

Power Cards

A. Description and Purpose:

A brief scenario is written in the first person describing how the individual's special interest/passion has encountered and solved a problem. Then, a Power Card (Gagnon, 2001) is created that summarizes the strategy that the individual can use and contains a picture of the special interest. The individual carries this card with them as a reminder for when similar situations come up.

Using the "hero" or the special interest of the individual serves several purposes: the card itself ends up serving as a motivator, the card is a non-threatening way to convey information, and the card capitalizes on the individual's relationship with their interest.

Power Cards are useful in the following situations:

- When the individual lacks understanding of routines, hidden curriculum items, or the perspective of others.
- When the individual does not understand that they have choices.
- When the individual is having difficulty understanding a cause/effect relationship.
- When the individual needs reminders to follow a routine or protocol.
- When the individual engages in the challenging behavior frequently (not just one time).

B. Equipment Needed:

The scenarios can either be hand written or typed up and printed off the computer. The pictures for the Power Cards can be hand drawn (by author or individual), or more commonly, real photos or downloaded pictures are used.

C. Setting it Up:

1. Identify the problem behavior or situation.

Find out *where* the situation occurs, *who* is involved, *how* long it lasts, *how* it begins and ends, *what* occurs, and *why*. In addition, information about the learning style, reading ability, attention span, and interests of the individual is collected. This information is gathered by direct observation and interviewing those involved with the individual: parents, professionals, and if possible, the individual themselves.

2. Identify the individual's passions or special interests.
3. Collect baseline data has to how often and for how long the behavior is occurring.
4. Write the scenario.
 - Write the scenario with the individual individual's skill levels in mind.
 - The scenario is written in the first person.
 - The scenario is written in either the present or future tense.
 - The scenario should include a paragraph relating to the "hero" or special interest. It can start with facts about the "hero". Then it should go into how the "hero" encountered the same problem (or type of problem). Next, the scenario will state the way(s) that the "hero" handled the situation. Lastly, the scenario will express how the "hero" would like the individual to handle the situation.
5. Design the Power Card.
 - Include a picture of the "hero".

- Include a list of the possible solutions to the problem, as outlined in the scenario.

D. Implementation:

1. Introduce the scenario and Power Card to the individual.
 - Choose a time to introduce the scenario and Power Card that is a low-stress time for the individual. Introduce them in a setting that is comfortable and free from other distractions.
 - Read the scenario with the individual. The initial read-through should be followed by a discussion.
 - After the initial read-through, the individual should be encouraged to read the Power Card independently.
 - The individual should also be encouraged to share the card with other important people in their lives.
2. How often the Power Card is reviewed is based upon common sense and the individual’s needs.
3. Based on individual’s input and performance, fade reading of the scenario while still keeping the Power Card.
4. Based on individual input and performance, fade the use of Power Card. The individual should be empowered to decide if and when to fade the use of the card.

E. Evaluation:

Take follow-up data at regular intervals after implementation of the Power Card to see if it has been effective in behavior change. Make modifications to the card if necessary (these modifications could be with or without the individual’s input).

F. Teaching Tips:

- Using review of a Power Card or scenario as a punitive consequence for misbehavior is inappropriate and will undermine the goal of the card.
- Be careful to introduce and review the scenario and Power Card with the individual when the individual is in a calm, relaxed state.

G. Resources:

- Gagnon, E. (2001) Power Cards: Using Special Interests to Motivate Children and Youth with Asperger Syndrome and Autism. Autism Asperger Publishing Co.: Shawnee Mission, Kansas.

Sample Scenario:	Sample Card:
<p style="text-align: center;">What A Jedi Does When They Are Upset</p> <p>Jedi Knights are the defenders of peace and justice in the galaxy. Yoda, Obi-Wan, and Mace Windu are all Jedi Masters. These Masters know that it is important to stay focused on their job of maintaining peace. However, there are times when even Jedi Masters get upset and feel like hitting or pinching someone. The Masters know that these behaviors are not OK for them to do.</p> <p>The Jedi Masters want you to know how important it is to make OK choices when you are becoming upset. The next time you begin to feel upset, try doing one of the things that the Jedi Masters would like you to do:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Close you eyes and take a deep breath. 2. Slowly and quietly count to 10. 3. Ask an adult for a break. 	<p>Close you eyes and take a deep breath.</p> <p>Slowly and quietly count to 10.</p> <p>Ask an adult for a break.</p> 