

The Power of Validation: Why Everybody Needs It and How to Use It

By: Mahsa A. Lindeman, LMFT

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INTRODUCTION

Hello and thank you for downloading my free report. You, like most people, may have heard the word validation thrown around but you may be unsure of exactly what it means, how to use it or even why to use it. It is something that unfortunately does not come naturally to most people. But it is something that can be learned, and the differences it makes in the relationships in your life are astounding and powerful.

In this report I will help you to understand exactly what validation is and when to use it. I will show you how the opposite, invalidation, is so common and how often we experience it. I will provide you with various examples so that you learn to recognize it and the difference in the impact of both. The technique of validation is one of the most important tools for anyone to learn and one with the most beneficial results.

What Is Validation?

In its simplest terms, validation means when you express your understanding and acceptance of another person's internal experience, whether you agree or not. Validation is the glue that maintains all of our relationships. By accepting another person's feelings, we help that person to feel heard and understood. That person in turn is more likely to validate our feelings and decrease the emotional upset in the relationship. It's the fuzzy feeling you get when somebody shows you that they "get it". They get what you are feeling and what your experience is like for you. They may not agree with you but they get it.

The most confusing and tricky part of validation is "whether you agree or not". Many people think that by validating another person, you are agreeing with them. NOT TRUE. Validation is just letting the other person know that you understand. You may or may not agree with that person's perspective, but you understand his or her experience.

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Here is an example of validation and the distinction in regards to agreement:

Mom: "I got a call from your teacher today. What happened?"

Child: "Well Ethan made me really mad. He was saying some stuff to me and I told him to stop but he wouldn't. I got so mad! Then I hit him right in the face".

Mom: "Wow, you must have been really upset at what he was saying to you! You got so angry that you decided to hit him hard".

Child: "Yup exactly".

Mom: "I understand how sometimes you can feel so angry you would choose to hit. But let's think of another way you could have dealt with your anger".

Here is the same scenario without the validation:

Mom: "I got a call from your teacher today. What happened?"

Child: "Well John made me really mad. He was saying some stuff and I told him to stop but he wouldn't. I got so mad! I hit him right in the face".

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Mom: "Why would you hit him? Honestly, I just don't understand you sometimes. You must've know it would get you in trouble and yet, here you are. Well I don't want you hitting anymore so let's figure out another way you could have dealt with your anger.

Imagine you are the child. How did you feel in the different scenarios?

In the second scenario, the mom did not take the time to understand her child's perspective. She just reacted which is what most people do.

Taking the time to understand her child's perspective, even though she did not agree with his choice, helped to empower her as a parent, helped to empower her child's natural feelings and ultimately resolve the issue at hand. In the first scenario, the child is much more likely to engage in the resolution aspect because he felt understood.

What is Invalidation?

Invalidation is much more familiar to us. It is something that most people experience early on and throughout life frequently. Whether you received invalidation from your parents growing up, your teachers, your friends, your co-workers, or your spouse, it is likely something that you have experienced many, many times.

The definition of invalidation is to reject, ignore, mock, tease, judge or diminish someone's feelings. It is an attempt to control how a person feels and how long they feel it. Here are some common statements of invalidation you may have experienced:

Stop crying

Don't be sad

Don't worry

You don't really think that or mean that

Don't let it bother you. Let it go.

Don't be so sensitive

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Any of these sound familiar? We are told from an early age that our feelings don't count, to stop feeling a certain way, to change our feelings. We get told this so frequently, that we lose touch with our feelings and end up shaming ourselves, ignoring and minimizing our feelings. We don't feel validated ourselves and we start to invalidate others around us. They in turn continue to invalidate us and the cycle continues over and over again. Repeated experiences of invalidation have grave consequences. It contributes to a host of issues such as discord in our relationships, depression, anxiety, self-harm, isolation, substance abuse and an overall impairment in functioning.

The Early Years

From a very early age, we are taught invalidation. Parents say statements such as: "Stop crying. Why are you so mad? There's no reason to be so mad! Don't get all sad just because I said one little thing. You are so sensitive! Learn to let things go! You can't hate school, its so much fun. How could you possibly not like your brother?"

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Are you *still* upset after all of this time?!". I'm sure you can think back to many other examples of invalidation you heard as a child.

The Impact

These statements set you up to discount and distrust your own feelings. You receive the message that what you are feeling is not right and to stop feeling that way immediately. When your parents, the first people in your life whose role it is to care for you, invalidate you, then you believe their statements must be true. Later, your friends and teachers may invalidate you as well and that only reinforces this belief over and over again.

Most parents don't mean to invalidate their childrens' feelings and most would probably never do it intentionally, but nevertheless, it happens again and again. Most likely, your parents are also products of an invalidating upbringing. They may not have been aware of what they were doing, let alone the damaging effects. But the statements you

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heard stay with you and impact all of your future relationships. You begin to invalidate yourself, your spouse/partner, your loved ones, and your children. So how can you stop this cycle? How can you bring more joy and understanding into your relationships? The following are tips on ways to incorporate validation into all of your relationships and the powerful impact it can have.

How Do I Validate? 5 Simple Tips

1. Recognize common feelings in yourself and others

Noticing and reflecting someone's feelings is the core of validating. But recognizing feelings in ourselves and others does not come easy, initially. The following are some common feelings. There are many, many more feelings but this gives you some of the basics. Feel free to expand this as you see fit:

Happy, sad, angry, hurt, nervous, worried, frustrated, scared, confused, surprised, excited, disappointed, guilty, overwhelmed, stressed, embarrassed.

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2. Reflect what you see

Validating is simply expressing your understanding of someone's internal experience. You are accurately reflecting someone's internal state and feeling. You observe what they must have felt like and you describe that. Some examples:

- You felt really frustrated when your teacher didn't listen to you.
- You are so hurt that I didn't do what I promised I would do
- You felt worried that something happened to me when I didn't answer my phone
- You were disappointed when you didn't get that offer
- You felt embarrassed when I tried to talk about your accomplishments with the family

You are simply noticing how someone is feeling and stating that. You are NOT discounting, minimizing, controlling, diminishing, or ignoring their feelings.

3. You are not agreeing or disagreeing

And the most important distinction: you are not agreeing or disagreeing. You may fear that by validating someone, that somehow you are agreeing, condoning or encouraging their feeling. This is simply not true. Every person will have their feelings, regardless of how you or anyone else feels about it. By allowing someone the right to feel what they are feeling, you are helping to meet the basic need in all of us: to feel understood.

4. The Impact of Being Understood

When somebody feels understood by you, they in turn want to understand you. By creating a feeling of being understood, you create more space for positive interactions and resolution in your relationships. In fact, most arguments turn into a power struggle because when neither party is feeling understood or validated, they begin to focus on acquiring power through coercion instead. The point of the discussion becomes more about “I will make you understand how

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I feel by forcing you to agree with my perspective!”. However, once we begin to incorporate validation in our interactions with others, we find that many positive results occur.

5. Practice

Validating someone can be used with anyone and everyone. It is especially vital in your relationship with your loved ones and very powerful with your spouse/partner and children. And the more you use it, the more comfortable you will feel with it and the more likely it is that you will use it again and again. With that being said, it will initially not come easy! Remember that most of us have become so habituated to being invalidated and invalidating others, that to do the opposite will feel quite strange. You may feel like you are forcing it, that it feels unnatural, strange, or weird. These are all normal feelings. You are going against something that has been ingrained in you from an early age.

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However strange it feels initially, you will also notice the change in the people you use it with and your relationships. Initially your loved ones may not understand your validations, but soon they will begin to respond to you with more warmth, respect and engagement. You will feel more compassion for others as well as others feeling more compassion for you. Your children will feel a stronger bond to you and feel more comfortable being their authentic selves, instead of who they think you want them to be. You also set your children up for healthier interactions not only with you but everyone else they encounter.

CONCLUSION

Relationships are the essence of our lives. We have to balance and manage many different relationships everyday. Sometimes you may begin to struggle in the relationships that mean the most to you. You are not sure what has gone wrong but you know something has. Implementing the tools you learned here can have a very positive impact on your relationships. You are helping to meet a very basic need in all of us. The need to have others see us, hear us and understand us. By providing someone with validation, you are strengthening not only that person's experience with you, but also the bond between you.

If this is something that you would like more help with, please do not hesitate to contact me. It would be a privilege for me to help you use this amazing tool with yourself, your spouse, children, friends, co-workers and any other relationship that you value.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Mahsa A. Lindeman is a licensed Marriage and Family Therapist with a part-time private practice in downtown Walnut Creek, California. Mahsa has a Bachelor's in Psychology and a Masters in Counseling with an emphasis in Marriage and Family Therapy. Mahsa works with a wide range of client populations, and her specialties include working with children, adolescents and mothers.



Mahsa has special trainings in working with trauma, depression, grief, play therapy, sand tray therapy, and art therapy. She uses a strength-based approach in a warm, nonjudgmental, and compassionate environment to help you discover your innate strengths and work towards healing. In her free time, Mahsa enjoys spending time with her husband and two young children exploring beaches, forests, farms, museums and other attractions in the beautiful Bay Area.

For more information on Mahsa Lindeman, please visit her website at <http://www.walnutcreekfamilytherapy.com> or call at (925) 289-9733.