

Manage difficult times

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

Notice the signs that ākongā are becoming anxious, for example tapping, rocking and fidgeting

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

Slow down and communicate calmly and simply

- Maintain a low, calm tone of voice.
- Communicate simple, concise messages and limit the amount of words used.
- 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 ākongā 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 ākongā 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 ākongā to gather their thoughts. Pause, observe and prepare for any further action that may be needed.
- Ask other ākongā to move away or leave the classroom if necessary. Be aware how this may impact others.
- Use your school’s agreed process for getting support.

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