

Today's session was about creating Safe Spaces where students and the volunteers can work effectively together.

We spoke about issues that can make it challenging to be a volunteer in a school such as:

- Being expected to work at the back of a noisy classroom
- Being in a space where the student is easily distracted by other people walking by or wanting to overlook what the student is doing
- The requirement from SVPACT to be in line of sight of a member of staff
- Being expected to work with more than one child at a time
- The neurodiversity of children

We also spoke about the need for the child to feel safe and confident when they are working with us. They need to understand that our purpose is to listen to them and support and encourage them to become happy, independent learners.

We watched a great Youtube video about the Brain called: **Dr Daniel Siegel presenting a Hand Model of the Brain**

You can find it here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gm9CIJ74Oxw>

This simple model enables adults and children to understand what 'Flipping the lid' means. The fingers curved over the top represent the cortex of the brain, where all the thinking happens. This part of the brain may not be able to deal with all the conflicting emotions that the child is feeling, so the child feels overwhelmed. They may 'lose it' and flip their lid.

How should you react?

Stay calm, stay relaxed. Children pick up on the emotions of the people that they are with. If you start to feel anxious, cross, worried. They will pick up on these emotions and this will add to the mix.

The SET Strategy was discussed.

Support - I really want to help you with this

Empathy – It seems like you find this really hard at the moment

Truth – Our time together is limited so we need to work together to make the most of it.

As mentors working with children we need to have well developed emotional regulation of ourselves.

Emotional regulation is a practice of cultivating a sacred buffer of time between feeling the emotion and your reaction to that emotion. For example, pausing to collect your thoughts before you respond.

It can also mean waiting until you're in a supportive setting to process tough feelings.

Emotional regulation is an important tool for mental well-being in general and to protect and establish healthy relationships.

When this skill is honed, it can help you:

- feel balanced and in control of your emotional reaction
- stay calm during challenging situations
- better manage stress
- protect important connections
- [actively listen](#) to the needs of others
- express your needs in constructive ways
- remain professional in work situations
- not take things personally

BEYOND BLUE is a useful resource when trying to deal with anxious children. The following information comes from their website:

Ten Strategies to support anxious children

The best thing you can do for your child is to help them learn how to cope with anxiety

10 strategies to try

1. Start by slowing down

2. Make time to worry

3. Climb that ladder

4. Encourage positive thinking

5. Have a go

6. Model helpful coping

7. Help your child take charge

8. Be upfront about scary stuff

9. Be BRAVE

10. And finally, check your own behaviour

You can read the complete text here: <https://healthyfamilies.beyondblue.org.au/age-6-12/mental-health-conditions-in-children/anxiety/strategies-to-support-anxious-children>

Remember, the goal for most kids isn't to eliminate anxiety completely. It's really about giving them the skills to manage anxiety so it doesn't get in the way of enjoying life.



Draw or Color



Use a Breathing Board



Try Wave Breathing



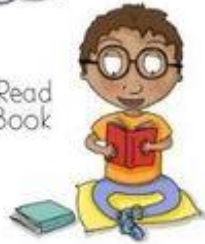
Tell Myself a Positive Affirmation or Mantra.



Think of 3 Things I Am Grateful For



Read a Book



Look at Feel-Good Pictures



Stretch or Do Yoga



Ask Permission to Quietly Exercise for a Minute or Two



Ask a for Help

When I Feel Mad, Sad, Worried or Unfocused at School I Can...



Build Something or Do a Puzzle



Treat Myself with Kindness and Just Breathe



Help Someone or Ask to Do a Classroom Chore



Give Myself or a Stuffed Animal a Hug



Journal or Write a Letter



Squeeze Then Relax My Muscles



Get a Drink of Water



Try 5 Finger Breathing

Use a Tool from the Calm Box



Push Against the Wall and Then Relax



10 WAYS

to Calm Down



1. Breathe in and out slowly 10 times.

2. Squeeze a stress ball.

3. Take a break and get a drink of water.

4. Talk to a grown-up.

5. Hug someone.

6. Draw a picture about it.

7. Write about your feelings.

8. Do some stretches.

9. Think of something happy.

10. Read a magazine or book.



