

Virtual Interview Debrief

Ella Moreau Case, October 2025



Overview

The conversation opens with Kacie setting the frame and building rapport. Kacie introduces herself and Michael, explains the CARE team's role, and clarifies that the purpose of the meeting is to understand Ella's recent experiences and ensure she and those around her feel safe and supported. There's some light small talk (coffee, how she's doing in the moment), which helps Ella settle in before you move into content.

Ella then lays out the core of her concern. She's a mortuary science student, doing well academically. She is deeply invested in more environmentally sustainable, "green" funeral practices and in challenging what she sees as a predatory, commercialized industry. The conflict centers on a professor and a program culture she experiences as invalidating, condescending, and resistant to criticism. She describes classroom exchanges in which her dissenting views are shut down, and a power dynamic in which the professor "has power over me," leaving her feeling invalidated and dismissed. She also talks about a group chat with other students and her presence in online/social media spaces where she posts about the funeral industry. She knows she can come across as very assertive, which can make others defensive. Some of these posts and discussions have apparently been cited as a concern, though she herself is unclear exactly which ones triggered the referral.

Kacie spends a good chunk of time helping Ella unpack the emotional and functional impact of invalidation and the lack of dialogue, how isolated she feels in the classroom, and where she does feel heard (online communities, like-minded peers, activism). You explore what validation would look like (not necessarily agreement, but being taken seriously and not dismissed) and what kind of accountability she wants from the professor (recognition of harm and a commitment to change behavior). Ella repeatedly emphasizes values-driven frustration rather than a desire to harm. She talks about feeling helpless and stuck within the program, but also about her long-term plan to finish, become certified, and eventually open her own practice where she can align work with her ethics.

Midway through, Kacie shifts into a more explicit safety check. She asks directly about whether Ella's anger or online statements have ever translated into thoughts or plans to hurt the professor or anyone else. Ella acknowledges having vented in anger and using strong language, but is clear that she has never had an active plan or drive to commit violence and has not made direct threats. When Kacie asks about thoughts of self-harm or not wanting to be alive, Ella differentiates past depressive episodes from her current state and describes "crisis" for her as something more severe than what she's experiencing now. She indicates she's not currently suicidal and does not see herself as in acute crisis, even though the situation feels unsustainable over time.

Michael's contributions come later and are more focused on coping, thresholds, and behavior choices. He thanks Ella for her openness, then asks what it would look like for her to recognize she does need more help, what she would be experiencing at that point, and who she would reach out to. He picks up on her phrase about things feeling "unsustainable" and "time to make waves," asking what "making waves" means in practical terms and whether there are other avenues (going to the dean, using strategies that have worked in other classes, or disengaging from arguments with this professor) that might help her get her message across without further

escalation or burnout. There's a gentle challenge embedded in his questions. If she is this concerned, what keeps her from using more formal channels, and what would be the downside of not continuing to push this particular professor in class?

The conversation closes with a summary and options. Kacie reflects on Ella's main themes, her passion for reforming the industry, the distress and helplessness around the current classroom dynamic, and her need for validation rather than agreement. You offer concrete resources, including help connecting to counseling/therapy, ongoing support from the CARE team, and a plan to check back in and see how she's doing. Ella is receptive to these ideas and explicitly says she would appreciate having someone to talk to and a follow-up.

Team Feedback

Ella presents as a passionate, values-driven student who is deeply invested in reforming what she sees as an exploitative and environmentally harmful funeral industry. Her conflict with a mortuary science professor, particularly around being labeled “naïve” and feeling dismissed, has left her frustrated, isolated, and questioning her place in the program. The interview does a good job surfacing the core themes of her ethics and identity as a future professional, the power imbalance she feels in the classroom, the emotional toll of ongoing invalidation, and the tension between her assertiveness and how others perceive it. Across the conversation, she is consistently clear that she is not interested in harming others, but she is worn down, disheartened, and searching for both validation and accountability.

As interviewers, you bring a clear desire to understand Ella rather than simply “process a case.” You open with a relatively warm frame, ask many thoughtful, open-ended questions, and explore a wide range of domains, including academic functioning, mental health, classroom dynamics, social media, and coping strategies. Your risk assessment is appropriately thorough; both harm to others and self-harm are explored multiple times, helping the team feel confident about acute safety. There are also strong moments of curiosity about Ella’s values and long-term goals that help her feel seen beyond her conflict with this professor.

At the same time, several global themes emerge around improvement. The interview relies heavily on information-gathering questions rather than explicit emotional validation and a clear explanation of the referral. Ella asks directly why she is there and, at times, signals that she feels she is repeating herself or not being fully heard. Clarifying the purpose of the meeting early, slowing the pace of questioning, and pausing more often to name and validate her hurt, anger, and exhaustion would likely help her feel more anchored and less like she is under a microscope. There is also room to more explicitly balance the focus between “What can Ella do differently?” and “What institutional or faculty changes might be needed?” so the responsibility for change is not subtly placed solely on the student.

Finally, your team dynamic has clear strengths and untapped potential. Kacie carries most of the early relational work and narrative exploration, while Michael steps in later with calm, clinically focused questions about risk, thresholds, and options. Used deliberately, this “tag-team” approach can give the subject a sense of being held by a thoughtful group rather than a single voice. Going forward, a bit earlier engagement from Michael, clearer handoffs between them, and a jointly delivered summary of next steps could strengthen the sense of cohesion and support. Overall, this interview lays a solid foundation. It is safe, respectful, and curious. With enhancements in transparency, emotional attunement, pacing, and role clarity, your already-strong skills can translate into an even more collaborative and effective threat assessment conversation.

Core Learning Areas

Clarifying Referral, Purpose, and Process

Ella asks directly why she is in the meeting, and the answer never feels fully clear to her. Early in the interview, you could briefly explain what prompted the referral, how the CARE team works, and the possible outcomes. This doesn’t need to be long or legalistic, but it should be honest and

specific enough that Ella isn't left guessing. Returning to that frame once or twice ("Here's how this question connects to why you're here...") would also help her see the logic behind the interview. Clear, compassionate transparency lowers defensiveness and makes the conversation feel collaborative rather than mysterious or investigative.

Slowing Pace and Trusting Silence

The interview leans heavily on frequent, back-to-back questions. Even though they are thoughtful questions, the pace can make the interaction feel like a checklist rather than a conversation, and Ella sometimes signals that she feels it's repetitive. You could benefit from slowing the pace, letting answers land, allowing short silences, and summarizing periodically rather than immediately moving to "the next thing." Trusting that the story will continue, and that a brief pause won't derail the interview, creates more space for rapport and reflection. This slower pace also makes it easier to notice emotional cues and adjust, rather than staying locked into a mental list of topics to cover.

Centering Emotional Validation and Empathy

You gather rich information but often move quickly past emotional "hot spots," such as being called naïve, feeling tone-policed, or withdrawing from class. These moments are invitations to slow down and say, in plain language, "That sounds really painful," or "Of course that would sting." More frequent emotional labeling, reflective statements, and explicit empathy would help Ella feel that her subjective experience, not just her behavior, is understood. This doesn't replace risk assessment; it supports it. When feelings have been clearly named and validated, subsequent risk questions, behavioral probes, and problem-solving ideas are more likely to land as caring and fair rather than as judgment or scrutiny.

Balancing Student Responsibility with System Change

A recurring theme is an emphasis on what Ella might do differently, how she communicates, how she "makes waves," and whether she should step back from challenging her professor. While exploring coping and choice is important, it risks suggesting that the burden for change rests solely on her. Considering shifting toward a more balanced lens that also names the professor's behavior, power differentials, and possible institutional responses. Explicitly acknowledging that some of this is not just "Ella's problem to fix" can reduce shame and helplessness. This balance reinforces that you are looking at the whole system, not just trying to adjust a difficult student.

Coordinating Co-Interviewer Roles and Presence

Kacie carries most of the early relational and narrative work, while Michael remains quiet for a long stretch before entering with more clinically focused questioning. This structure has potential strengths, but it can also feel disjointed if not made intentional. You could clarify roles ahead of time (who anchors rapport, who probes risk, and how and when you trade off) and then show that coordination in the room. Earlier, brief engagement from Michael and smoother hand-offs between them would help Ella experience them as a cohesive team rather than one main interviewer plus an observer who suddenly begins asking heavy questions late in the process.

Closing With Concrete, Collaborative Next Steps

By the end of the interview, Ella reasonably wants to know, "What happens now?" This was a missed opportunity to translate a rich assessment into a clear, shared plan. You could be more

explicit about what you heard, how you're understanding risk, and the options that exist, to ensure Ella leaves with something tangible. Concrete next steps might include follow-up meetings, support services, possible faculty or departmental conversations, and what she can expect from the CARE/threat team. Framing these steps as things you will work on with her reinforces collaboration and reduces the sense that she has simply been evaluated and sent back into the same stuck situation.

Feedback for Kacie

Your interview approach with Ella is grounded in curiosity, structure, and genuine care. You open with a warm, accessible frame, use broad, open-ended questions, and give Ella room to step into her identity as a passionate, values-driven student before moving into areas of concern. Throughout the interview, you gather rich narrative detail about Ella's program, beliefs, and classroom dynamics, and appropriately check both other-directed and self-directed risk. Your style generally communicates, "I want to understand your world," by asking thoughtful follow-ups and returning to important themes like assertiveness, invalidation, and the impact on mental health.

At the same time, the sheer volume and pace of questions sometimes outstrip emotional reflection and explicit validation. There are repeated moments where Ella hints that she feels misunderstood or repetitive ("like I said...") and asks directly why she's there, while the interview stays mostly in information-gathering mode. With more deliberate moments of empathy, clearer upfront explanation of the referral, and a slightly slower rhythm, your existing strengths could land even more effectively, helping Ella feel both thoroughly assessed and genuinely supported.

Strengths

- **Strong openers and framing:** You begin the interview with a clear, friendly introduction and broad questions that let Ella define the problem in her own words rather than starting with accusations or checklists.
- **Curious, values-focused questioning:** You show real interest in Ella's "green" practices, ethics, and identity as a mortuary science student, which helps reduce defensiveness and deepen engagement.
- **Good use of open-ended and follow-up questions:** You consistently invite narrative ("tell me about...") rather than just yes/no answers, and drill down on key points to understand context and meaning.
- **Nonverbal presence on Zoom:** You use eye contact, nodding, and generally calm body language to convey attention and steadiness, even while taking notes.
- **Thorough exploration of risk domains:** You appropriately check for both harm to others and self-harm, and revisit these areas to ensure clarity and completeness.

Areas for Improvement

- **Clarify the referral and purpose earlier:** When Ella asks, "Why am I here?", offer a concise, compassionate explanation sooner, so the interview feels transparent rather than mysterious.
- **Increase emotional reflection and validation:** More often pause to name and validate feelings (hurt, frustration, isolation) before moving to the next question, especially around repeated themes like being called "naïve."
- **Slow the pace and reduce "checklist" feel:** Allow more silence, avoid stacking questions, and summarize periodically so Ella doesn't feel rushed or like she's repeating herself.

- **Refine phrasing to sound less formal/clinical:** Soften some question wording ("have any other students stated...") into more conversational language that matches the rapport she's built.
- **Close the loop with collaborative next steps:** As Ella asks about what happens next, spend a bit more time outlining concrete options and ways the team can support her, not just collecting.

Feedback for Michael

Your interview approach is calm, measured, and clinically oriented. You enter later in the conversation, which lets Kacie build the initial rapport, and then you step in with questions that deepen the risk and coping assessment: What does “crisis” mean for Ella? How would she know she needs more help? Who would she reach out to? You also appropriately revisit self-harm and safety questions to double-check risk, which adds a layer of clinical thoroughness. When you engage, your tone is generally steady and respectful, and you do good work helping Ella think about her options and thresholds rather than just her current frustration.

At the same time, because you speak less and often appear on screen with a fairly neutral expression, your presence can feel more like an observer than an active ally until later in the interview. Some of your phrasing, especially around “making waves” and what might happen if she doesn’t keep pushing, can land as focusing primarily on what Ella should change rather than balancing that with institutional responsibility and validation of her experience. With a bit more early warmth, explicit empathy, and clearer, concrete next steps, your solid clinical instincts could feel more collaborative and less like troubleshooting her rather than the situation she’s stuck in.

Strengths

- **Calm, steady presence:** You bring a composed and grounded energy that can help contain strong emotion and keep the interview from feeling chaotic.
- **Thorough risk-checking:** You appropriately revisit self-harm and crisis questions, adding a “second pass” that strengthens confidence in the risk assessment.
- **Good focus on coping and thresholds:** You ask what it would look like if Ella did reach a crisis point and who she would turn to, which helps map out future safety and support.
- **Encourages reflection on choices:** You invite Ella to think about different paths (continuing to push, “making waves” in other ways, or stepping back), helping her see she has options.
- **Supports Kacie by sharing the load:** You step in at key points so Kacie isn’t carrying all the questioning, modeling a tag-team approach for co-interviewing.

Areas for Improvement

- **Engage a bit earlier with rapport:** Offer a few brief, supportive comments earlier in the interview so Ella experiences you as a collaborator from the outset, not just a quiet observer.
- **Add more explicit empathy and validation:** Before problem-solving, more often name what Ella is feeling (hurt, exhausted, isolated) so your questions land on a base of “I get how hard this is.”
- **Soften potentially sharp phrasing:** Rework language like “make waves” or “what if you just didn’t do this?” to emphasize shared brainstorming rather than implying she should stop speaking up.
- **Balance responsibility between Ella and the system:** When exploring her coping, also acknowledge clearly where institutional or faculty behavior needs to change, so it doesn’t feel like the onus is all on her.

- **Be clearer and more concrete about next steps:** When Ella asks what happens now, take the lead in laying out specific options (follow-up, supports, possible faculty/department routes), so she leaves with a clearer plan.

Dusty Harrington Virtual Interview

Chronological Timestamped Feedback for Kacie and Michael

1:00 Warm, clear opening frame

Kacie opens by introducing the CARE team and setting the frame for the conversation. The introduction is friendly and accessible, which helps Ella understand that this isn't a disciplinary hearing but a support-focused meeting. Going forward, you might briefly connect this meeting to the broader safety/threat-assessment process so Ella understands the purpose and stakes from the outset.

1:48 Light rapport about coffee

You make a light attempt at rapport around coffee, signaling that you see Ella as a person, not just a "case." Even though this small talk doesn't fully land, it's still useful to try these micro-connection points. Over time, tying rapport to things Ella has already shown interest in can make these moments even more effective.

2:15 Broad invitation to share

You use a broad, open-ended question to invite Ella to describe the nature of her challenge in her own words. This early move keeps the focus on Ella's story and values rather than on a checklist of concerns, which supports engagement and reduces defensiveness.

2:51. Starting with program identity

By framing the conversation around Ella's experience in the mortuary program, you allow her to begin from a place of identity and pride in her chosen field. This helps Ella feel seen as a student and future professional before the more sensitive conflict issues are addressed.

3:29 Exploring "green" values

A follow-up question about the "green" system encourages Ella to share more about her ethics and passion for environmentally conscious practices. This values-focused curiosity deepens the connection and reinforces that her motivations are being taken seriously.

4:14 Verbal attending on Zoom

You use verbal encouragers, "yes," "uh-huh," "right", to show you're listening. This is a solid attending skill, though on Zoom these can sometimes sound like interruptions. Leaning a bit more on visual cues like nodding and eye contact can preserve the connection while keeping speech space clear for Ella.

5:00 Solid contextual questioning

At this stage, Kacie's questions continue to build context around Ella's academic and program experiences. You reflect good preparation and a genuine desire to understand the larger picture rather than jumping prematurely to risk-only questions.

5:50 Early dive into meaning

You ask about death and the afterlife, and Ella appears comfortable engaging with this deeper material. Keep these deeper questions, but give a bit more space between them for trust and connection to solidify along the way.

6:17 Focused probe for insight

You drill down into a specific part of Ella's story, inviting deeper insight into how she interprets her own behavior and the professor's responses. These focused questions are helpful for assessment and land best when interspersed with reflections that mirror Ella's feelings back to her.

6:39 Pace begins to quicken

The pace of questioning becomes brisk here, giving the interaction a slightly checklist-like feel. Slowing the rhythm, allowing short pauses, and occasionally summarizing what's been said can help Ella feel less rushed and more fully heard.

6:51 Nonverbal engagement strengths

Nonverbal behaviors such as nodding, maintaining eye contact, and not over-relying on note-taking come across as effective and attuned. These subtle signs of presence often communicate safety and interest even more than repeated verbal encouragers.

6:53 Neutral but attentive presence

Michael maintains a fairly neutral, steady facial expression while listening. That neutrality helps keep the focus on Ella. Adding occasional nods or small shifts in expression could further signal your active engagement without disrupting the flow.

7:01 Missed opportunity: outfit bridge

Returning briefly to coffee is a nice touch. You could also make use of Ella's distinctive outfit and Ouija-themed apron as a bridge. Commenting respectfully on these cues could naturally connect to her interest in spooky or afterlife themes, deepening rapport.

7:10–7:46 Balancing notes and presence

You continue to offer verbal micro-attending while glancing away to write notes. This is understandable, but on Zoom, frequent note-taking plus verbal fillers can feel less connected. Balancing written notes with sustained visual attention helps Ella feel more fully "held" in the conversation.

7:36 Ella asks, "Why am I here?"

Ella directly asks what the concern is and why she has been called in. This is a pivotal moment. A clear, compassionate explanation of the referral and the team's role can go a long way in building trust and lowering anxiety about the process.

7:52 Partial answer to concern

Kacie responds by continuing to explore Ella's understanding of why she might be there, which is clinically relevant, but stops short of a direct explanation. A brief, straightforward description of the concern, paired with reassurance that you want to support her, would help address Ella's question more fully.

8:30 Reason for referral still unclear

Even though Ella offers her perspective on what might have led to the meeting, the core "why am I here?" feels unresolved. Addressing this explicitly can reduce uncertainty and prevent Ella from feeling like her direct question has been sidestepped.

9:02 Continued narrative information gathering

You shift into gathering a more detailed narrative about what occurred in class and online. This is a strong information-gathering technique that should be paired with a quick return to the explicit reason for the referral so that Ella doesn't feel her earlier question was ignored.

9:40 Ella shows sophisticated insight

Ella's language becomes more sophisticated, using phrases like "call to action" and describing feeling invalidated. This shows a high level of insight and suggests she may be ready for a more transparent discussion about how the team views her behavior and concerns.

10:15 Ella feels repetitive, unheard

Ella's comment, "Well, like I was saying..." suggests she feels she's repeating herself. This is a useful signal to pause, summarize her main points, and validate that she has been heard before moving into new lines of inquiry.

10:38 Formal phrasing about other students

The phrase "have any other students stated..." is accurate but a bit formal. A softer version, such as "Have you heard classmates talking about similar experiences?", could help keep the conversation feeling more natural and less interrogative.

11:30 Perspective-taking question on the professor

Kacie asks how Ella thinks her professor is feeling, which invites perspective-taking and can be clinically helpful. These questions land best when there has already been strong emotional validation and when the tone is conversational rather than clinical.

12:10 Emotional impact needs reflection

Ella shares a fairly emotional description of feeling dismissed and called naïve. Before moving on, it would be powerful to name that impact ("That sounds really hurtful") so she feels her feelings, not just her facts, are being recognized.

12:00–13:00 Questions outpace validation

During this stretch, several good exploratory questions are asked in quick sequence, but there's relatively little emotional labeling or reflection. Adding more brief empathy statements and summaries can balance out the pace and strengthen rapport.

12:26 Exploring “assertive” self-description

Ella again describes herself as assertive, offering an opening to explore how she understands that trait and how others might interpret it. This can help her feel less judged and more engaged in a shared inquiry about her communication style.

12:33 Question overlaps with Ella's response

Kacie begins a new question while Ella is still finishing her thought and looks down to write. Waiting until Ella fully finishes, then responding, can enhance her sense of being listened to without interruption.

13:00 (1) Realignment via paraphrasing needed

Ella's phrase “Well, that's kind of what I'm talking about” hints that the questions are slightly missing her core point. This is an ideal moment to paraphrase what she's said, check if it's accurate, and realign the conversation with her main concerns.

13:00 (2) Clarifying “followed up with”

When Ella says, “When I call that behavior out, I'm not followed up with,” you ask what follow-up would look like. Although that's a reasonable clarifying question, if it were paired with first acknowledging the disappointment, it could feel even more supportive as Ella elaborates on wanting basic responsiveness and respect.

13:44 Searching for next question

Kacie's light “um” conveys the mental work of continually finding the next question. As rapport strengthens and emotions are more explicitly named, the story often flows more naturally, reducing the pressure to generate new prompts constantly.

14:35 Strong summary of experience

Ella offers a thoughtful summary of how the situation has affected her emotionally and academically. This is a prime time to reflect back her key themes and validate the weight she's been carrying before moving back into problem-solving.

14:58 Theme of “naïve” re-emerges

The “naïve” comment resurfaces, underlining how much this label bothers Ella. Repeated themes like this are particularly important to acknowledge; a simple “That really sticks with you” would show that the interviewer recognizes the emotional sting.

15:15 Reframe without lingering in feelings

You offer a partial reframe, but relatively quickly return to questioning. Lingering a bit more with the emotion Ella has named before pivoting back to information gathering would strengthen trust in the process.

General (Michael) – Considering co-interviewer presence

Up to this point, Michael has stayed mostly quiet, giving Kacie and Ella room to connect. A few early, supportive comments from you could diversify the interview style and provide more data on how Ella responds to a second interviewer.

15:36 Returning to the assertiveness theme

Ella again describes herself as assertive. This repetition provides a natural anchor for exploring how her assertiveness interacts with the classroom power structure and how she wants it to be understood by others.

15:54 Mental health impact highlighted

Ella explains how the situation affects her mental health, grades, and sense of being harassed. Before moving into more detail, an explicit empathy statement ("That sounds exhausting and unfair") can show that her distress is being taken seriously.

“Like I said” – Pattern of repeated explaining

Across the interview, Ella uses "like I said" multiple times, suggesting she often feels she is restating herself. This pattern can be a cue to consider whether you might occasionally be asking for information she believes she has already given, and whether brief summaries could help her feel more validated.

17:00 Isolation and withdrawal described

Ella mentions feeling withdrawn and isolated, which is important risk-relevant information. Asking for more detail is appropriate here, especially when paired with naming the emotional experience ("That sounds lonely").

17:30 Space for Michael’s voice

This point in the interview could be a natural place for Michael to step in more actively with support or clarifying questions. Your presence could give Kacie a moment to regroup and help Ella feel recognized by both of you.

18:00 Revisiting social media concerns

Kacie circles back to Ella’s social media posts and online presence. Returning to this topic is clinically relevant. Providing a brief explanation of why these posts matter to the assessment can help Ella understand the lens and feel less "policed."

19:11 Distinguishing assertive vs. threatening

Ella clearly differentiates between being assertive and being threatening, opening a door to talk about “feeling threatened vs. being threatened.” This is a valuable opportunity to explain how the team thinks about risk and to clarify what has and has not raised concern.

19:35 Naming “tone policing” frustration

Ella uses the term “tone policing” to flag her frustration with how her communication style is being received. Acknowledging this term and the feeling behind it (“It sounds like you feel criticized for how you speak”) can help defuse tension and show respect for her perspective.

19:58 Direct denial of other-harm

Ella directly denies intent to harm others, and you appropriately transition to questions about self-harm. A brief acknowledgment of her clarity and honesty here can make the shift feel less abrupt and more collaborative.

20:43 Nuanced view of crisis

Ella gives a nuanced explanation of crisis, depression, and suicidal intent, almost in a quasi-clinical way. Recognizing this sophistication (“You’ve clearly thought a lot about this”) can help shape subsequent questions and convey respect for her insight.

21:25 Linking questions to safety frame

You continue exploring Ella’s internal experiences. The content is relevant, but you might want to occasionally connect these questions back to the safety and support frame, so Ella understands why such personal topics are being covered.

22:17 Disheartened by invalidation

Ella describes feeling disheartened by repeated experiences of invalidation. This is a key emotional moment, and reflecting on the hurt and discouragement can help her feel that the team truly grasps the impact, not just the events.

23:30 Limited in-person community

Ella notes that she doesn’t have much in-person community or built-in support. This is important contextual information and can lead naturally into gentle brainstorming about how the institution might help her feel less alone.

24:00 How assertiveness shows in class

Kacie asks how Ella’s assertive personality shows up in the classroom. Grounding this question in observations from the interview (“I’ve noticed you’re very clear and direct here...”) can help it feel like a shared inquiry rather than an evaluation.

25:25 Professor explicitly calls her naïve

Ella reports that her professor directly called her naïve. This moment is significant both emotionally and potentially procedurally. A strong empathetic response is warranted, and it may also raise institutional questions about respectful classroom conduct and possible bias.

25:06–26:06 Multiple chances for empathy

Throughout this segment, Ella makes several emotionally charged statements. These are all opportunities to slow down and provide empathy, brief reflections on how discouraging, painful, or exhausting the situation is, before asking for more specifics.

27:58 Defining accountability desires

Ella articulates that she wants accountability. Asking what accountability looks like to her is a good move; building on her answer with a few possible options or examples can help translate that desire into concrete next steps.

28:36 Strengthening behavior-change framing

You reflect back Ella's wish for a commitment to changed behavior from the professor. Framing this more affirmatively by acknowledging her right to want respectful, responsive treatment can help her feel validated in her expectations.

29:10 Seeking dialogue, not dismissal

Ella clearly states that she wants to challenge ideas without being labeled naïve; her "you know?" at the end is a bid for connection. Your recognition of her frustration is helpful, and occasionally dropping softeners like "it sounds like" can make empathy land even more directly.

29:45 & 49:07 Clarifying overall hopes

When you ask what Ella is hoping for overall, Ella answers that she wants dialogue and not dismissal. This is a powerful place to reflect her goals back to her and show how the team might support those aims within institutional limits.

31:09 Complex question, warm repair

You pose a somewhat complex question that Ella finds confusing, so she asks you to repeat it. Your brief laugh and apology are warm and humanizing, and her follow-up response is more emotionally attuned, demonstrating how repair can actually strengthen rapport.

32:00 Managing visible interviewer discomfort

During more emotionally intense moments, you exhibit visible physical shifts that may reflect your discomfort. Becoming aware of these nonverbal cues can help her maintain a calm, grounded presence that reassures Ella, even when the content is challenging.

33:27 Normalizing phone use gracefully

When Ella checks in about using her phone, you normalize it by noting that students often use their phones. This easygoing, non-shaming response lands well and keeps the tone relaxed and collaborative.

34:29 Naming emotions with choices

You ask how it feels when peers don't engage the way Ella hopes. Offering a small menu of emotions ("Does it feel more disappointing, lonely, or irritating?") could help Ella name her experience and feel understood.

35:00 Michael joins with support

Michael steps in more actively, recognizing Ella's isolation and asking about who she can reach out to. Your entry adds another supportive voice to the conversation and illustrates how two interviewers can share the relational work.

36:00 Second pass on self-harm

Michael asks another question related to self-harm and crisis, essentially double-checking risk. This second pass is clinically sound; acknowledging Ella's consistent, clear denial further reinforces a sense of fairness and thoroughness in the process.

37:00 Exploring "making waves" options

You explore what it might look like for Ella to "make waves" in ways that don't burn her out. While the phrase can feel a bit sharp, the underlying intent, to broaden her options, can be strengthened by pairing it with recognition of how much effort she's already put in.

38:01 Ella asks about next steps

Ella reasonably asks what is going to happen next, given how hopeless she feels about the situation changing. This is the perfect moment for clear, concrete options so she leaves the conversation with a roadmap rather than just more reflection.

39:00 Weighing the cost of advocacy

Michael invites Ella to reflect on what might happen if she chose not to keep pushing this professor. This can be useful in exploring coping options, as long as it's balanced with acknowledging her right to advocate and the emotional toll of always being the one to "speak up."

41:11 Nonverbals of searching for words

There are some visible moments, upward glances, pauses, where you are clearly searching for the next thing to say. Being mindful of these nonverbals can ensure you don't inadvertently signal uncertainty or disconnection to Ella.

41:24 Avoiding over-responsibility for Ella

You ask about how she's handled similar situations in other classes, which highlights her coping strengths. It's important to avoid implying that all responsibility lies with Ella, especially when structural and power issues are part of the story.

41:48 Continued pattern exploration

Kacie comes back in with more questions about patterns of interaction with this professor. This continued exploration shows a commitment to understanding the broader context rather than focusing on a single incident.

42:55 Refining challenge versus dismissal

Kacie asks whether the issue is that the professor challenges or dismisses Ella's ideas, then quickly adds "or dismissed," which better matches Ella's experience. Acknowledging that the initial wording didn't quite fit would further demonstrate responsiveness and attunement.

44:45 Naming power differential clearly

Ella highlights the power differential between herself and the professor. This is a key moment for you to explicitly name and validate that imbalance, recognizing how it shapes both her distress and her limited sense of options.

45:52 Inviting additional wants and needs

Kacie asks what else Ella would like to see happen, which is a strong, collaborative closing question. It emphasizes Ella's agency and helps ensure the interview captures her hopes, not just the institution's concerns.