

## What is validation and why is it important?

Validation is a way of acknowledging another person's experience. It does not require you to agree with their point of view, nor does it require you to take responsibility for another person's thoughts, feelings, or behaviors. Using validating statements and nonverbal communication facilitates an open dialogue and can help others feel heard. Invalidating responses shut people down and convey a message of intolerance, judgment, disapproval, rejection, or worse.

## How do you avoid the pitfalls of invalidating communication?

Below are examples of both validating and invalidating communication. While it is by no means a comprehensive list, it is intended to help you recognize patterns of communication that may be harming your relationships. It is also important to remember that everyone makes mistakes or allows their emotions to get the better of them on occasion. The goal is progress, not perfection! If you find yourself engaging in these invalidating behaviors, don't beat yourself up. Just do better next time!

### Examples of validating statements:

Thank you for sharing that.  
I'm so glad you trust me with this information.  
That must have been difficult for you.  
I appreciate you explaining your point of view to me.  
It sounds as though you're feeling...  
How can I support you?  
I'm sorry that happened to you.  
That sounds like a tough situation.  
Thank you for your honesty.  
Tell me more about...  
What do you need from me right now?  
How can I lighten your load?  
Thank you for...  
I can understand where you're coming from.  
I hear you.  
I can see you're really upset by this.  
What can I do to help?  
What can I do to comfort you?  
I'm here for you.  
Would you like feedback? (It's okay to ask! And it's okay to say "no" if you don't want to hear it!)  
Can I help you solve this problem?  
It sounds like you're feeling...Is that right?  
It's okay to feel...  
I believe in you.  
I get that.  
I'm proud of you.  
It sounds like you did everything you could.  
It's okay if you don't know what to do about this.  
I'm in your corner.  
You don't have to talk about that if you're not ready.  
It's not your fault. (This is especially important to emphasize if the individual has been victimized or abused.)

### Examples of invalidating statements:

I don't know why you think/feel that way.  
That doesn't make any sense to me.  
You're wrong for thinking/feeling that way.  
If I were you, I would think/feel...  
You shouldn't think/feel that way.  
That's stupid.  
Get over it.  
I'm sorry you feel that way.  
It could be worse.  
You shouldn't let it bother you.  
How do you think that makes me feel?  
I don't think that's what happened.  
Don't be so sensitive/dramatic/etc.  
That person who upset you was probably just...  
I don't think they meant to...  
You brought this on yourself.  
Well, life isn't always fair.  
Look on the bright side.  
At least it's/you're not...  
I know exactly how you feel. (Sometimes this is okay, but ask yourself, do you really?)  
I'm not having this discussion.  
That's/you're weird.  
You need help.  
You're a mess.  
You're always complaining.  
You just need more...  
Here's my opinion/advice...(Not always invalidating, but did they ask for it?)  
Passing judgment of any kind  
Stonewalling (aka the silent treatment)  
Platitudes (e.g., "tomorrow is a new day" or "everything happens for a reason")  
Sarcasm/cracking jokes  
Any derogatory/demeaning language or name calling

**Examples of validating body language/nonverbal communication:**

Appropriate eye contact  
Relaxed and open posture  
Nodding  
A reassuring smile  
Appropriate emotional responses/facial expressions  
Giving the communicator your full attention  
Comforting touch (With consent!)  
Maintaining appropriate distance from the communicator (Everyone's personal "bubble" is different. If you're not sure, ask!)

**Examples of invalidating body language/nonverbal communication:**

Avoiding eye contact/looking away  
Too much eye contact/"staring down"  
Allowing yourself to be distracted (e.g., looking at your phone or doing something else while the communicator is speaking)  
Rolling your eyes  
Smirking  
Defensive or aggressive posture (e.g., body turned away, arms crossed, squaring up)  
Touching without consent  
Invading someone's space  
Raised eyebrows  
Unwanted sexual advances/gestures