

Emotional Validation Quick Reference Sheet

What is emotional validation?

Emotional validation is the process of **listening without judgement** to a student and **acknowledging their emotional experience** rather than trying to change it. This is an **identity-affirming approach** that prioritizes the mental health and well-being of students.

How does emotional validation work?

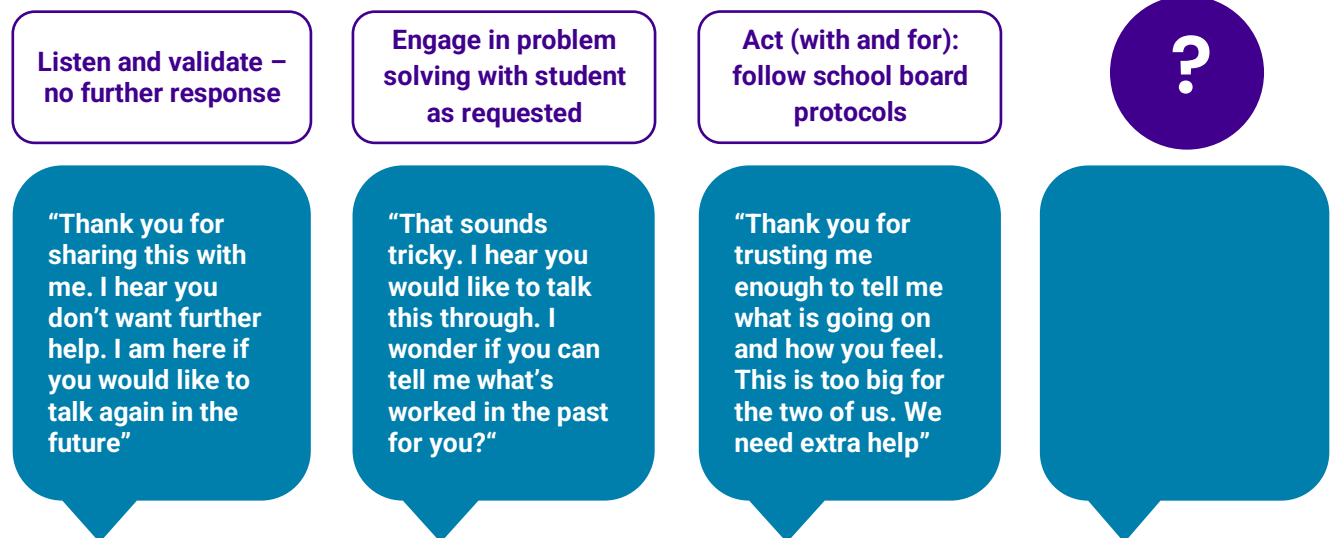




Respond with support, as needed...

Listening and validating a student's emotions **IS a response**, and sometimes nothing else is needed.

Other times, emotional validation may be followed by **a subsequent response(s)** depending on the situation, and whenever possible, **centring the wishes of the student**.



What could emotional validation sound like?

-  “I can only imagine how _____ you’d feel”
-  “Thank you for trusting me with this”
-  “I hear that you don’t want talk anymore today, and that is okay. You are always welcome to come back if you change your mind”
-  “I understand that you don’t want to talk with me today/about this. Is there someone else you would like to talk with?”

Emotional validation tips

Do	Try not to
✓ model calmness ✓ take your time ✓ look beneath behaviour ✓ be aware of your own feelings, biases and experiences ✓ draw on empathy ✓ validate the underlying emotion ✓ set a limit if needed	✗ jump to problem solving ✗ correct/judge/minimize ✗ interrupt ✗ tell the student to look on the bright side ✗ share your own experience ✗ try to change the emotion ✗ say you completely understand ✗ prioritize a return to learning

Reflect

- What assumptions do I make when a student is experiencing heightened emotions?
- How do I build authentic relationships with students?
- How do I foster affirming and validating spaces for students to openly share their emotions?

Emotional validation centres the emotional experience, wisdom and strengths of students. It involves intentionally engaging with cultural humility by reflecting on our own biases and assumptions and remaining open and curious about the unique ways that students have of identifying, expressing and coping with emotions.

