

What is Validation and Why Do I Need to Know?

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Have you ever wished you could take back an email that you sent when you were emotionally upset? Or maybe you made some statements when you were sad that you didn't really mean or agreed to something when you were thinking with your heart that you later regretted? Or maybe you wanted to be supportive and helpful to someone you love but couldn't because your own emotions made it difficult?

Communicating when overwhelmed with emotion does not usually work well. Being overwhelmed with emotion is not a pleasant experience. For emotionally sensitive people, managing their emotions so they can communicate most effectively and with the best results means learning to manage the intense emotions they experience on a regular basis.

Validation from others is one of the best tools to help emotionally sensitive people manage their emotions effectively. Self-validation is one of the best ways for emotionally sensitive people to manage their own feelings. Self-validation is the step that comes before self-compassion. Acknowledging that the internal experience exists and is understandable comes before self-kindness.

Understanding Validation

Validation is a simple concept to understand but difficult to put into practice.

Validation is the recognition and acceptance of another person's internal experience as being valid. Emotional validation is distinguished from emotional invalidation, in which your own or another person's emotional experiences are rejected, ignored, or judged. Self-validation is the recognition and acknowledgement of your own internal experience.

Validation does not mean agreeing with or supporting feelings or thoughts. Validating does not mean love. You can validate someone you don't like even though you probably wouldn't want to.

Why is Validation Important?

Validation communicates acceptance. Humans have a need to belong and feeling accepted is calming. Acceptance means acknowledging the value of yourself and fellow human beings.

Validation helps the person know they are on the right track. Life can be confusing and difficult. Feedback from others that what you are experiencing is normal or makes sense lets you know that you thinking and feeling in understandable ways. Your internal experience does not have to be the same as anyone else's but it helps to know that your experiences are understandable. Or not.

Validation helps regulate emotions. Knowing that you are heard and understood is a powerful experience and one that seems to relieve urgency. Some say it's because when we don't feel understood it creates thoughts of being left out or not fitting in. Those thoughts lead to fear and maybe panic because of the importance of being part of a group is critical for survival, especially in the early days of mankind, and of the potential loss of love and acceptance which is a basic need. Whatever the reason, validation helps soothe emotional upset.

Validation helps build identity. Validation is like a reflection of yourself and your thoughts by another person. Your values and patterns and choices are highlighted and that helps people see their own personality characteristics more clearly.

Validation builds relationships. Feeling accepted builds relationships. Some research shows that chemicals related to feeling connected are released when someone is validated.

Validation builds understanding and effective communication. Human beings are limited in what they can see, hear and understand. Two people can watch the same event occur and see different aspects and remember important details differently. Validation is a way of understanding another person's point of view.

Validation shows the other person that they are important. Whether the person being validated is a child, a significant other, a spouse, a parent, a friend, or an employee, validation communicates that they are important to you and you care about their thoughts and feelings and experiences. Validation also shows the other person that you are there for them.

Validation helps us persevere. Sometimes when change is very difficult, having the difficulty of the task recognized helps people keep working toward their goal. It seems to help replenish willpower.

A simple to understand concept, validation is powerful and often more difficult to practice than it might at first seem. In my experience, the results are well-worth the effort.

<http://blogs.psychcentral.com/emotionally-sensitive/2012/02/levels-of-validation/>