

Emotional validation

When a student is experiencing emotions, it's important to **recognize that the situation they are experiencing is important or difficult** for them. Offering help and listening, even if the adult does not share the same perception of the gravity of the situation, **allows the student to feel heard, understood and respected**. Conversely, trying to minimize emotional intensity and offering advice and solutions before having validated the emotion being felt can create a feeling of incompetence in the student.

Emotional validation from someone they trust fosters:

- emotional regulation
- the ability to resolve difficult situations

Ways of validating a student's emotions include:

- Actively listening by asking open-ended questions, taking an interest and rephrasing the student's words to ensure an understanding of the situation, and reflecting the emotions expressed by the student without judgment.
 - Examples of open-ended questions:
How do you feel? / What happened? / What do you think of the situation?
 - Examples of rephrasing: If I understand correctly, you're angry / In other words, you feel lonely.
 - Examples of reflections: Your eyes look sad / Is it possible that you find the situation unfair?

Leaving room for silence to observe and analyze the student's behaviours can be helpful to better understand what they are experiencing.

Validation allows the student to take notice of the attention that they are given and provides them with the opportunity to express themselves more easily, without fear of judgment. Validation also makes it possible to differentiate the emotion from the behaviour. In a situation in which the student is angry and throws objects, we can validate the anger they are feeling without validating the behaviour. Once they have calmed down, we can normalize the emotion the student experienced and suggest alternative solutions adapted to the context for managing the emotion the next time it arises.

Here are some other examples of sentences to validate the emotions felt by the student:

- "It's normal to be disappointed. Do you want to talk about it?"
- "I see that you are angry. Would you like a little time to yourself?"
- "I feel like you're experiencing some difficult emotions right now (silence)."
- "I understand that it's upsetting to wait in line."

Source

Lafond, C. and D'Auteuil, S. *Vivre avec un proche impulsif, intense, instable*. Bayard Canada, 2006.

