

# Family Quick Guide: Creating & Using a Break Space

ASD Nest Support Project, NYU Steinhardt

*Creating a dedicated space to relax and regulate*

## Creating a Break Space

Consider what you will need to make this space comfortable and inviting, as well as functional and safe.

Should be separated, small, space.

- Consider: a corner of the bedroom, next to a bookshelf, behind a curtain, in a tent

Include comfortable seating.

- Consider: a pillow, blanket, bean bag chair, etc.

Consider noise—ideally this is a quiet location.

- Consider: white noise, soft music, earplugs or headphones

Consider lighting—ideally natural lighting.

- Consider: dim lights, a lamp, flashlight

Provide tools to help children regulate.

- Consider: a variety of fidgets, drawing materials, books, [mindfulness strategies](#)

Make it their own.

- Consider: add loveys, comfort items, interest items



## Introducing the Break Space

Explain the purpose of the break area.

- “This is our break space. It is always available, and it is great to use when you feel worried, frustrated, or if your heart starts racing.”

Review the rules of the break area.

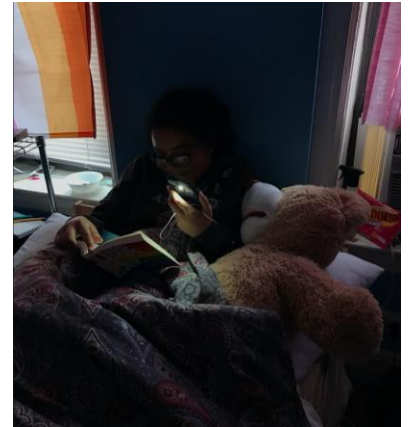
- Ex. “This is not a play space or a learning space. It is for you to use alone for four minutes at a time to get your body and your mind ready for learning again.”

Explain clearly how your child should access the break area.

- Ex. “When you need a break, put your pointer finger in the air to let me know.”

Model how to use the break area.

- Have your child practice and explore the fidgets and other materials.



## Using the Break Space

This is *not* a punishment location.

- It is not a time-out corner! Your child should not be sent to the break space. The purpose of the break area is for children to regulate in a safe and semi-private space.


Provide gentle reminders when it seems like a time your child would benefit from a break.

- The break space can be used anytime someone is feeling overwhelmed, frustrated, dysregulated, unfocused, etc.

Breaks can be proactive—consider building them into your [daily schedule](#).

- This space should be available for access all day long.





This is intended to be non-contingent—breaks don't have to be “earned.”

- When your child requests a break consider allowing them to go to the space.

Don't forget about yourself...

*Make a space of your own to take a break when you need one!*

