

# MANAGING ADOLESCENT-FAMILY CONFLICT: VALIDATION

From Dr Carla Humphrys

## Why validate?

Validation helps you show acceptance and understanding of how another person views a situation, even if it's different to our perspective. It helps you to think and act dialectically.

Validation also lets another person know that their feelings, thoughts, or actions are understandable in a given situation.

Validation helps to improve relationships, while deescalating conflict and intense emotions and helps the other person stay calm and more receptive of what you have to say.

Validation is not agreement. It doesn't mean that you like or agree with what the other person is doing, saying or feeling. Just that you understand where they are coming from.

## How to validate?

Give verbal responses to show you are listening. Actively listen, make eye contact and stay focused.

Make sure your verbal and nonverbal reactions are both validating; avoid saying the words but eye rolling at the same time.

Find a word to describe how the other person is feeling in the moment. Reflect the feeling back, without judgement (e.g., "I understand that you are having a tough time right now").

Show tolerance - try to see how the feelings, thoughts or actions make sense given the person's history and current situation.

Respond in a way that shows you are taking the person seriously. This can include just listening to someone who comes to you with a problem and not assuming that they want advice with problem solving (you can always check to see what they want in these situations).

Try to avoid talking about your own experiences to demonstrate your understanding as it detracts from acknowledging the experience of the speaker.

## How to validate without agreeing?

For example; Your teenager wants a later curfew, "I get that you want to stay out later since you are having fun with your friends. We agreed that this would be your curfew time until you get back on track with your school work".

## How to validate when you really can't understand their point of view?

"I can see that you are in a lot of pain".

"I know that you really want me to understand this, and I really want to understand. I am really struggling to get it at the moment, and I would like to keep talking so that I can keep trying".

## **References**

Rathus, J. H. and Miller, A. L. DBT Skills Manual for Adolescents. New York: The Guilford Press; 2015.