

# Manage difficult times

There will be times when ākonga feel overwhelmed. Guide ākonga through these challenging situations, while being calm and confident.

**Notice the signs that ākonga are becoming anxious. For example tapping, rocking and fidgeting.**

- Remind them of any self-management and relaxation strategies they know.
- Remove unnecessary demands and/or redirect the student to another activity.
- Connect with ākonga using verbal and non-verbal techniques.

**Slow down and communicate calmly and simply**

- Maintain a low, calm tone of voice.
- Use supportive phrases such as “I’m here to help. When you are ready, we can...”.
- Actively listen, for example nod and repeat key phrases.
- Validate student emotions “I can see you are feeling frustrated.”

**Be mindful of your body language**

- Approach ākonga from the side, rather than front on, this is less confronting.
- Maintain a calm presence and provide reassurance.
- Keep an appropriate distance, close enough to let ākonga know you’re there, but making sure they don’t feel trapped.
- Use appropriate eye contact, direct eye contact can be challenging and intimidating.

**Create a safe space and get support**

- Create space and use silence and non-action as an opportunity for ākonga to gather their thoughts. Pause, observe and prepare for any further action that may be needed.
- Ask other ākonga to move away or leave the classroom if necessary. Be aware of how this may impact others.
- Use your school’s agreed process for getting support.

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