

A FEW TIPS FOR RESPONDING WITH EMPATHY TO A STUDENT EXPERIENCING ANXIETY



AVCRR (ACKNOWLEDGE-VALIDATE-CONTAIN-REFLECT-RETURN)

Here is a helpful response flow for defusing and regulating emotions.

- **Acknowledge the emotion:** "You're afraid. Do you feel that you can't do it? Are you afraid of looking ridiculous in front of the others?" The goal is to see what emotion your student is feeling, to identify it, and to state it. When you're not sure of the emotion you perceive, ask them questions about what they're feeling.
- **Validate:** "You have the right to be afraid." "You're right. It is stressful." At this point, you want to tell the student that they have the right to experience all their emotions (but not all behaviours!), that you understand their emotion because you might feel the same way in their place. Already, at this point, the student should start to feel some relief.
- **Contain:** When containing an emotion, it's important to keep your cool despite the intensity of the situation in order to remain fully present to what's happening. Don't hesitate to put limits on behaviour. Avoid fuelling anger with words, reprimands, blaming, threats, etc.
- **Reflect:** When you are in the process of containing the emotion or later in the day have triggered the student's emotion. Try to determine whether a need or want is driving the emotion, or whether other emotions are involved.
- **Return:** Lastly, it's important to talk about what happened with the student
"Were you anxious because you felt that I hadn't been clear enough?
Or because you thought you didn't have enough time?"



THESE RESPONSE BEHAVIOURS ARE NOT INNATE and require some practice. Taking time with your student to reflect on an emotional situation or event can help improve their attitudes in future situations.

Taken from *Enfants stressés ! Tout ce qu'il faut savoir pour aider votre enfant à grandir sereinement*, Nathalie Parent, Éditions Michel Lafon Canada.