

## EQ TIP SHEET

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### ASK, DON'T TELL

Emotional intelligence includes the ability to acknowledge and validate other people's emotions.

**Never say, 'I know how you feel'.**

We don't.

**We can only ever guess at what others are thinking and feeling.** We need to provide space for them to express themselves and share what is actually going on for them.

One way to open the conversation is to offer a suggestion about what you think may be going on. A good way to do this is to use phrases like:

- **It seems like...** *e.g. It seems like this may be very frustrating for you.*
- **It sounds like...** *e.g. It sounds like you're feeling quite nervous about that.*

This allows room for the other person to either confirm your thoughts or to offer a more accurate description of what they are experiencing. Now we are able to give **a more supportive response that encourages them to continue their story.** It lets the other person know we're listening and interested in hearing more.

#### Other useful phrases:

- *I'm curious about...*
- *Help me understand your perspective*
- *Walk me through that*
- *Tell me more*
- *Paint a picture for me*
- *Thank you for bringing this to me. I want to know more about what's going on before I respond.*
- *How is this impacting you?*
- *What does fixing this look like to you?*
- *Could we make a plan together for how to...*
- *What might I do to support you?*
- *Would you be comfortable continuing to check in on this to talk about some ways to approach the situation?*

Ask questions that encourage the other person to continue. Listen more, talk less. People often already know what to do. Feeling heard and validated is usually the first step towards positive change.

See also [\*Mentors: Stop Saying I Understand\*](#)

And [\*People Who Say These 5 Words Have Very Low Emotional Intelligence\*](#)



*Bruce Williams*

[www.brucewilliams.com.au](http://www.brucewilliams.com.au)