

INTERPERSONAL EFFECTIVENESS HANDOUT 18

([Interpersonal Effectiveness Worksheet 12](#))

A “How To” Guide to Validation

1. Pay Attention:

Look interested, listen, and observe. No multitasking. Make eye contact. Stay focused. Nod occasionally. Respond with your face (e.g., smile at happy statements; look concerned when hearing something painful).

2. Reflect Back:

Say back what you heard or observed to be sure you actually understand what the person is saying. *No judgmental language or voice tone!*

Try to really “get” what the person feels or thinks. Have an open mind. (No disagreeing, criticizing, or trying to change the person’s mind or goals.) Use a voice tone that allows the other person to correct you . . . and *check the facts!*

Example: “So you are mad at me because you think I lied just to get back at you. Did I get it right?”

3. “Read Minds”:

Be sensitive to what is *not* being said by the other person. Pay attention to facial expressions, body language, what is happening, and what you know about the person already. Show that you understand in words or by your actions. *Be open to correction.*

Example: When you are asking a friend for a ride at the end of a long day and the person slumps down, say, “You look really tired. Let me look for someone else.”

4. Understand:

Look for how the other person feels, is thinking, or if he or she is making sense, given the person’s history, state of mind or body, or current events (i.e. the causes)—even if you don’t approve of the person’s behavior, or if his or her belief is incorrect. Say “*It makes sense that you . . . because . . .*”

Example: If you sent a party invitation to the wrong address, say, “I can see why you thought I might be excluding you on purpose.”

5. Acknowledge the valid:

Show that you see that the person’s thoughts, feelings, or actions are valid, given current reality and facts. Act as if the person’s behavior is valid.

Example: If you are criticized for not taking out the garbage on your day, admit that it is your day and take it out. If people present a problem, help them solve it (unless they just want to be heard). If people are hungry, give them food. Acknowledge the effort a person is making.

6. Show Equality:

Be yourself! Don’t “one-up” or “one-down” the other person. Treat the other as an equal, not as fragile or incompetent.

Example: Be willing to admit mistakes. If someone introduces him- or herself by first name, introduce yourself by your first name. Ask other people for their opinions. Give up being defensive. Be careful in giving advice or telling someone what to do if you are not asked or required to do so. Even then, remember you could be wrong.

Note. Adapted from Linehan, M. M. (1997). Validation and psychotherapy. In A. Bohart & L. Greenberg (Eds.), *Empathy reconsidered: New directions in psychotherapy* (pp. 353–392). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association. Copyright 1997 by the American Psychological Association. Adapted by permission.

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