(s)]* and I want to tell you about my *[insert name of program or organization such as church, VBS, Wednesday night worship, etc.]*.



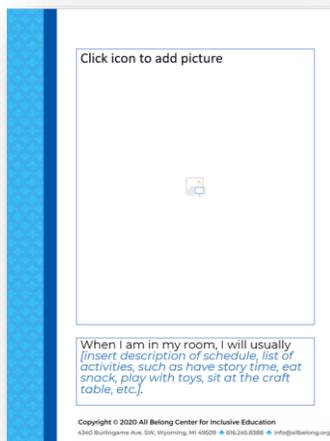
Slide/page 3: Insert a picture of the building or location of the group or activity.

Here is a picture of my church. It is called *[insert name of church/organization/event]*.



Slide/page 4: Insert a picture of the room. If there is a separate spot for singing, for example, and one for the lesson, include pictures of both.

Sometimes I stay with my family when I am at church and sometimes, I go to a room for all of us in *[insert designation for group, grade, etc.]*. Here is a picture of the room where I can be with my friends.



Slide/page 5: Insert pictures of some of the items on the list, or if you have a picture schedule already prepared, insert a picture of that schedule. You could even insert video clips of the different parts of the schedule.

When I am here, I will usually *[insert description of schedule, list of activities, such as "have story time, eat snack, play with toys, sit at the craft table," etc.]*.



Slide/page 6: Insert pictures of leaders and, if appropriate, one-on-one volunteers with names below pictures. Make sure to list the names these people should be called (e.g., Miss Laura, Mrs. Braxton, Brad).

When I am here, I will have people who help me. Here are some pictures of my leaders.



Slide/page 7: (as one option) Insert pictures of other participants in the group, again with names below the pictures so that the individual can begin to learn names.

I will be in here with some friends, too. These are pictures of some of my friends.



Slide/page 8: (as another option) Insert a group picture of participants, listing their names below the picture.

I will be here with some friends, too. This is a picture of some of my friends.



Slide/page 9: (optional, if applicable) Insert some information about the routines, management phrases (such as “eyes on me”) or behaviors that will help this individual understand what to do.

While here, *[insert description of boundaries, expectations or routines such as “eyes on me” or “1-2-3 Magic”]*.



Slide/page 10: Insert a picture of the individual with his or her family or in his or her home setting.

When *[insert name of program]* is done, my *[insert name or designation of who this will be, such as mom, dad, big brother, etc.]* will *[insert description of will happen, such as “pick me up”, “meet me at the desk”, “take me home”, etc.]*. Then we will be together as a family again.