

Validation and Borderline Personality Disorder



Presented by Karyn Hall, Ph.D.
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References

This presentation is based on Dr. Marsha Linehan's work on validation. The information given also includes Dr. Kristin Neff's work on self-compassion and Chip and Dan Heath's work on change. Many of the ideas discussed have developed through interactions with my DBT teams as well as families of individuals with BPD and individuals with BPD, all who have generously shared their knowledge and experiences.

Definition of Validation

To acknowledge and accept a person's feelings, thoughts, behaviors and internal experience as valid and understandable.

Or

To confirm or strengthen what is relevant, true, or effective about a response, be it a thought, emotion, physical sensation, or action. Validation requires empathy (the accurate understanding of the person's experience) but validation also includes the communication that the person's response makes sense. (Linehan)

What Validation is Not

Validating someone's thoughts, feelings, or behavior does not necessarily mean you agree with what he is thinking, or feeling or his behavior.

What Validation is Not (Cont.)

Validation is Never About Lying (*Don't validate the invalid.*)

Validation is Not the Same as Complimenting

Validation is Not Being Ruled by the Emotions of Others

Validation is Not Parroting Words in an Inauthentic Way

Validation Does Not Mean No Limits

Validation is not teaching, lecturing, or advising.

A Few Reasons Why Validation is So Important

Facilitates regulation of emotions

Helps strengthen persistence through difficult times to reach a goal by communicating understanding of the difficulty

Recognizes the truth of different points of view and by recognizing the other person's point of view you can both start at the same place

Enhances relationships and can decrease feelings of abandonment

Enhances identity

Understanding Invalidation

Invalidation means that another person's emotional experiences are rejected, ignored, or judged.

Invalidation tends to increase emotional upset.

Reasons We Invalidate

We have a different world view

We want someone we love to have characteristics that will help him or her be successful

We want to feel close

We want to fix what is wrong

We find reality is too difficult to accept

We are angry or resentful

We don't understand the disorder

Reasons We Invalidate (Cont.)

We are afraid of emotions

We are overwhelmed emotionally

We know our loved one's habits

We don't want our loved one to go through what we went through

We want to encourage

We are in a hurry

We are fearful.

Ways We Invalidate

Facial Expressions

Body Language

Verbal Statements

Ways We Invalidate

Blaming

Name Calling

Minimizing

Denying Someone Else's Feelings/Thoughts/Sensations

Not Being Present

Ignoring

Discounting goals and dreams

Levels of Validation (Linehan)

Level 1: Be Present

Level 2: Accurate Reflection

Level 3: Guessing about Unstated Feelings

Level 4: Validate in terms of past history

Level 5: Validate in terms of present events and the way most people would react

Level 6: Radical Genuineness

Special Situations

When We See Identity Differently

Difficulty of the Task

Goals

Progress

Lying

Skills Needed to Practice Validation

Mindfulness

Dialectical Thinking

Letting Go of Any Set Roles

Compassion

Respecting and Accepting Differences and Imperfections

Regulation of Emotions

Willingness to Practice

Roadblocks to Success

Judgments

Fear

Exhaustion

Self Blame

Holding onto past experiences

Other (roadblocks vary from person to person)