

## Validation

**VALIDATION** communicates to another person that his or her feelings, thoughts, and actions **make sense** and are understandable to you in a particular situation.

**SELF-VALIDATION** involves perceiving your *own* feelings, thoughts, and actions as making sense, accurate, and acceptable in a particular situation.

**INVALIDATION** communicates (intentionally or not, through words or actions) that another person's feelings, thoughts, and actions in a particular situation make no sense, are "manipulative," or "stupid," or an "overreaction," or not worthy of your time, interest, or respect.

### **Remember: Validation ≠ Agreement**

Validation *does not* necessarily mean that you like or agree with what the other person is doing, saying, or feeling. It means that you understand where they are coming from.

### **WHY VALIDATE?**

- Validation improves relationships!!!!
- It can deescalate conflict and intense emotions.
- Validation can show that:
  - We are listening.
  - We understand.
  - We are being nonjudgmental.
  - We care about the relationship.
  - We can disagree without having a big conflict.

### **WHAT TO VALIDATE?**

- Feelings, thoughts, and behaviors in ourselves or others

Validate the valid, not the invalid. You can still validate the feeling *without* validating the behavior. For example: Validate someone feeling upset about a low test grade even though you know he or she didn't study, but *don't* validate the lack of studying that led to the low grade.

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## How Can We Validate Others?

1. Actively listen. Make eye contact and stay focused.
2. Be mindful of your verbal and nonverbal reactions in order to avoid invalidation (e.g., rolling eyes, sucking teeth, heavy sighing, walking away, making light of serious things, or saying, for example, "That's stupid, don't be sad," "I don't care what you say," "Whatever!").
3. Observe what the other person is feeling in the moment. Look for a word that describes the feeling.
4. Reflect the feeling back without judgment. The goal is to communicate that you *understand* how the other person feels (e.g., "It makes sense that you're angry"; "I understand that you are having a tough time right now").

For *self-validation*: "I have a right to feel sad." Avoid "Yes, but . . ." thinking. Instead, think about what your best friend in Wise Mind would say to you.

5. Show tolerance! Look for how the feelings, thoughts, or actions make sense given the other's (or your own) history and current situation, even if you don't approve of the behavior, emotion, or action itself.
6. Respond in a way that shows that you are taking the person seriously (with or without words); for example, "That sounds awful." If someone is crying, give a tissue or a hug. You may ask, "What do you need right now? For me to just listen or to help you problem-solve?"

## Activity

# Validation

Activity name: Validation Role-Plays

Supplies needed: Validation Scenarios List (see next page)

Activity goal: Highlight how Validation increases understanding and builds connections with others.

Activity instructions:

- Ask for a volunteer to begin the role-plays. Volunteer chooses a scenario from the Validation Scenarios List and (if needed) is instructed to ask the group for a second volunteer for help in acting out the scenario.
- Volunteer #1 reads the scenario to the group, and volunteer #2 begins the scenario by playing the part of person needing Validation. Volunteer #1 then practices giving only Validating feedback to volunteer #2.
- Continue until each group member has had the opportunity to practice giving Validation.

Discussion questions:

- What was it like to use Validation?
- What was it like to receive Validation?
- What made it difficult to Validate?
- What was it like to use Validation when you disagreed or were fighting?
- How could you use Validation in your relationships?
- How could you Validate yourself?

# Validation Scenarios List

1. You are at lunch with several friends. You notice that one has been very quiet, avoids eye contact and looks like she is tearing up. Use Validation with her.
2. You are having a hard day and find it difficult to get homework done. To make matters worse, you keep calling yourself “stupid and lazy.” Use Validation with yourself.
3. You really want to go to a party with your best friend, but, he says, “I don’t think I’m in the mood for a party.” Use Validation with your best friend.
4. A peer in your DBT skills group says she is really depressed. Use Validation with your group peer.
5. You and your mom are arguing about what time curfew should be. Use Validation with your mom.
6. Your dad is upset about losing his wallet and keys. Use Validation with him.
7. Your friend tells you at lunch that he got an A on his biology test. Use Validation with him.
8. Your brother tells you that he is thinking about breaking up with his girlfriend, and feels both sad and excited about it. Use Validation with your brother.
9. You studied really hard for a math test but ended up getting a C when you thought you’d get an A or a B. Use Validation with yourself.
10. Your mom just found out about your self-injury and is telling you how scared she is for your future. Use Validation to express an understanding of her perspective.
11. You and your friend are hanging out and want to get lunch, but you disagree about where to eat. Use Validation to express an understanding of your friend’s opinion.