Consider your role.
- Maintain a trusting therapeutic relationship
- Maintain a safe and supportive environment that allows emotions to be expressed
- Facilitate so as not to worsen the experience by ignoring, delegitimizing responses
- Clarify unfamiliar terms or language to prevent confusion

Acknowledge that emotion is being expressed.
If you have a good sense of what the emotion is, then it is useful to name it. If not, using more general language is preferable.
⇒ I can see this is really affecting you.
⇒ This information is very upsetting.

Empathize (if you genuinely feel it).
Empathy means being able to emotionally imagine what the patient is going through. If you have a strong sense of what the patient is experiencing, it can be very therapeutic to express it.
⇒ This seems really unfair.
⇒ I can imagine that you might feel very disappointed.

Legitimize the appropriateness and normalcy of the reaction.
Medical professionals are in a powerful position to help patients and families feel that strong emotions under these circumstances are normal and to be expected.
⇒ Anyone receiving this news would feel devastated.
⇒ It is completely expected to be very distressed by this kind of news.

Explore more about what is underneath the emotion.
⇒ Tell me what is the scariest (most difficult) part for you
⇒ Tell me more about that.... (Keep the exploration going until it is fully expressed and understood.)

Explore strengths/coping strategies.
This may occur at this phase of the interview, or it may be postponed to a later phase when planning for next steps begins.
⇒ In past circumstances, what has helped?
⇒ How have you adapted to difficult circumstances in the past?
⇒ What are you hoping for now?