Validation

Why Validate?

Validation:

- shows that you care about the relationship
- improves communication—teens are more likely to open up when they feel heard and understood
- reduces conflict
- conveys respect and acceptance
- fosters positive mental health and emotional intelligence
- helps teens see themselves as worthy and loveable

When you validate correctly, when really "get" what the person is feeling, you will see a visible difference in their demeanour, they may respond positively, or the "fight" might go out of them, this allows you to work together to solve the problem instead of everyone trying to defend themselves.

How to Validate

Listen actively. Give the person your undivided, curious, and non-judgmental attention.

Be mindful of your response. Think about what your body language is saying (an eye roll or a frustrated sigh can be invalidating). Be careful not to minimize or dismiss the problem by saying something like, "It's no big deal" or "You worry too much."

Guess the emotions the person may be feeling based what they have said and their body language. For example, "It sounds like you are feeling really angry" or "I'm guessing you must have felt pretty hurt by that comment." Using a questioning tone allows the person to correct you if you guess wrong.
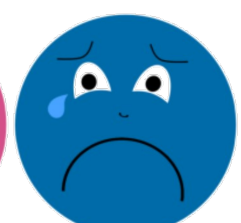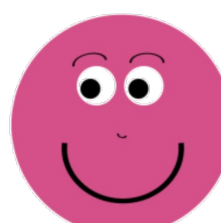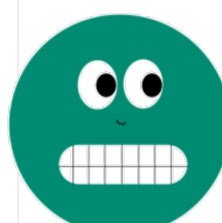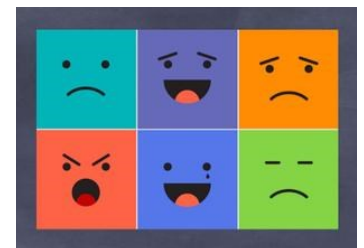
Be tolerant. Try to see the situation from the other person's perspective. How do their feelings, thoughts, or actions make sense given their situation. You do not have to agree to understand.
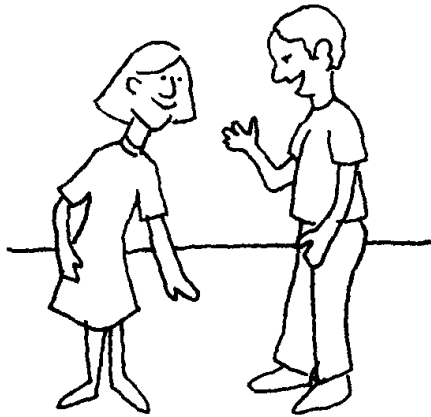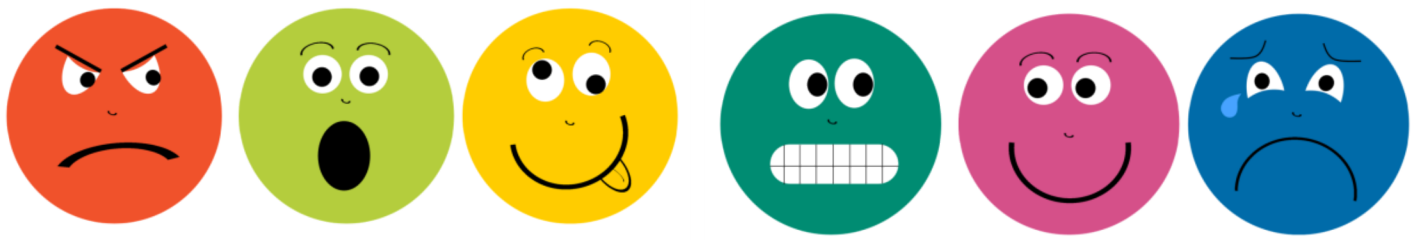
Respond in a way that shows you are taking the other person seriously (with or without words). For example, "Tell me more so I can better understand," "How is this affecting you?" or "How do you want to handle this?

Sometimes you might *not* get it. Asking curious, non-judgmental questions can help get to the crux of the issue. If you are blaming or judgmental, you are less likely get to the "kernel of truth."

Validation communicates to another person that their thoughts, feelings, and actions make sense and are understandable in a given situation.

Example

Your child comes home and they are so angry about their friend who went to the mall with someone else instead of them.

Invalidating Responses

"Oh that's okay, you'll go with them another time." OR "Do you know what I went through at work today? You teenagers have it so easy." OR "Honey, it'll be fine, don't worry about it, you'll be okay, why don't you just go by yourself?

Why? These responses are invalidating because you're not attending to the emotion. Your child was hurt because they were rejected, they were stepped over, and they don't know that they'll be fine.

Validating Responses

"Oh shoot, what happened? I'm so sorry, I would be angry too if that happened to me [just imagine if someone you were planning to spend time with after work ditched you and went to spend time with another friend, you WOULD be angry, and disappointed] that stinks...tell me more."

Why? This response is validating because you are listening, honouring the emotion, and just allowing your child to sit with it *without* trying to fix it or coming up with a solution. You may EVENTUALLY get to working out a solution, or your child may figure one out themselves, but feeling that they have actually been HEARD and UNDERSTOOD allows them to feel safe.

For more information

Can Validation Help You Connect and Bond with Your Teen?

Validation *is* acceptance and understanding

Validation is *not* agreement or approval