

Self-Advocacy Cards



I need a quiet break please

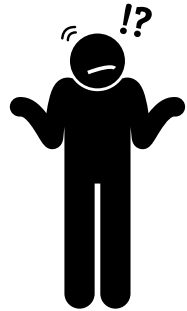
It is too bright

It is too noisy

How to use..

- Begin by using the short scripts first and move through to longer scripts as your child's confidence grows.
- Select an example card or make your own.
- Practice at low-pressure moments. Role-playing at home for example..
- Make it visible - maybe attached to a lanyard.
- Praise the attempts your child makes - it doesn't have to be perfect!

Short Script Ideas



I don't understand

How to use..

Longer script ideas are for older/verbal learners. The following are some ideas for practicing at home, in low pressure moments. Encourage your child to think about some of the things they may need to advocate for themselves such as:

- It may be a sensory break script - 'I'm feeling overwhelmed by the noise/lights. I need a 10-minute break in the quiet room to calm down.'
- Or a support self-advocacy at school type script - 'When I get anxious in group work, I do better with a visual prompt and a short break. Can we agree a signal?'
- Or it may help them explain masking - 'Sometimes I hide how I feel to fit in. If I look okay, I might still need a break.'

You may come up with some of your own ideas that they can add to these.

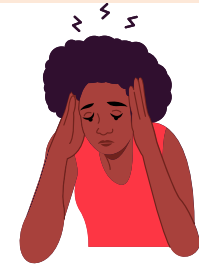
Longer Script Ideas



I'm feeling overwhelmed. Please can I step out for 10 minutes?



This is too loud/bright for me. Please, can I put my headphones on?



When I get anxious, I do better with a visual prompt and a short break. Can we agree a signal?



Sometimes I hide to fit in, but I might look ok, but if I do this.... I am not

How to use..

For children who are non-verbal/low verbal, helping them to use a card system can sometimes be useful.

Attached are cards which you can use as:

- Green = OK
- Yellow = I need a break
- Red = I need help

You can also use a gesture, such as discreet hand sign (e.g. tapping the wrist) as agreed with their adult.

Alternatively, you could use the icon strip opposite so the child can point to what they need.

If you find your child isn't using the icon strip, start at the beginning and use real objects/resources first before relating them to the icons.

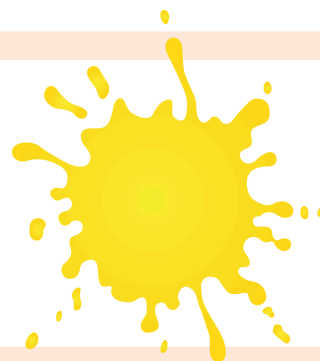
One square has been left blank for you to add your own.

Cut out and use as you need.

Non-verbal/low verbal options



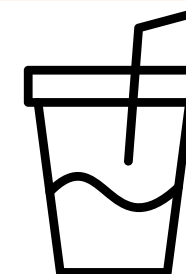
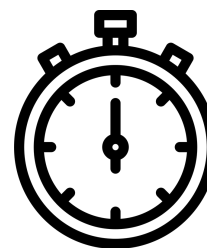
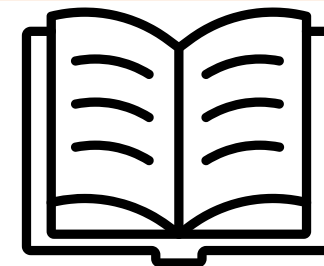
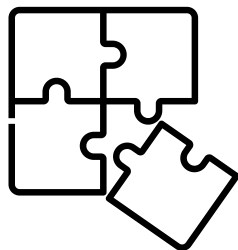
I am OK



I need a break



I need help



How to use..

You may need to continue to be the advocate for your child, even when you are not there.

The following is a printable checklist for a self-advocacy card.

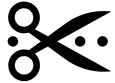
Teacher/Carer Note Templates

Name: Sam

Signal: Yellow card in pencil case

I need: 5 minutes in the quiet corner with my headphones

When I'm back: I'll tell the teacher I am ready



Name:

Signal:

I need:

When I'm back:

If your child will not say it aloud, use the cards or a gesture first; pair with a reward for trying.

If staff forget, provide a laminated teacher note and a one-line email they can copy.

If peers notice: teach a neutral explanation your child is comfortable with (e.g. 'I'm taking a quick brain break.')