**Validating & Invalidating Statements and Curious Questions**

When done correctly, validation can be the best tool to help de escalate a tense situation.

Remember, not to focus on what happened; focus on what the person ***feels*** about it.

Address the person’s feelings, not the situation. To address the feelings, you must do so using emotional language, not rational or judgmental language**.**

**Examples of invalidating statements:**

When you make a validating statement, you **SHOULD NOT:**

* Make it about you. “I hated it when that happened to me.”
* Try to one-up the person. “Oh, you think you have it bad…”
* Tell them how they should feel. “You should feel lucky, blessed…” “What’s the big deal?”
* Try to give them advice. “What you really should do is…”
* Try to solve their problem. “I’m going to call that girl’s parents and…”
* Cheerlead (there is a time for this, but not now). “I know you can do it…”
* Make “life” statements. “Well, life’s not fair…”
* Make judgmental statements. “What you did was **wrong/bad/stupid…good/great**…”
* Make “revisionist” statements. “If you had only…”
* Make it about your feelings. “How do you think that makes **me** feel?”
* Make “character” statements. “You’re too sensitive.” “You’re so dramatic.”
* Rationalise another person’s behavior. “I bet they were just…”
* Call **names**. “You’re such a **baby**.” “Don’t be such a **wimp**.”
* Use reason or the “facts.” “That’s not what happened…”
* Use “always” or “never” statements. “You always get yourself into these situations…”
* Compare the person to someone else. “Why can’t you be like your sister?”
* **Label** the person. “You’re **nuts…crazy**”, etc.
* Advising to cut ties or ignore the situation. “Just ignore him.”

**Examples of validating statements:**

If you want a validating statement to feel “true”, make it about the truth of the situation for the other person. That truth is the way they feel about the event.

* I can see that you are very (upset, sad, frightened, scared)
* Here’s what I’m hearing you say (summarise with fact checking).
* I guess that must have been hard for you.
* I can see you are making an effort.
* I can see how hard you are working.
* Wow, that (she/he) must have made you feel really angry/sad, etc..
* I can see this is important to you.
* What a frustrating situation to be in!
* It must make you feel horrible to have someone do that.
* That’s got to be so (difficult, upsetting, frustrating, etc.) for you.
* Wow, how hard that must be.
* That really stinks!
* That’s messed up! (*or stronger language if you are so inclined!!*)
* How frustrating!
* Yeah, I can see how that might make you feel really sad.
* It makes sense you would be so upset about that.
* What a horrible feeling that must be.
* What a tough spot.
* It sounds like you feel that’s really unfair and you shouldn’t be asked to do that.
* That must be really discouraging.
* I bet you feel disappointed.
* Darn, I know how much that meant to you.
* Tell me more. (*shows interest*)
* I would be (upset, nervous, sad, scared, frightened, scared) too!!
* I can see you’re overwhelmed. Let me help you with that. Can we talk?
* I know you’re scared. It’s going to be hard...and I know you will figure it out.
* That must have been very upsetting for you.
* I guess that must have been hard for you.
* I’m thinking **this** must have been (upsetting, sad, frightening, scary) **for you.**
* I’m thinking **you** must have been (upset, sad, frightened, scared, etc.)
* I would have been (upset, sad, frightened, scared, etc.) too***. (Self-disclosure)***
* Of course…me, too! I would have felt the same way. ***(Self-disclosure)***
* I don’t have the same beliefs as you but I can see this is important to you.
* We are both feeling sad…we are suffering together.
* Your suffering is my suffering (because I love you).
* Fair enough.
* You may be right!

*… and, of course, many, many more. Put your own ”voice” into them!*

**Examples of probing, curious questioning:**

* Can I ask some questions?
* Is this a good time to talk?
* Can we talk?
* Tell me more.
* What are you feeling?
* I don’t understand.
* Help me to understand.
* What exactly happened? (Ask fact checking questions…)
* What am I not getting?
* Are you mad at…upset with…me?
* What are you feeling?
* How can I help you out of this pain?
* Is there anything I can do to help you?
* Can you give me a stress #? 1 = I’m OK, 10 = I’m drowning!!
* Are you safe?
* I will worry if you…(don’t keep in contact, don’t call when you leave the house, go there alone..)
* I’m worried where this will go.
* I’m thinking I might have a feeling of what you’re going through.
* Would you like my opinion or do you just want me to listen?
* Let me help you…
* Can I help you with that?
* Do you want to know what I think?
* Does this make sense?
* I need time to think about it…this. (*Buy more time*)
* I need to talk to (mum, dad, etc.) about this. (*Buy more time*)
* I / we will get back to you. (*Buy more time*)