

Family Voice Bulletin – Issue 17 (October 19th/2021) Validation

Summarized by KJ (Krystal-Jyl) Thomas, MSW, RSW

In this weeks session, facilitators KJ Thomas, MSW, RSW and Jillian Crabbe, MSW, RSW were joined by guest speaker; Deborah Mullins, MSW, RSW speaking to the important topic of Validation.

Validation is used to acknowledge truth in a meaningful way in what another person is. Validation can be a positive tool in communication to help bring connection to another person's goals, values, struggles, and contributions. To use validation, we think about the pieces that are indeed valid in a relationship, such as how another is feeling, their desires, beliefs, and thoughts, as well as their efforts. Using validation can help another person feel understood, cared about, and connected to. Another great result of validation can be its way to ease tension or anger in difficult situations, and reduce shame. At times we can see our loved ones as fragile, and have a strong desire to protect them. Validation can help remind both ourselves, and our loved ones of their own positive strengths, and capabilities.

Validation is a skill. It takes practice, and it can be easy to fumble. Validation is meant to be authentic, so stick to the things you truly believe in, and can get behind supporting. Try to be consistent-even when it doesn't yield immediate results, and try not to use comparisons that could come across as judgmental. Lastly, validating someone's emotion does not mean you have to agree with the circumstance. It is not meant to problem-solve, but rather to build connection which can foster improved communication.

Strategies for Maintaining Validation

Being Attentive- use listening skills to show your loved one non-verbally that you are attentive to them. This can include eye contact, open body language (avoid crossed arms), a nodding your head. You can also observe what they may be conveying in their own body language.

Reflecting Back- Reflect back to a person what you are hearing, and keep an open mind that you may not be understanding correctly. Make it a safe space for a loved one to correct you. Keep your tone of voice non-judgemental.

Empathetic Mind Reading- this involves reading non-verbal cues as sometimes those we care for may withdrawal, or shut-down. It can involve responding empathically to what is not being said.

Based On Your History- this involves the history you have come to know about your loved one, and seeing things through the lens of what they have experienced in their past.

Normalizing- this involves using present context to help connect to a person in their situation.

I Believe in You- this involves radical genuineness in responding to strengths and capacities, and having empathy for the difficult situations.

Resources

- [Six Levels of Validation \[DBT Essentials\] - YouTube](#)
- [DBT Micro Lessons: An Animation About Validation – YouTube](#)
- Educational Support Group for Caregivers <https://on-bpd.ca/en/family-connections>