

LEVELS OF VALIDATION

When a person confides in you, they are not usually looking for you to fix, advise or problem-solve unless they specifically ask for it. Rather, they are looking for validation. If you are not used to validating, here are some suggestions. **There is no greater way to set a person at ease.**

Level 1	SHOW INTEREST Overall show interest in the other person (through verbal, nonverbal cues), show that you are paying attention (nodding, eye contact, etc.)	Ask questions – "What then?" Give prompts - "Tell me more," "Uh-huh."
Level 2	USE ACCURATE REFLECTION	"So you're frustrated because your son hasn't picked up his room."
	SUMMARIZE what the person is sharing, then ask	"Is that right?"
	Take a NONJUDGEMENTAL stance toward the person, be matter-of-fact, have an "OF COURSE" attitude.	Example: "My therapist doesn't like me."
	Note that YOU DON'T HAVE TO AGREE with the person about their perceptions.	"You are feeling really certain she hates you."
Level 3	PUT YOURSELF IN THEIR SHOES: Try to "read" a person's behavior, imagine what they could be feeling, thinking or wishing for. It feels good when someone takes the time to think about our life experiences. Remember to check for accuracy. It is best to not make assumptions.	
Level 4	VALIDATE THE PERSON'S BEHAVIOR IN TERMS OF CAUSES like past events present events even when it may be triggered based on dysfunctional association.	"Since your new boss reminds you of your last one, I can see why you'd be scared to meet with her," or "Since you have had panic attacks on the bus, you're scared to ride one now."
Level 5	COMMUNICATE THAT THE PERSON'S BEHAVIOR IS REASONABLE, MEANINGFUL, EFFECTIVE	"It seems very normal to be nervous before a job interview - that sure makes sense to me," or "It sounds like you were very clear and direct with your doctor."
Level 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TREAT THE PERSON AS VALID - NOT PATRONIZING OR CONDESCENDING. • RECOGNIZE THE PERSON AS THEY ARE WITH STRENGTHS AND LIMITATIONS. • GIVE THE PERSON EQUAL STATUS, EQUAL RESPECT. • BE GENUINE with the person about your reactions to them and about yourself. • BELIEVE IN THE OTHER PERSON WHILE SEEING THEIR STRUGGLES and PAIN 	

All of these levels of validation are very important skills
for building and maintaining relationships with others

VALIDATION IS What you might expect from a therapist
 What you need from others but often can't find the words to ask
 Validation does not mean to agree

“I hear you” and “it is okay to feel that way” does not mean you agree or there isn't more to consider

VALIDATING BEHAVIOR	EXAMPLE:	EXAMPLE of Nonvalidation
BE PRESENT	Undivided attention	Checking time when talking. Drumming fingers impatiently
ACCURATE REFLECTION	Listen and Reword	Misinterpreting. Blaming. Name calling. Judging. “You're overreacting.”
READ BEHAVIOR	Listen to body in addition to words	Ignoring tears. Ignoring your lack of eye contact. Rolling your eyes
UNDERSTAND BEHAVIOR ACCORDING TO OTHER'S HISTORY AND BIOLOGY	Might be similar but different from yourself	Assuming they know how you feel. Not asking. Telling you how to feel. Ridicule: “Here we go again.”
NORMALIZE RECOGNIZED EMOTIONAL REACTIONS ANYONE WOULD HAVE	“It is okay to feel that way”	Wanting to fix your feelings. “Don't be sad. Eat ice cream.” Loved ones who don't want you to hurt
RADICAL GENUINENESS	as real person with real feelings rather than incapable of solving own problems, as an equal	Lying so as to not hurt someone's feelings. Minimizing, avoiding upset or vulnerability. Denying difficulty

Emotional validation means acknowledging and expressing acceptance of someone's internal experience, thoughts, feelings, and behaviors as **UNDERSTANDABLE**. Does not include lying or agreeing.

Validation is NOT accepting harmful behavior

PRACTICE is the key to making validation a natural part of the way you communicate

A goal is for YOU to validate both yourself and others. Self criticism is the opposite of self validation