



I am teaching a young person with attachment difficulties. What do I do?

These suggestions are not intended to be a substitute for a more thorough process of assessing a young person's needs and level of additional support.

- **Check-in time** - Think about getting everyone else settled and working so that you can give extra attention to the child who walks into your classroom and isn't ready to learn.
- **Attune to the child** - Your sensitivity to even small changes in behaviour will help the young person learn that you are competent and caring. For example, try to notice how he looks when he feels he has failed or when he is anxious.
- **Don't overwhelm the young person with your interest or concern** - Use some aspect of the curriculum or task to show interest in a young person.
- **Be mindful** – Be mindful of their difficulty with activities that require executive functioning, e.g. following multiple instructions, analyzing large amounts of information.
- **Team work** - Some children have teaching assistants. Think of that support person as being part of a team. You still need to get to know the young person and guide and monitor their learning.
- **Emotional bodyguard** - Subject matter can make a young person feel vulnerable. Themes such as family and loss can stir up strong feelings. It may be difficult to completely avoid these triggers, this makes it even more important that you learn to attune to the child so you can adapt material and intervene early.
- **Homework** - Don't sacrifice high aspirations for a young person but remember that their situation at home might make homework difficult to complete.
- **Shame less** - Boundaries are important but try not to publicly sanction a child; a child who is already struggling with a sense of worthlessness may react negatively.
- **Discipline with empathy** - Listen to the young person - don't try to fix the problem at the expense of really listening.
- **Praise to build trust** - Using exaggerated praise may damage your credibility. Learn to recognize when the young person is proud of something. Praise the process more than personal traits.
- **Pair them up with another young person** - Some young people can accept help from a peer more easily than from the teacher. The right young person can also help them stay emotionally regulated.
- **Keep calm** - Deal with low level disruptive behaviours in the classroom without showing you are stressed. Some young people are very sensitive to how stressed you look. They feel less anxious when they can see that you are in calm and in charge.
- **Draw a line** - If there has been a difficult incident remind the young person that they have a new start and that what happened won't be held against them.