

11. Responding to strong emotions

The following The Indian Model School tips will help staff to deal positively with the difficult emotions of complainants and avoid defensive responses.

- **Receive:** Listen and say nothing for the moment. Give the complainant room to express their emotions. Respect the complainant's communication of their feelings.
- **Notice:** Observe your own reaction to the person's expression of their emotions.
- **Centre:** Tune into yourself. Breathe deeply.
- **Listen again:** Ask yourself what you are picking up from what the person is saying. Separate their feelings from the content. Do not react emotionally to accusations aimed at you personally.
- **Reflect back:** Summarise what you believe to be the person's main points of concern and how they are feeling.
- **Clarify and explore:** Identify precisely what it is the person needs or is concerned about. Think about what is behind the words they are using. Ask questions that shift the focus from their anger to exploring the issues.
- **Repeat the cycle:** Ensure that feelings and facts are mutually understood.