

Design options for emotional capacity

A suggestion for implementing the strategy 'Design multiple means of Engagement' from the Guide: [Universal Design for Learning](#)

Includes:

Why this matters

Recognise expectations, beliefs, and motivations

Develop awareness of self and others

Promote individual and collective reflection

Cultivate empathy and restorative practices

Useful resources

Inclusive Education

From

Guide: [Universal Design for Learning](#)

Strategy: [Design multiple means of Engagement](#)

Suggestion: [Design options for emotional capacity](#)

Date

05 July 2026

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inclusive.tki.org.nz/guides/universal-design-for-learning/design-options-for-emotional-capacity

Why this matters

Learners may learn to manage themselves and their emotions on their own, by trial and error or by observing others.

Many learners can benefit from more explicit supports ([CAST, 2024](#)).

[Design options for emotional capacity](#) focuses on how we support and extend emotional capacity while honouring variability among learners.

The guideline prompts us to consider how we:

- [recognise expectations, beliefs, and motivations](#)
- [develop awareness of self and others](#)
- [promote individual and collective reflection](#)
- [cultivate empathy and restorative practices](#).

The guideline also reminds us to consider:

- How will these options support learners in reaching their goals?
- Could any of these options create barriers or unnecessary challenges?
- Will all learners have fair and equal access to high-quality choices?
- How do these options reflect and respond to learner variability?

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Recognise expectations, beliefs, and motivations



Recognise expectations, beliefs, and motivations

Engagement

-  Model different ways to set personally appropriate goals that take into account both strengths and areas to work on.
-  Support activities that encourage self-reflection and appreciation of one's strengths in order to build confidence.
-  Consider how bias may create barriers, such as low expectations or expecting every learner to demonstrate engagement in the same way.

Adapted with permission: UDL Guidelines 3.0, CAST (2024)

Source:

[UDL Guidelines 3.0, CAST \(2024\)](#)

<https://udlguidelines.cast.org/engagement/emotional-capacity/expectations-beliefs-motivations/>

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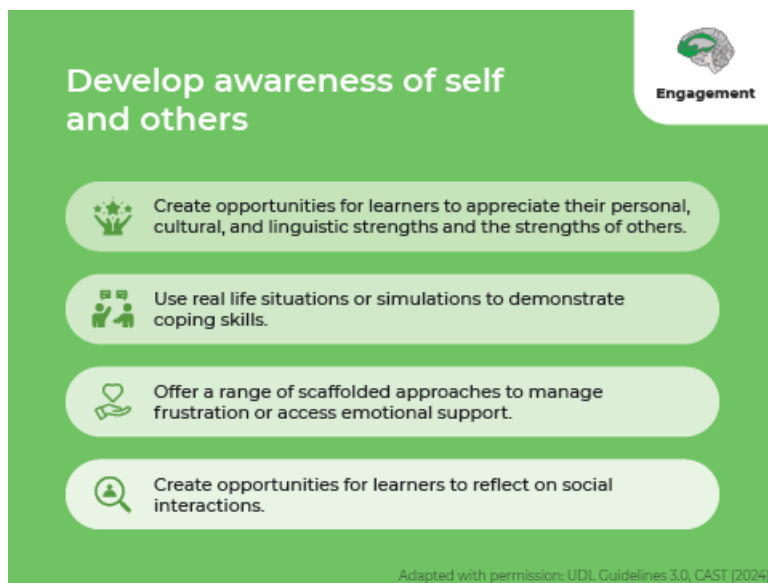
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Develop awareness of self and others



Source:

[UDL Guidelines 3.0, CAST \(2024\)](#)

<https://udlguidelines.cast.org/engagement/emotional-capacity/awareness/>

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Promote individual and collective reflection

Offer a range of individual and group assessment techniques.

Encourage learners to identify and choose ones that are optimal:

- ✓ Use charts, rubrics and visual aids to help learners track, display, and reflect on their progress.
- ✓ Design activities that provide feedback and offer scaffolds like charts, templates, or feedback displays to help learners reflect on progress.
- ✓ Promote and model strength-based language (for example, “How can I improve on the areas I find difficult?” rather than “I am not good at drawing”).
- ✓ Support opportunities for collective reflection supported by wānanga, talanoa, or [art-based activities](#).

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Cultivate empathy and restorative practices

Empathy plays a vital role in collaboratively creating fair and inclusive learning environments.

It also plays a crucial role in restorative practices.

Consider building some of the options into your learning programme:

- Activities that invite listening to and considering perspectives other than one's own.
- Content that authentically represents a diversity of lived experiences.
- Co-create and facilitate classroom agreements.
- Facilitate restorative circles or other [restorative practices](#).

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Useful resources



Design options for emotional capacity (UDL Guideline)

This UDL guideline invites educators to consider how to support learners to recognise and manage emotions and behaviours, and empathise with others.

As learners will vary in their emotional capacity, offering a range of support options is recommended.

This guideline supports the UDL Engagement principle.

Publisher: CAST (2024)

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