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)

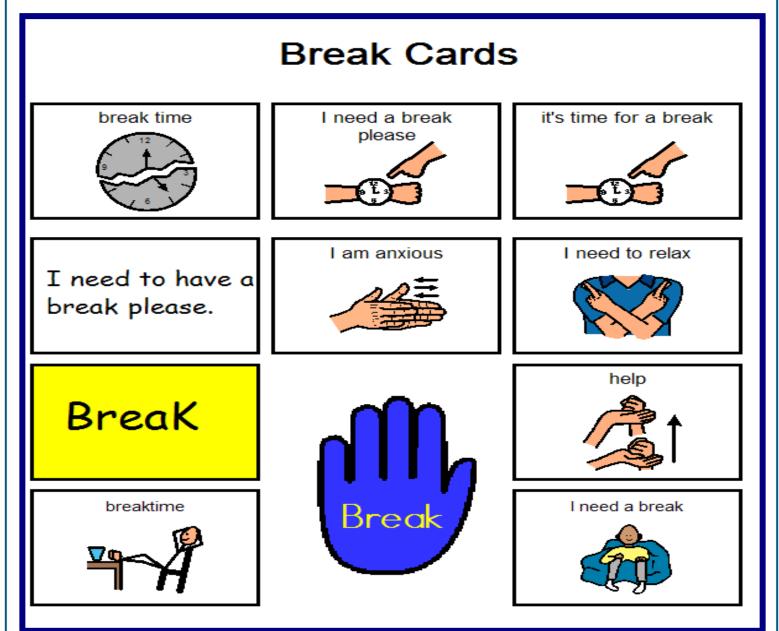## Questions to consider when implementing a break card:
- ✓ What is the goal of the break card?
- ✓ How will your child request a break (e.g., pointing to the card, exchanging the card, etc.)?
- ✓ What is your child's visual recognition level (e.g., objects, photos, pictures, line drawings or text)?
- ✓ 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?

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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? (Hodgdon, 1995)

Sample Break Card:

References:

Hodgdon, L. (1995). *Visual strategies for improving communication practical supports for school and home,* Troy: QuirkRoberts Publishing.

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