

Cornerstone concept

In this module, we are looking at skills (or strategies) that are the cornerstone of maintaining communication. The more two people (dyad) engage in accurate self-disclosure/ validation, the better they will feel. You have to look for a way to win, with no cost to yourself. And remember, simply not to escalate a situation can at times be to “win.”

Before we begin, here are two terms that are helpful to define:

Internal dialogue: running a conversation, a rehearsal of a situation, and possible responses in your head

Self-disclosure: sharing relevant information with another person to help promote trust and build a feeling of closeness

Self-validation and self-disclosure

Think of a situation when you validated a private experience. Perhaps, you didn't get a job promotion and so felt terrible, and your own emotions were overwhelming or cascaded. If you ran an internal dialogue, acknowledged the situation, and self-soothed, you lessened the distress. You accepted the reality. We are not talking about rationalizing a situation, but about not beating yourself up. Self-validation is a way to self-soothe and bring some inner peace.

Focus: Have the group look at self-validation as a private experience that can bring inner peace.

Definition of validation: what is validation?

Validation means that you identify and then communicate your understanding of what the other person is saying or feeling in a very clear way. In fact, the acronym CLEAR can help you remember the process of validating, namely *communicate*, *legitimize* the facts of another person's responses, *explain* your own feelings after expressing understanding (empathy), *acknowledge* the situation, and *respect* the other person's feelings, reactions, goals, emotions.

We can practice validation using inner dialogue and our own personal experiences. Remember, you do not have to agree with someone, but you do acknowledge the responses – or feelings. We can acknowledge that someone is angry with us without agreeing that we were wrong.

**Definition
of
Validation
(Page 24)**

What Is Validation?

(Fruzzetti)

Identifying and communicating your understanding of what the other person is saying or feeling in a CLEAR way

- ▲ Communicate what you understand about the situation
- ▲ Legitimize the “facts” or another’s responses
- ▲ Explain your own feelings after expressing understanding
- ▲ Acknowledge the situation, the other’s opinions, feelings
- ▲ Respect emotions, desires, reactions and goals

Types of validation

Of course, we do not just communicate with words, but also with gestures, with attitude, with body language. Sometimes our behavior alone is validation. For example, if someone is hungry, we offer something to eat. We don't have to say, "I understand your pain," but we can communicate indirectly our understanding by dealing with a need directly. If someone is acting out, like being grumpy because they are hungry, by providing food we are showing that we understand their behavior is reasonable.

We need to be aware that we can validate with more than one sense: a look, eye contact, and, especially, touch communicate our caring and understanding.

Types of Validation (Page 24)

Types of Validation

Verbal validation: validation through words. For example, saying "I agree," "you are right," "of course you would do that."

Behavioral validation: validation through behaviors and actions. For example, patting someone's hand, giving a smile, a hug.

Exercise #1

Make a validating statement once a day to one person

a. Note the response b. How did it make you feel?

Why is validating important?

Here, we really need to explain what we mean by validating being a cornerstone in building and maintaining a relationship and showing that we value the relationship.

Imagine that your partner does something that upsets you, and you express your anger to them. If they respond in a validating way, for instance by saying, "I'm so sorry I upset you, what can I do to make it better?" imagine how you would feel. Now imagine that they responded in an invalidating way, for instance by saying, "I can't believe you're giving me a hard time about that, you do that all the time!" What would happen to the negative emotion you'd feel in each scenario? What is likely to happen next?

Validating negative emotion, including anger, helps the other person to calm down. It also makes them feel heard and understood in a way that builds trust and closeness, even when dealing with difficult emotions.

Additionally, responding in a validating way instead of an invalidating way - which is likely to escalate the situation and end up hurting both you and your loved one - helps you stay in control of your own emotions and responses, increasing your own self-respect.

Even if the other person does not accept your behavior, you can feel good about how you handled the situation. Also, the fact that you have made a positive step was helpful, and you felt much better than if you had just held your tongue, and done nothing, and were passive. So, one very real element in validating is the idea that you can de-escalate your own feelings, and that it is right to feel good. By de-escalating your feelings, you are stacking the odds to maintain or promote the right climate to begin dealing with a difficult situation, to deal with the problem, to use other resources and supports.

Validation keeps a relationship going because it makes understanding possible.

**Why
is
Validation
Important?
(Page 24)**

Why is Validation Important?

Validation:

- ▲ Is the core of communication (along with accurate disclosure)
- ▲ Builds trust and slows negative reactivity
- ▲ Decreases anger
- ▲ Enhances self-respect
- ▲ Is the key to getting through “rough” spots in the relationship
- ▲ Makes both the sender and recipient feel more positive about the relationship
- ▲ Makes problem solving, closeness, & other kinds of support possible

What should I validate?

If we think about it, validation is involved in most of our relationships, whether they are the close family relationships or working and professional relationships. It is not just a strategy that we use in difficult relationships; all people need validation in differing degrees.

Obviously, there has to be reality in what we validate. If someone has, for example, a dream for a professional life that is beyond his or her abilities, it would be unfair to validate the actual possibility of achieving that dream. But how we respond to the other person’s expression of the dream is important. We can be mindful and start with empathy/understanding of the dream, validate that that is what the person wants, and also realize that we do not have to support all steps of a plan. For example, if someone has broken a relationship and is moving, we can support the move but not necessarily the behavior that lead to the breakup of the relationship.

We need to be mindful, and non-judgmental, while holding to the reality of the situation. We really need to tease the components apart. For example if the person moving is your relative and it means you will have to be involved in paying for the apartment, then this is a reality problem.

The more genuinely we can accept other people’s feelings, emotions, beliefs, and values, the greater the chance of genuine dialogue. In dealing with a task that someone is finding very difficult, even if we do not understand the particular difficulties, we can validate the difficulty of doing a job. What we are really saying, is that we only validate the valid – and there are usually some parts that are valid.

Validation Skills
TEACHING NOTES

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When safety is a concern, it is especially important to only validate the valid: take for example a family member who wants to move, but previous moves have resulted in suicide attempts. The valid part is that the person wants to move, and it is likely helpful to validate that desire; this does not mean you have to support the action of moving, because you are aware of the potential consequences. Teasing apart the valid and invalid parts can be very challenging, especially when emotions are high and safety is at risk; there are times when you can only be the best parent or spouse you can be. In general, we need to reinforce positive, adaptive behaviors. It is important to emphasize that suicidal behaviors require help from professionals. If possible, obtain agreement from your relative in advance to seek professional help when feelings of suicide emerge.

**Validation
Targets**

**What
Should
I
Validate?
(Page 25)**

Targets: What Should I Validate?

- ▲ Feelings or emotions (e.g. “I can see you are really upset with me.”)
- ▲ Legitimacy in wanting something (“I know you want money to decorate your apartment because you want it to look nice. Right now I don’t have money to give you.”)
- ▲ Beliefs, opinions, or thoughts about something
- ▲ True values about something
- ▲ How difficult a task is (“I understand how difficult things are for you.”)
- ▲ How hard a person is trying to accomplish something (“I know you are trying to do the best you can right now.”)
- ▲ Things a person does that are effective for herself or himself (“I know how hard you are working on things and it looks like it is paying off. You are really trying and it is helping the situation.”)
- ▲ Things a person does for another (“You were so helpful to your grandmother.”)
- ▲ Efforts made (reinforce)

Exercise #2 What do you tend to validate the most? The least?

**BUT
(Page 25)**

Only validate valid things...

BUT

There are *always* valid parts!

How to validate

To get back to the specifics of validation: people ask how they can validate, and the answer is: any way you can! The thing to remember is that you are finding points of understanding and then communicating that you understand.

Validation is not just empathy. It is the communication of empathy.

Validation Skills TEACHING NOTES

**How
to
Validate
(Page 25)**

How Do I Validate Another Person?

ANY WAY you can:

Search for understanding and communicate that understanding

Different levels of validation

As discussed earlier, affirmation can be verbal or non-verbal. Levels of validation are not exclusive. How you validate is not as important as doing it. It's important that another human being "gets it," understands how you feel. But again, you do not have to validate all components of a situation. For example, someone breaks up with a boyfriend who drinks too much, but then is suicidal. Breaking up the relationship, this can be genuinely validated, but not the suicidal reaction.

Key words in the different levels of validation are the active listening, being non-judgmental, being mindful, disclosing your own feelings even if that means being vulnerable. Again, remember that the primary emotion is being validated, and when someone is in their emotion mind - and this state can last for extended periods of time - this is often a time when you are not going to be effective and professional help is needed. Sometimes, things don't work out no matter how skillful you are.

**Different
Levels
of
Validation
(Page 26)**

Different levels of validation

- 1) **Pay attention**, listen actively, use good eye contact and body posture to communicate that you are listening non-judgmentally. Listen mindfully- be an active rather than a passive listener.
- 2) **Reflect** his/her feelings descriptively (non-judgmentally), let yourself feel a little bit of what he/she is feeling, and let yourself show it (voice tone, facial expression, posture). Say back what you are feeling. **Acknowledge** the other person's experiences, desires, emotions, thoughts, opinions
- 3) **Summarize** her/his or your perspective descriptively. For a better understanding, clarify, through questions, what it is that you hear, that you understand. (Be careful not to disagree, criticize, or judge, not to attempt to change his/her mind or goals, nor to get him/her to do something differently). Be aware that some questions may be interpreted as opinions or judgments.
- 4) **Show tolerance**; give the "benefit of the doubt" and put the thing you are trying to validate into a broader context; see how the behavior is valid in the other person's life, given his or her^ history and experiences. Be non-judgmental.

(Continued...)

Validation Skills TEACHING NOTES

Different Levels of Validation (Page 26)

- 5) Be mindful of the other person and the relationship; stay non-judgmental; normalize thoughts, feelings, and wants in present circumstances; if the other's behavior is normal, or makes sense, say so; find parts of their experience that are normative (e.g., emotions or desires).
- 6) Practice **willingness and genuineness**. In spite of how you may feel or that you have the right answer, try to do what is effective for the moment.
- 7) **Self-disclose your own vulnerability** (this is a form of validation). If the other person is vulnerable with you, it is very validating to be vulnerable in return (especially concerning your relationship). Be genuine. **“Me too!”**

Exercise #3

Count how many times in one day you are validated by someone.

- a. How did it make you feel?*
- b. How did you respond?*

Warning signs of invalidation

These are the times when we need to slow down, de-escalate / de-polarize, to be mindful. Most of us can think of a time when we were aware of these signs in our own or other people's behavior. In our culture, we seem to be pretty good at devaluation or invalidation.

Warning Signs of Invalidation (Page 27)

The Many Ways to Invalidate the Valid

(or, 101 ways to corrode your relationship and help the other person be miserable)

- ▲ Do things to diminish safety (make threats, be coercive or aggressive)
- ▲ Ignore or don't pay attention (or pretend not to pay attention)
- ▲ Minimize feelings or their legitimacy
- ▲ Be critical or judgmental; put the worst possible “spin” on the behavior
- ▲ Let miscommunication stand un-repaired
- ▲ Be willful (focus on being right instead of effective or decent)
- ▲ Insist on your solution to the problem instead of solving the problem
- ▲ Make assumptions about another person that are not mindful, are judgmental, not consistent with the facts

Validation Skills TEACHING NOTES

Warning signs of invalidation continued (Page 27)

The Many Ways to Invalidate the Valid

(Continued...)

- ▲ Up the ante: escalate conflict
- ▲ Try to win an argument by being more hostile or attacking
- ▲ Don't pay attention to another's pain or suffering
- ▲ Engage in "controlling" behavior
- ▲ Engage in crazy-making behavior (e.g., be dishonest, or patronizing, insist she or he feels or thinks something even though they say they don't – even if you are "well-intended")
- ▲ Don't validate enough

Helping yourself to be more validating

Perhaps the main motivator for people is remembering that they really love the other person, and so they will take the steps to work on validating the other person. It helps to look at the other person's point of view or perspective, to move out of the moment's feelings. If you think about people in the morning, being grumpy, if we think how that person feels and what the outcome is that we really want, then this understanding will affect our focus and actions. We might wait for a while until the person is in a better spot before bringing up any issues.

Getting Yourself to be More Validating (Page 27)

Validation Tips

- ▲ Take the other person's perspective
- ▲ Remember the foundation: this is your family member
- ▲ Empathy = understanding and validating the other person
- ▲ Reality acceptance (what "is" versus what "should be")
- ▲ Effective assumptions promote effective behavior
- ▲ Typically, in everyday situations, if you can make three validating statements in a row, the conversation will change for the better, or at least the situation will stop from escalating.

Factors to Remember (Page 28)

Remember

- ▲ Validating doesn't mean you like it, doesn't mean you agree
- ▲ Validating does not mean problem solving (right now at least)
- ▲ Validation is not placation (e.g., agreeing with the other person **just** to get them to be quiet)
- ▲ Validate yourself

Summary: 1. Validate only the valid
2. Don't invalidate the valid
3. Don't invalidate the invalid
4. Invalidate the invalid only occasionally..& only after validating the valid a lot

We need to remember to validate ourselves. We often are judgmental of ourselves and say “I should have done better.” We are often self-invalidating because we are judgmental of our own skills. Keep in mind that although we focus on validating our relative, we need to think how we can validate ourselves and our own experiences. A major obstacle to self-invalidation is not knowing our feelings. Often, difficult situations may evoke many different emotions, or we may be stuck in judgments and secondary emotions. The critical point is that we need to be aware of what we are feeling. This awareness takes practice, to recognize and label our emotions, so that we don’t discount our feelings.

Self-Invalidation
(Page 28)

What is Self-Invalidation?

- ▲ Not knowing what we are feeling or getting stuck in secondary emotion
- ▲ Ignoring what we are feeling when we know what we feel
- ▲ Discounting what we are feeling after we have acknowledged it, i.e., saying that it does not really matter
- ▲ Allowing someone to treat us disrespectfully
- ▲ Not observing our "limits"

Consequences of self-invalidation

When a person is continually invalidated by others, it is likely that he/she will learn to turn that invalidation inwards, and then invalidate him- or herself. It makes sense: if you frequently hear from others that your emotions don’t make sense or are wrong, you will eventually come to believe that this is the case. This ends up making you your own worst enemy, in a sense, and has serious negative consequences for your well-being.

Consequences of Self-Invalidation
(Page 28)

What are Some of the Consequences of Self-Invalidation?

- ▲ It is "de-skilling," reducing our ability to cope with a given situation
- ▲ It reduces our sense of coping mastery vis-à-vis another person
- ▲ It promotes depression, guilt, shame, and burden
- ▲ It decreases our general sense of well-being including our physical health
- ▲ It increases our emotional vulnerability

Exercise # 4

In what areas of your life do you tend to invalidate yourself?

Self-validation skills

Many of the points discussed about validating others can be applied to self-validation. What we want to keep in mind is that we have a choice about getting out of emotional cycles. Learning how to promote our own emotional healing is important if we truly want to help someone else.

Many parents of offspring with BPD have been told that they are to blame for their child's illness – and some professionals still promote this idea. To accept this viewpoint is self-invalidating.

**Self-Validation Skills
(Page 29)**

How to Change Self-Invalidation: Self-Validation Skills

- ▲ Use Core Mindfulness Skills to be aware of your thoughts and feelings (p.11 in handouts)
- ▲ Acknowledge the emotion by labeling it. Is it sadness, anger, guilt?
- ▲ Validate yourself as you would if someone else expressed the feeling
- ▲ Use Radical Acceptance of your feelings, your thoughts, your actions. You might not like the feelings but you accept that they are there.
- ▲ Identify the areas where you most often self-invalidate.
- ▲ Reconsider the particular feeling from another perspective, i.e., justified guilt vs. unjustified guilt. Should you feel guilty or are you taking on guilt when it isn't justified? Example –you did not cause your relative to have BPD.
- ▲ Support your own primary emotions. They are your feelings. Let go of secondary emotions.
- ▲ Do not do "shoulds": I should feel this way or that. Your feelings are your feelings!
- ▲ Do not second guess your feelings when someone else's behavior or actions contradict what you are feeling.
- ▲ Encourage and accept validation from other people. *(Fruzzetti, 2006)*

Observing your limits

Observing your own limits is different from setting limits, as limits are not arbitrarily chosen: it is important to mindfully and descriptively notice where your natural limits are, and stand by them. Every person's limits are different, and there is no one place where you "should" set your limits. For example, we might find that we have to observe our limits about giving money to our loved ones, so that we do not become resentful, but the amount of money one is willing to give will depend on the individual and the circumstances.

Again, there is the question of balance. It is difficult to balance your needs with the needs of your loved one, but if you allow your limits to be consistently violated, you may end up feeling resentful or taken advantage of, or it may end up damaging your self-respect.

Observing your limits continued

At such times, we need to observe and think through the problem, and not just react judgmentally. Being able to “describe” and being mindful of our emotions are important skills in such circumstances.

When someone is having a hard time, it is difficult for parents or relatives to know when to set limits for someone else, and to establish your own limits and boundaries, to find that fine line between enabling and being supportive. It takes work, but you must do it if you want to be there in the long run without burning out.

**Observing
Your
Limits
(Page 29)**

Observing Your Limits

(Linehan)

Having a relative with BPD can push you sometimes to do or accept things that you might not normally do. You might allow yourself to be treated in way that you never thought you would accept.

Situations like that are not good for you personally and can cause you to “burn out.” Example: You give more money than you are able to give. People need to observe their limits. This is different from setting limits. “Setting limits” is not allowing someone to do something, i.e., not giving the child the candy before a meal.

Every situation is different and so we have to use our wise mind to determine where our limits are. If you feel full of energy, then you might say yes to a request. But if you feel “burnt out” and resentful, you might want to say no. Also of note is that your limits may shift over time. That is human nature.

Be mindful of not using the word “boundaries” as it is often experienced as a loaded term .It may bring up issues of abandonment. It is best to think in terms of observing limits.

Why and How to Observe Your Limits

This again is a list that we really need to commit to memory. It takes time and practice to learn to observe one’s own limits, especially in times of crisis, but even making a beginning can be helpful. And, as usual, begin with small steps, and practice.

Example of observing limits: Your relative asks for money and you are not sure how you feel about saying yes or no. You feel you need some time to figure out a response that you feel does not push your limits. Allow yourself that time. If you feel that giving the money is not possible for perhaps a variety of reasons, state so and then offer some problem solving if you think your relative is open to that. A suggestion is to think in terms of the following response pattern:

No. Validate: No. Validate + Problem Solve (if appropriate).

<p>Why and How (Page 29)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Why</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▲ Helps to reduce burn-out ▲ Helps to preserve the relationship ▲ Helps to preserve your sense of self 	<p style="text-align: center;">How</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▲ Identify what you are willing to accept ▲ Identify what goes beyond your limit and your sense of self-respect ▲ Accept that it is ok to say no
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When all is said and done: Sticking with your limits

The reason why we are here in this *Family Connections* program is to learn to focus on skills that make us more effective in looking after ourselves, with the added benefit that if we manage our own needs and emotions we are in a stronger position to help a child, spouse or friend.

This is an ongoing process because we all change. For parents, relatives, and spouses it is important to remember that one of the problems of the disorder is that the family member cannot regulate himself or herself. The more we as parents or role models are regulated and demonstrate our ability to grow, the more we are modeling helpful behaviors.

We learn how to behave by watching the behavior of others, so we can help our loved ones by modeling effective behavior. Although this learning process may take a long time, especially when there may be a long history of ineffective or difficult interactions, even a small shift can make a difference. In the long run, skills make a difference, even if they don't work all the time.

<p>When All is Said and Done</p> <p>Sticking with Your Limits (Page 30)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">When All is Said and Done</p> <p>The most validating concept is the importance of the other person in your life and the importance of the relationship.</p> <p>Paradoxically, sometimes you must manage your own emotions and needs first, before you can take care of someone else.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Observing (sticking with) your limits after you have identified them</p> <p><i>Exercise #5</i> <i>Observe if and when your limits are stretched. Where does it occur the most?</i></p> <p><i>Exercise #6</i> <i>If appropriate, observe your limits in a situation and write down your experience.</i></p>
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Relationship priorities

For many parents, relatives, and friends, the task of keeping the relationship on track has seemed daunting, mainly because there were no “guidelines” to follow, or milestones to give a sense of progress.

The three relationship priorities give three pegs to hang a plan on.

For many of us dealing with someone with the disorder, our sense of “rights” has been eroded, and it is helpful to have an outside, objective set of statements that say that it is OK to obtain objective goals, that it is possible to have a positive approach to establish and maintain relationships, and lastly, but equally importantly, that preserving and maintaining self-respect is an important goal.

<p>Relationship Priorities (Page 30)</p> <p>Objective effectiveness</p> <p>Relationship effectiveness</p> <p>Self-respect effectiveness</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">DBT identifies three major priorities:</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>(Linehan)</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Objective Effectiveness 2. Relationship Effectiveness 3. Self-respect Effectiveness <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Objective Effectiveness: obtaining your objectives or goals in a given situation. Getting something concrete to happen, i.e., money to be returned, a salesperson to take back an item. 2. Relationship Effectiveness: getting or keeping a good relationship; acting in a way that is positive for the overall good of the relationship. 3. Self-respect Effectiveness: preserving or improving your sense of self-respect, maintaining your values and liking for yourself in the context of the relationship. <p><i>Exercise #7</i></p> <p><i>Describe an easy problem situation</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. <i>Observe and describe your wants and desires: list them in the order of priority: objective, relationship, self-respect.</i> b. <i>Describe them each in two sentences.</i>
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**DEAR
MAN
(Page 31)**

DEAR MAN

(Linehan)

(DEAR is to guide you in the initial discussion and MAN is to guide you in your response to their responses).

D=Describe the situation. Be concise and clear, not too wordy. Aim for only two or three sentences. Only the facts.

Example: “Yesterday you asked me for \$50 and said you needed it right away.”

E=Express. Express your feelings and opinions about the situation.

Example: “It upsets me when you ask for money at the last minute. It puts me in a very pressured position.”

A=Ask for what you want.

Example: “Please ask me several days before so that I am prepared.”

R=Reinforce (reward) the other person for giving you what you are requesting.

Example: “That way the money is more likely to be available for you or we can think of alternative solutions.”

M=Be Mindful about what you are doing, keeping focused on the objective. Be a “broken record” if necessary by keeping strong in the point you are making and when it is appropriate .

A=Appear confident with a strong voice, good body posture, good eye contact.

N=Negotiate, if necessary. Example: “That time frame might work for you?”

This DEARMAN skill takes practice and can be one of the most effective skills. Aim for short statements rather than long explanations. One to two minutes for the entire DEAR MAN is the goal.

**GIVE
FAST
(Page 32)**

How DEAR MAN is accomplished

GIVE FAST

(A style you often use with your best friend)

G=Gentle; be moderate in your approach

I= Interested; listen and be interested in the other person. Don't interrupt.

V=Validate or acknowledge the other person's feelings, wants and opinions about the situation.

E= Easy manner; use a little humor, if possible; don't be intense.

F= Be Fair to yourself and to the other person.

A= (no Apologies) no apologies for making a request, saying no, for disagreeing.

S= Stick to your own values. Don't sell out when you disagree or if it goes against your beliefs.

T= Truthful; don't lie or exaggerate

Exercise #8

Use DEAR MAN with someone

a) Describe what happened.

b) Write a DEAR MAN letter to someone where there is a difficult situation to be discussed.

c) Bring in a difficult situation to do a role play

DEAR MAN and GIVE FAST

Especially in time of crisis, it is helpful to have a simplified format such as this in our minds, since at such times under pressure it is hard to be thoughtful and logical and come up with the most effective response.

Again, practice helps. It is important when talking about DBT skills to remember that usually the teaching and practice of standard DBT skills is spread over a year or so. In these 12 weeks together, we are just beginning to acquire skills to begin to change some of the aspects of relationships. Some people will find some skills harder to acquire and practice than others. But, we all need to set our priorities and limits, and then practice the skills. With continued practice, these skills become easier and easier to do in difficult situations, and you may even end up using them automatically.

Some statements seem very simple. For example, in DEAR MAN, finding your own level of "gentle" may take some reflection. It's hard to have a sense of humor when dealing with a difficult situation. Learning to believe that you alone can give yourself the right to peace of mind is, for many of us, a difficult and novel lesson.

Validation Skills

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Reminder

Self-
validate
(Page 32)

Essence of Self-Validation

- Let go of judgments of yourself (which typically lead to shame).
- Notice shame, and (if you haven't truly transgressed against your values) let it go and find the alternative, primary emotion.
- Describe situations, acknowledge wants and preferences.
- Stay with, allow, appreciate, validate your primary emotions.
- Practice just being who you are, just notice and describe.
- When in doubt, imagine that someone you care about and respect is in your situation ... How would you respond to her or him? Respond this way to yourself.

Practice Exercises (Page 33)

Practice Exercises

1. Make a validating statement once a day to one person
 - a. Note the response
 - b. How did it make you feel?
2. What do you tend to validate the most? The least?
3. Count how many times in one day you are validated by someone
 - a. How did it make you feel?
 - b. How did you respond?
4. In what areas of your life do you tend to invalidate yourself?
5. Observe if and when your limits are stretched.
Where does this occur the most?
6. If appropriate, observe your limits in a situation and write down your experience.
7. Describe an easy problem situation
 - a. Observe and describe your wants and desires: list them in the order of priority: objective, relationship, self-respect.
 - b. Describe them each in two sentences.
8. Use DEAR MAN with someone
 - a) Describe what happened.
 - b) Write a DEAR MAN letter to someone where there is a difficult situation to be discussed.
 - c) Bring in a difficult situation to do a role play