

## POWERCARDS

### What?

Visual approach that:

- teaches an appropriate behaviour or social skill, (e.g. how to behave in assembly, personal hygiene, losing games, how to cope with an upcoming situation that you anticipate the child will find challenging)
- helps a child to make sense of social situations, routines, the meaning of language and the unwritten social rules (Gagnon, 2001)
- uses a child's special interest or hero. The 'hero' will be having the same problem as the child, and the Power Card explains how the hero handles it, to set an example for the child
- It has two parts: a **personalized script/explanation** about the situation and a Power Card that **summarises the main 'rules'**.

### How?

The Script:

#### Who/what is your child's special interest/hero?

Identify the child's special interest or hero. This will serve as a motivator that the child is more likely to tune into, want to be like and also do what the 'hero' suggests.

#### What's the problem or situation?

Give a short introduction focussing on the child's hero and the problem behaviour or situation (with pictures to support the story), eg. ***Mario always forgets to wash his hands after going to the toilet. Mario's mum really wants him to remember to do this. He needs to have clean hands for driving his racing car.***

#### What's the goal?

Identify the problem that the child is having, e.g. ***not washing hands after using the toilet*** therefore the goal is: ***to wash his hands after using the toilet***

#### How will the character solve the problem?

Give a brief scenario about the child's hero attempting a solution to the problem, eg ***Mario uses the poster on the bathroom wall to remind him to wash his hands every time he goes to the toilet.***

Give a reason for why the hero uses a positive behaviour, eg ***Mario knows that his hands have germs on them after he's been to the toilet. He knows that washing his hands keeps them clean, and keeps him healthy.***

#### What are going to be the two/three things for your child to remember to do?

Give a brief three to five step strategy outlining the hero's problem solving method, including a description of how the hero experiences success with the strategy, eg ***1. Mario always looks at the poster in the bathroom to remind him to wash his hands. 2. Mario washes his hands so that they're clean for driving his racing car. 3. Mario feels really good because he's remembering to stay healthy.***

- Add a note of encouragement from the hero/about the hero for the child to try the new behaviour, eg *'Mario really wants you to remember to wash your hands too. If you do wash your hands after you've been to the toilet, you'll be just like Mario'*.

### The Power Card:

- A Power Card is then written on a small card that summarises the plan based on the Power Card script and can be easily carried around.

1. **Mario always looks at the poster in the bathroom to remind him to wash his hands.**
2. **Mario washes his hands so that they're clean for driving his racing car.**
3. **Mario feels really good because he's remembering to stay healthy.**



### Introducing the Power Card:

- Before developing the Power Card, talk to the child about how the Power Card will work, e.g. *"you know that sometimes it's hard to remember to wash our hands after using the toilet? Well I've heard that Mario had the same problem but he's learnt a really clever way to help him to remember. Shall we find out?"*
- Read the Power Card through together
- Talk about the Power Card to check the child understands the content and link it to their own behaviour/situation to ensure the Power Card is meaningful
- Encourage the child to share the Power Card to other significant adults and peers so that everyone is aware of the 'problem', the goal and the strategies.
- Encourage the child to take ownership of the Power Card- if they can read, prompt them to read it to the significant adults and peers.
- If the child feels they have ownership over the card and if they are motivated to overcome the problem they could decide how long they need to use the Power Card for and therefore when they no longer need it.



### When?

- Choose a time when the child is calm and engaged to introduce and read the power card through for the first time.
- Read the full Power Card before the activity that the child finds difficult.
- Use the small Power Card as a visual prompt to remind the child of the strategies to use at the time of the activity.
- Revisit the full Power Card as much as you feel is necessary for the child to remember the strategies and to reinforce the motivation, i.e. this could be every time the activity/situation occurs, each night before bedtime etc.

### Tips

- Consider the child's comprehension skills, use vocabulary that they will understand, ensure that sentences aren't too complex. If they cannot understand spoken language at sentence level then this strategy may not be appropriate
- Monitor the effect of the Power Card; if nothing is changing after 2 weeks, consider changing one element of the Power Card, i.e. when it is read or the content of the scenario
- Consider involving the child in making the Power Card to increase motivation- they may enjoy finding pictures to go on the card

## Planning your power card

Who/what is your child's special interest/hero?

What's the problem or situation?

What's the goal?

How will the character solve the problem?

What are going to be the two/three things for your child to remember to do?



Examples:

### **Firefighters Can Dress Quickly**

Firefighters receive calls to save people every day. When they receive a call they have to act very fast. Firefighters like to dress very quickly so they can get to their important jobs. Firefighters didn't always know how to dress quickly but they came up with a plan. Now they can dress very quickly because they follow the '1-5 Go' Plan. Firefighters want children to try this plan when they get dressed at school. If you have trouble getting dressed to go outside at school you can try it too just like firefighters.

Here's how you can try the firefighters' "1-5 Go" Plan at school:

1. Indoor shoes off
2. Outdoor shoes on
3. Coat on
4. Hat on
5. GO!



#### **Firefighters' "1-5 Go" Plan:**

1. Indoor shoes off
2. Outdoor shoes on
3. Coat on
4. Hat on



### **Darth Vader Wears Clothes**

Darth Vader has to wear special armour, these are his clothes. He didn't like wearing these clothes because they felt uncomfortable. Darth Vader tried not to wear his clothes but he realised he couldn't do very much without them. Now Darth Vader knows that wearing his clothes protects him, they make him strong and help him to survive in lots of places. Darth Vader wants children to get dressed quickly so that they wear clothes and be strong too.

Darth Vader says,

1. Wear your school uniform
2. Get dressed into your school uniform quickly
3. Feel strong in your school uniform, just like Darth Vader in his special armour!

Darth Vader says Well Done!!

**Remember, Darth Vader says,**

- 1. Wear your school uniform**
- 2. Get dressed into your school uniform quickly**
- 3. Feel strong in your school uniform, just like Darth Vader in his special armour!**

**Darth Vader says Well Done!!**

