

Fold me

“Validation doesn’t mean we agree with another’s subjective reality. Validation allows another person’s emotional state a space to exist.”
- Dr. Jamie Long

Validate Emotions in Four Steps



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Without emotions, our day-to-day interactions would be nothing more than a cold exchange of information. But to establish a meaningful interaction based on more than just words, one must know how to give and receive emotions. To receive means to keep an open mind and be willing to understand (emotionally) what the other person is trying to communicate. It means accepting what they are telling you is true for them, even if it is different than your own experience. To give means to actively contribute to the conversation by expressing feelings, sharing emotional needs, and having the courage to be vulnerable at times.

Emotional validation contributes to overall happiness and well-being. One of the primary functions of emotional validation is to create a safe space where others can comfortably explore and understand their feelings. People who receive emotional validation experience a boost in emotional self-efficacy. In other words, when you validate someone's feelings, you help them gain confidence that they can cope with unpleasant emotional experiences.

Studies found that when faced with the opposite, emotional invalidation, we tend to experience unpleasant emotional states. Whether it triggers anger, disappointment, frustration, or rejection, emotional invalidation makes it impossible to create authentic interactions, regardless of personality and character traits. It's difficult to build trust and warmth in relationships without emotional validation.

Four Steps to Building Emotional Validation

Step 1. Listen

Active listening or empathic listening is an important skill to develop. There are four fundamental characteristics of active listening.

1. Understand the person in front of you before making yourself understood.
2. Adopt a non-critical, non-evaluative attitude.
3. Use your silence to encourage the other person to share.
4. Offer the person in front of you your full and undivided attention.

Step 2. Understand

Listening and understanding go hand in hand, allowing you to build a mental picture of the situation that the other describes to you and pick up on the emotional vibe. One of the mistakes we make when we listen is to rush to offer solutions or advice. Listen to the other person's story and refrain from giving any unsolicited advice, no matter how obvious the solution may seem to you.

Step 3. Accept

Although most of us are capable of understanding what another person is going through, sometimes, it can be pretty hard to detach from our views and perspectives. It can be easy to get so caught up in your perception of reality; you don't realize that you're gradually losing the emotional connection that the other person is trying to build with you. Cultivating acceptance means putting aside your views and opinions, taking the other person's story as it is, (whether you agree with it or not), and focusing on the relationship. It's not about who's right and who's wrong; it's about cultivating emotional safety.

Step 4. Reflect

To reflect means to rephrase a message or story that someone shared with you by capturing its essence and highlighting it in a way that makes the other person feel understood.