

“I AM OVERLOADED AND CANNOT EXPLAIN RIGHT NOW” CARD SET

I AM OVERLOADED AND CANNOT EXPLAIN RIGHT NOW

I am currently overloaded and unable to fully explain what is happening.

My ability to speak, process information, regulate emotions, or respond appropriately may be temporarily impaired.

I am attempting to use my accommodations safely and responsibly.

Right now I may need:

- ☐ quiet
- ☐ time
- ☐ reduced demands
- ☐ fewer questions
- ☐ lower noise
- ☐ a break
- ☐ movement
- ☐ water
- ☐ sensory support
- ☐ written communication
- ☐ AAC access

I may be able to explain later once regulated.

Student Name:

Preferred Regulation Supports:

Preferred Communication Method:

- ☐ speaking
- ☐ writing
- ☐ AAC
- ☐ typing
- ☐ gestures

Support Contact:

IEP/504 Coordinator:

Authorized Signature:

PLEASE STOP ASKING QUESTIONS

Too many questions are making it harder for me to regulate.

Right now I need:

- ☐ fewer words
- ☐ slower instructions
- ☐ silence
- ☐ space
- ☐ time to process

I am not refusing to cooperate.

My nervous system is overloaded.

Student Name:

Preferred Regulation Supports:

Preferred Communication Method:

- ☐ speaking
- ☐ writing
- ☐ AAC
- ☐ typing
- ☐ gestures

Support Contact:

IEP/504 Coordinator:

Authorized Signature:

I NEED A REGULATION BREAK

I need to leave briefly to regulate before this escalates further.

I am trying to:

- prevent shutdown
- prevent meltdown
- stay safe
- remain able to participate later

Please allow me to use my accommodations appropriately.

Destination:

Expected Return:

Student Name:

Preferred Regulation Supports:

Preferred Communication Method:

- ☐ speaking
- ☐ writing
- ☐ AAC
- ☐ typing
- ☐ gestures

Support Contact:

IEP/504 Coordinator:

Authorized Signature:

MY BRAIN IS TEMPORARILY OFFLINE

This one is slightly gentler/more human while still school-safe.

My brain is temporarily overloaded.

Right now I may struggle with:

- speaking
- processing directions
- emotional regulation
- eye contact
- remembering information
- answering questions
- making decisions

This is temporary.

Reducing pressure helps me recover faster.

Student Name:

Preferred Regulation Supports:

Preferred Communication Method:

- ☐ speaking
- ☐ writing
- ☐ AAC
- ☐ typing
- ☐ gestures

Support Contact:

IEP/504 Coordinator:

Authorized Signature:

I AM TRYING VERY HARD

I am trying to stay regulated and participate safely.

Even if I look:

- quiet
- upset
- distant
- frozen
- frustrated
- nonresponsive

I am still trying.

Please respond with calm, clear support instead of punishment or confrontation.

Student Name:

Preferred Regulation Supports:

Preferred Communication Method:

- ☐ speaking
- ☐ writing
- ☐ AAC
- ☐ typing
- ☐ gestures

Support Contact:

IEP/504 Coordinator:

Authorized Signature:

WRITING IS EASIER RIGHT NOW

Talking is difficult right now.

Please allow me to:

- ☐ write
- ☐ type
- ☐ point
- ☐ use AAC
- ☐ respond later

Communication still counts even when it is nonverbal.

Student Name:

Preferred Regulation Supports:

Preferred Communication Method:

- ☐ speaking
- ☐ writing
- ☐ AAC
- ☐ typing
- ☐ gestures

Support Contact:

IEP/504 Coordinator:

Authorized Signature:

PLEASE LOWER THE DEMAND LEVEL

My nervous system is overloaded.

High-pressure interaction may increase distress.

Helpful right now:

- ☐ one step at a time
 - ☐ written instructions
 - ☐ calm tone
 - ☐ fewer people talking
 - ☐ predictable expectations
 - ☐ reduced sensory input
-
-
-

Student Name:

Preferred Regulation Supports:

Preferred Communication Method:

- ☐ speaking
- ☐ writing
- ☐ AAC
- ☐ typing
- ☐ gestures

Support Contact:

IEP/504 Coordinator:

Authorized Signature:

I NEED A SAFE ADULT

I need support from a trusted adult before continuing this interaction.

Preferred staff member(s):

I regulate more effectively with familiar support people.

Student Name:

Preferred Regulation Supports:

Preferred Communication Method:

☐ speaking

☐ writing

☐ AAC

☐ typing

☐ gestures

Support Contact:

IEP/504 Coordinator:

Authorized Signature:

SHUTDOWN WARNING

I am close to shutting down.

Signs may include:

- difficulty speaking
- freezing
- staring
- delayed responses
- inability to answer questions
- emotional numbness
- exhaustion
- confusion

Reducing stimulation and demands now may prevent further escalation.

Student Name:

Preferred Regulation Supports:

Preferred Communication Method:

- ☐ speaking
- ☐ writing
- ☐ AAC
- ☐ typing
- ☐ gestures

Support Contact:

IEP/504 Coordinator:

Authorized Signature:

PLEASE DO NOT TOUCH ME

Physical contact may increase distress while overloaded.

Please avoid:

- grabbing
- tapping
- blocking movement
- crowding my space
- physically redirecting me

Space helps me regulate safely.

Student Name:

Preferred Regulation Supports:

Preferred Communication Method:

- ☐ speaking
- ☐ writing
- ☐ AAC
- ☐ typing
- ☐ gestures

Support Contact:

IEP/504 Coordinator:

Authorized Signature:

I NEED TIME BEFORE TALKING ABOUT THIS

I cannot process this conversation effectively right now.

I may need:

- ☐ time
- ☐ regulation first
- ☐ written communication
- ☐ support staff present
- ☐ a quieter environment

I am more able to problem solve once regulated.

Student Name:

Preferred Regulation Supports:

Preferred Communication Method:

- ☐ speaking
- ☐ writing
- ☐ AAC
- ☐ typing
- ☐ gestures

Support Contact:

IEP/504 Coordinator:

Authorized Signature:

RED CARD, HIGH DISTRESS

This should visually stand out.

I am in severe distress and may not be able to communicate safely.

Please:

- ☐ reduce stimulation
- ☐ stop asking questions
- ☐ allow silence
- ☐ contact support staff
- ☐ allow my accommodations
- ☐ help me reach a safe space

Escalation may worsen the situation.

Student Name:

Preferred Regulation Supports:

Preferred Communication Method:

- ☐ speaking
- ☐ writing
- ☐ AAC
- ☐ typing
- ☐ gestures

Support Contact:

IEP/504 Coordinator:

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