

Break Cards

'A visual prompt to remind the autistic person they need a break'

&

'A means with which to communicate one's need for a break'



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There are 8 sensory systems in the body - the auditory (hearing) system, the visual (sight) system, the tactile (touch) system, the olfactory (smell) system, the gustatory (taste) system, proprioceptive (feeling of motion and pressure in the joints) system, the vestibular (balance and spatial awareness) system and the interoceptive (internal feelings) system. Any or all of these systems can be implicated at any moment in time and individuals present either as hypersensitive to sensory stimuli - meaning an individual will feel a sensory sensation with little/less input - or as hypo sensitive to sensory stimuli - meaning an individual will feel sensory sensations only with greater amounts of sensory input. Either way sensory profiles must be accommodated for throughout the day in any environment.

One way to do this is to ensure the individual has access to regular breaks, movement or sensory in nature. A movement break allows the person to take a much-needed break from whatever they are engaged with. It enables them to move about, increase oxygen in the brain and prepare for the next part of their activity.

A sensory break on the other hand, allows the individual to access whatever sensory input they might need to allow them to continue to participate. An example of a sensory movement break might be spending a minute jumping on a trampoline to access proprioceptive input. Another example might be sitting in a quiet room, with ear defenders or noise cancelling headphones on, while reading a book. This break enables the individual access visual input, while allowing for their need to avoid auditory input.

To use –

These visuals can be used as reminders to take a break. They can be positioned strategically in an individual's line of vision and when they lift their heads up, they will see this and can take a break should they feel the need to.

These visuals can be photographed and stored on a phone. They can then be used in conjunction with an alarm, embedded so they come up on screen when the alarm sounds, and the individual is to take a scheduled break.

It is a good idea to provide the autistic child with these visuals, to use as a means with which to communicate when they need to take a break. The child can hold this up for the teacher to see. They can place it in the top

righthand corner of their desk. Or they can walk up to the teacher's desk and show them the card. Remember though, the child must be explicitly taught how to use this visual strategy to successfully engage with it. It is essential that this is taught using clear, concise and concrete instruction. By doing so, the autistic child is set up for success.



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