

# Ako – take a reciprocal learning approach

As each autistic student is different, some approaches will work better than others. Explore different approaches with the student and regularly reflect with them on what's working well. Refine as needed.

**Help students develop a strong sense of identity and be knowledgeable about their needs and abilities:**

- Explore flexible options to allow students to learn in ways that work for them.
- Validate, respect and respond to student concerns and emotions.
- Help students give language to what they are feeling using verbal and visual tools.
- Work together to identify challenges, solve problems and develop systems for asking for help and finding a safe place or person.
- Create opportunities for students to take the lead using their strengths and interests.
- Develop cues that can be used by ākongā, peers or kaiako to signal such things as the need to refocus or take a break from a task or situation.

**Work together to develop effective feedback systems:**

- Avoid abstract or subtle rewards such as social approval and facial expressions that students are not attuned to.
- Develop clear written and visual success criteria.
- Use concrete and precise communication to avoid misunderstandings.
- Consider short term contracts to achieve specific learning goals and task expectations.

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