COMMUNICATION SAFETY AND ADVOCACY

Communication is key to safety. The ability to use words to say "no," assert body autonomy, set boundaries, and seek predictability is incredibly powerful. These are the words that help young people build their sense of self, feel safe, and advocate for themselves. They give them the power to influence their environment and the actions of others.

But that power depends on how these words are taught and how they're responded to. For these words to really matter, we need to show our learners that they are capable communicators, that their messages are important, and that they are truly "heard" and respected.

Key points to consider when teaching these messages:

1. **Start by modeling without pressure**, especially when the learner is calm and regulated. Use things like "no," "stop," "switch," "break," "pause," and "please leave" cards in everyday interactions. Respond to these messages to help the learner understand and make their environment more predictable.
2. **Model without expectation** during moments of dysregulation. If the learner is expressing one of these messages physically, respect it. Acknowledge what they're communicating, like saying, "You're letting me know you want to stop," and then respond to it. If you have a "stop" card and it's safe to show it without escalating the situation (like continuing the conversation or the activity they want to end), using it might be helpful in that moment.
3. **If a learner independently uses one of these cards** (like reaching for it, handing it to you, throwing it at you, or consistently looking at it), respond appropriately. Don't try to "push through" or ignore their message. These words help create safety when they're responded to predictably.
4. **These messages should always be available** and accessible in some form, no matter the situation.



5. **The BREAK card –** When helping learners communicate that they need a break, we must teach them to recognize when they need one, how to ask for it, and why they're taking it (e.g., to regulate, to meet a need, or to manage their energy). It's also important to teach them how to take a break in a way that will help them re-engage with their day afterward.
6. **The SWITCH card –** This card helps learners recognize when they need to switch activities to stay focused and engaged. It's not about stopping altogether, just changing what they're working on in that moment.
7. **The PAUSE card –** This can be used when an activity needs to be "paused" and the learner wants reassurance that when they return, the activity will be just as they left it.
8. **The Please Leave, NO, and Stop cards –** These are self-explanatory. When partners respect and honour these messages in everyday interactions, it builds trust and supports relationships that feel safe and predictable.
9. **The Support Me card –** This card is used when a learner feels that their needs are not being properly addressed or when they need assistance in managing a situation. It signals that the learner requires support to resolve a problem, whether that's seeking help with a peer interaction or addressing a challenge in the environment. When this card is used, it's important for partners (like teachers or caregivers) to take immediate action and provide the necessary assistance, reinforcing that the learner's voice is heard and valued.
10. T**he I Need Help card –** This card is used when a learner recognises that they are struggling or unable to manage a situation on their own. It signals that the learner requires support to overcome a challenge, whether it's related to a task, a social interaction, or managing emotions. When this card is used, it's crucial that partners respond promptly, offering assistance and ensuring the learner feels supported and empowered to ask for help when needed. Feel free to message me if you have any questions!

A special thank you to **Autism Level UP!** for creating such wonderful, neurodiversity-affirming resources and generously allowing them to be adapted and shared. These communication cards have been redesigned from their original resources, and I warmly encourage you to explore their fantastic work at Autism Level UP!. 💗

Love, Jamie X

Thank you for exploring this ADHD SLT resource!

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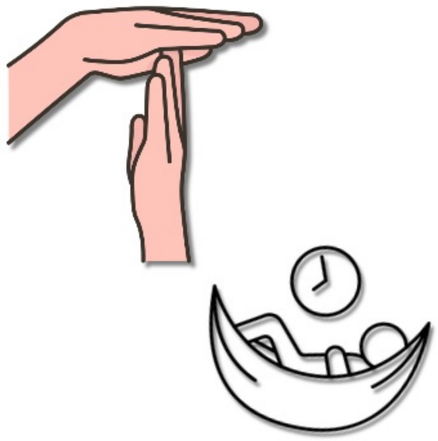
Created by a qualified Speech and Language Therapist with a neurodiversity-affirming approach.

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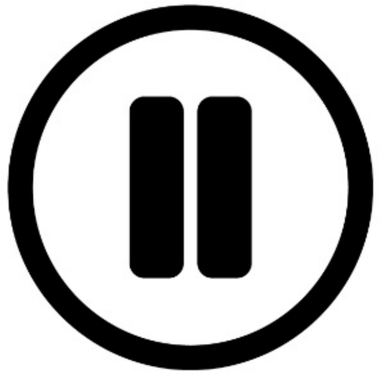
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Supporting communication, autonomy and well-being through creative, flexible activities. Scan the QR Code to explore!





Break



Pause



Switch



No



Stop



Please leave



Support me



I need help