

DBT: Six Levels of Validation

Validation is understanding that another person's feelings and thoughts makes sense to that person. It is non-judgmental acceptance of another person's feelings and thoughts as valid, regardless of whether logic was used or if you agree with them.

Level One: Listening and Observing

- Showing verbal and non-verbal interest in the other person.
- Acknowledging, accepting, and sitting with your internal experiences and/or emotions, instead of avoiding or pushing them away (even when distressful).
- Paying attention in a nonjudgemental way.
- Ex. Making eye contact, nodding, holding someone hand

Level Two: Accurate Reflection

- Paraphrasing or restating what another person has said.
- Helps to show you understand what someone is feeling or experiencing.
- Ex. "Let me make sure I understand, (and rephrase/paraphrase what was stated)."

Level Three: Articulating the Unverbalized

- Commenting on what was implied or observed but not spoken.
- Ex. "It seems like your very frustrated."
- Some people are afraid of verbalizing their feelings/emotions. Commenting on what was unverbalized can help to better manage what they are feeling.
- Ex. "I'm guessing that you felt very hurt and sad when that happened."

Level Four: Validating in Terms of Sufficient (but Not Necessarily Valid) Causes

- Validating behavior in terms of its cause(s).
- Trying to understand a person's emotions/reactions based upon their history/past experiences and/or biology.
- Ex. Given X, I can understand Y;" Given your history with _____, I can understand why you _____."

Level Five: Validating as Reasonable in the Moment

- Commenting on the normality/validity of a person's feelings given the situation.
- Connecting someone's feelings to a larger human experience.
- Ex. "It's understandable that you feel lonely. A lot of people feel this way after _____."

Level Six: Treating the Person as Valid - Radical Genuineness

- Relating to another, human to human, in the moment without invalidating their experience.
- Validating the person, in terms of sharing the experience with them.
- This can be any form of response, as long as it is sincere, and you genuinely care for the other person. And does not attempt to force the person to change or imply they are fragile or incapable.