

## Emotional Presence

Emotional presence, part of the affective domain, includes the attitudes, feelings, and emotions of our learners. In a classroom environment, we consider emotional presence when we recognize how our learners deal with what is happening not only in the classroom, but in the world around them. If you have ever noticed a student becoming excited about an upcoming project, complaining about the amount of work, or hesitating to speak out on a controversial issue, then you have observed emotional presence. While we may not always think about how our students will respond emotionally to our courses, the more we reflect, the more we realize student behaviors, reactions, and attitudes directly impact the learning environment.

### Emotional Presence in the Classroom

At first it may seem counterintuitive to consider the role of emotions in university classes, but “to ignore emotion in the human response to internal and external events is to ignore a central element of the human experience” (Cleveland-Innes & Campbell, 2012). We know from our own experiences that when we are stressed – regardless of where the stress originates – we may have a difficult time making decisions, communicating our thoughts, or reaching logical conclusions. In our physical classrooms, we can sometimes observe these behaviors, but what happens when we are teaching an online or hybrid course?

### Supporting Emotional Presence

We can't control what is happening in our students' lives outside of the classroom, so we want to focus on how we can support emotional wellbeing through our content, communication, delivery, and feedback. To get started thinking about emotional presence and teaching, consider the following examples.

Strategy	Activities	Considerations
Humanize the content	Personal examples, practical applications, personalized responses, student choices, current events	To lessen the “coldness” of learning via Zoom or strictly online, we need to remind students that those are simply the platforms we use to connect. The learning happens through interactions and shared experiences.
Support peer-to-peer connections	Group work, shared forums, team discussions	Creating some community-building activities helps students feel less isolated and more like integral parts of the course.
Leverage technologies	Flipgrid, Zoom, share documents and slideshows, videos, podcasts	Technology has the potential to spark curiosity and add relevance. But like all instructional materials, the purpose must be clearly connected to the objectives and the directions for use must be illustrative and specific.
Offer constructive feedback	Q&A forums, feedback loops, 1:1s, video or audio feedback, revisions, timely responses	A lack of feedback can exacerbate feelings of uncertainty and lead to anxiety. Try not to equate feedback with only assessments. Feedback should be frequent, delivered in a variety of ways, and be constructive.