



# ANXIETY, ASD AND THE POWER OF PREVENTATIVE BREAKS

Research has shown that more than **75% of all children with ASD experience INTENSE anxious feelings**. Today education is full of choices, open ended tasks and constant changes. For most students this makes learning interesting BUT for students with ASD, ADHD, ODD, etc. this creates many challenges and one of these is anxiety.

## ANXIETY CAN LOOK LIKE

- Avoidance of new situations
- Preference for sameness
- Rigidity
- Insisting on same rules/routines
- Social withdrawal
- Anger
- Meltdowns
- Repetitive noise, movement or sentence

## THE POWER OF PREVENTATIVE BREAKS

- **Students self-regulating their anxiety** is a VERY important part of their behaviour management programme.
- **A student being able to request a break** before a meltdown is a fantastic strategy.
- **You will need to teach them a range of strategies to calm themselves.** When you are teaching them, you will begin to notice which ones are more effective at calming. You can then write social scripts and use visual cards to help them remember what to do when they feel anxious.

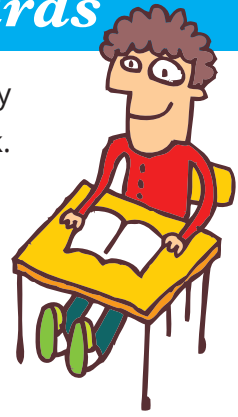


# Why you should use Break Cards

Remember sometimes anxious children with ASD can have difficulty communicating effectively, so this is why we use visual cards to request a break.

You can use these in two ways:

- 1 The student requests the break.
- 2 You give the student the card as you see anxiety rising.



There are a range of strategies you can use for breaks and here are some to get you started:

## How to use Break Cards

- Chewing (allowing to chew gum, chewy tube etc.)
- Quiet area
- Listening to music
- Watching liquid timer
- Humming, rocking
- Sit under a table with blanket over it
- Carry heavy books, box
- Lying under a gym mat, weighted vest etc



### BREAK CARD

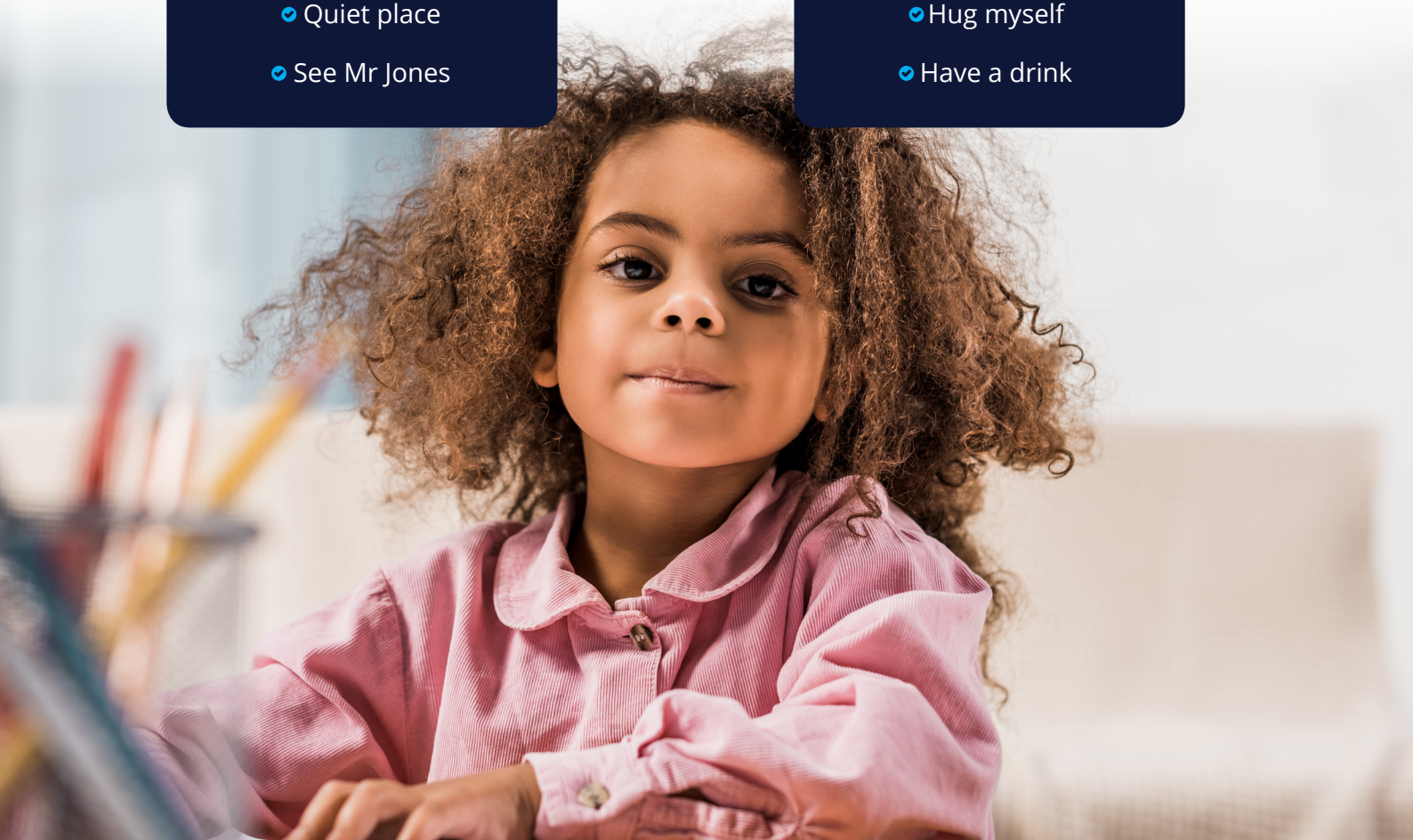
#### *I can ask for*

- ✓ Movement break
- ✓ Wall push ups
- ✓ Quiet place
- ✓ See Mr Jones

### BREAK CARD

#### *I can*

- ✓ Take 10 deep breaths
- ✓ Count to 20
- ✓ Hug myself
- ✓ Have a drink





## PHYSICAL BREAKS

- Mini trampoline
- Rolling on large exercise ball
- Star jumps, jumping
- Push up against wall
- Walk, run



## RELAXATION BREAKS

- Counting
- Breathing
- Music
- Imaginary World (some students escape into an imaginary world, this is particularly common for girls on the spectrum)



## NON-THREATENING WITHDRAWAL

### *Diversion before Meltdown*

- Send on an errand
- Get them to do a job for you

## OTHER STRATEGIES

- Toilet, drink and/or food
- Talking to mentor



## SOLITUDE SUGGESTIONS

- Safe haven
- Special interest time
- Book to read
- Sit away from group. For example: If you are on mat let them sit at a table away from group or if you are doing group work and the room is noisy send their group outside.
- If you are lucky enough to have a small room off your classroom create a space for them to work there.



"Matthew often needed time in his 'little room'. One day when I was in the classroom I observed him actually calling out answers from his room. He was still working just needed his own space."

# NEW EMOTIONAL REGULATION MASTER CLASS

## *Online 3 Hour Course*



For people who have attended or completed online Sue Larkey's or Dr Tony Attwood's courses. Feedback from courses participants said, they wanted more strategies & ideas to teach emotions BEFORE Meltdowns start.

- Recognise emotions in themselves & others
- Strategies to regulate emotions/behaviours
- Activities to do with whole class, small groups & individuals
- Timesavers- Ready Made Worksheets & Activities

**MORE INFORMATION**