Requesting a Break

**What is a break card?**
A break card is a visual support which may be used by your child to communicate the message that they need some time away from an activity, task or person.

**Why might your child use a break card?**
During an activity or task, children with ASD may become frustrated, bored or anxious which may lead to challenging behaviours. This strategy is often used for children who are non-verbal; however, even those children who are typically able to express themselves, may find it difficult during these times. A break card is an alternative way of communicating the need for a break while potentially decreasing their need to engage in challenging behaviour.

**When could your child use a break card?**
A break card is a strategy your child could use to communicate that they need to take some time away from an activity or task where they’re experiencing frustration or anxiety. It’s a strategy that they can utilize to self-manage their need to take a break for a predetermined time and return to the activity.

**How could your child use a break card?**
- To indicate they need time away from a person
- To indicate they need a break from a difficult task
- To indicate they need a break from an easy task
- To indicate they need to get away from an environment (e.g., the community pool because it’s too loud)

**Questions to consider when implementing a break card:**
- What is the goal of the break card?
- How will your child request a break (e.g., pointing to the card, exchanging the card, etc.)?
- What is your child’s visual recognition level (e.g., objects, photos, pictures, line drawings or text)?
- What will your child do when on break?
- How long is the break?
- How will your child know the break is over?
- Is the strategy at your child’s developmental level?
- How will your child transition back to the activity or task?
- How will you reinforce your child when they use the break card?
- Where will the break card be located for easy access when needed?

**Before implementing any strategy, remember to:**
1) Assess – What is your child currently able to do?
2) Goal – What is a specific goal for your child to work towards?
3) Strategies – How will you teach to reach the goal?
4) Monitor – How will you know if the teaching strategies are working?

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CW-Autism Services 2012
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Break Cards

Samples:

**Break Cards**

- **break time**
  - Image of a clock
- **I need a break please**
  - Hands pointing to a clock
- **it's time for a break**
  - Hands pointing to a clock

- **I need to have a break please.**
  - Hands in a gesture
- **I am anxious**
  - Hands in a gesture
- **I need to relax**
  - Hands in a gesture

- **Break**
  - Blue hand

- **breaktime**
  - Image of a person sitting with a cup
- **help**
  - Hands in a gesture
- **I need a break**
  - Image of a person sitting on a couch

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References


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