



Talking to Students about Sensitive Topics

Little Aavidum lessons and class discussions are meant to help students explore various emotions, thoughts, and experiences. At times, these can cause or trigger tough or confusing feelings for the students. Students may bring up personal matters or emotions that are sensitive in nature during these lessons and may require additional support and guidance. When these matters present themselves, it is normal for the staff members conducting the lessons to be somewhat uncertain about what to say or do.

We have prepared this document to help with these tough situations. At the beginning of each lesson, there is a slide devoted to acknowledging the sensitivity of some conversations as well as directing students to appropriate staff supports in your building. Prior to conducting any Aavidum lessons, please speak to the stakeholders of your school to determine who the appropriate school staff would be to speak with students who may have additional questions or needs following the lessons. Some examples in your school may be the school counselor, school psychologist, social worker, or principal. Please insert these individual's names onto the slide.

What you can do during lessons:

Give attention and demonstrate calmness.

Be patient and calm as you allow the student time to share their concerns, worries, or questions. Modeling calmness for your students will help them to embody it as well.

Listen with care.

Allow the students to share his/her initial thoughts, feelings, and questions. If the conversation becomes too sensitive for everyone to hear in the class, give the class a question to reflect upon/discuss and then pull the student aside or into the hallway to talk further.

Acknowledge and provide non-judgmental feedback.

Use reflective listening to repeat back what the student has shared with you to check for accuracy and understanding. Then let them know that you understand what they are sharing and are going to make sure you support them or get them the support they need. Do not say things like "you will be fine" or "everything is going to be okay." Instead say something like, "How can I best help you right now?"

Ask additional questions as appropriate.

If you need to clarify any information the student has shared, do so now. You can also ask them to share things they have tried to help themselves to make the situation better.

Refer the student to a supportive staff resource.

Let the student know that you are going to make sure they have a chance to speak with a designated staff member after the lesson is over. Reassure them that they are not in trouble, and you are going to help connect them with someone who can support them even further. Offer to walk with them to see/meet with this person if they would like.