

1. Have a predetermined and consistent designated area for the child to “take a break” so that they can remove themselves from the stressful situation. The parent and child can work together to identify a designated area.
2. Have a predetermined amount of time for which the child will take a break.
3. Parents can also have a predetermined space where they go to “take a break” and may also choose to take a break if they are having big emotions in response to the child’s behavior.
4. Make sure the child knows what behaviors lead to taking a break (for example, hitting a sibling).
5. Acknowledge the child’s emotions and calmly recommend that they take a break. If the child is young, it might be helpful for parents to accompany their child to the designated area. It is important for parents to stay calm and neutral when directing their child to take a break.
6. Effectively directing a child to take a break might sound something like, “I can see that you are really mad right now. It is okay to be mad. But we don’t hit when we are mad. When you feel mad, it is a good time to take a break so you can have some space to feel your feelings. How about taking a break in your relaxation corner for 15 minutes? I will also take a break in my relaxation space and then we can check in. I will set a timer, so we know when it has been 5 minutes.”
7. [After taking a break] Validate child emotions and explore more adaptive ways to manage the emotion. For example, “I understand that you were mad because you couldn’t play the game you wanted. I am sorry about that. Next time you are mad, what is something you can do instead of hitting your sister?”
8. It is important to use “take a break” the same way every time.