



## Validation: How to Support Your Loved Ones

### Why Validation Matters

From a science-based perspective, we are born with mirror neurons that fire when we see another human make a facial expression or move a certain way. In turn, we often mimic the behaviour. These neurons are thought to be directly linked to empathy.

When someone sees our emotional experience, attunes to it, and responds in a way that validates rather than fixes, our limbic brain settles. In that moment, we feel understood. We feel that who we are, just as we are, is OK.

What I have consistently seen in practice is this: human beings need to be heard and seen. We feel emotionally safe when we are validated.

Without validation, it's incredibly easy to feel dismissed, unimportant, minimized, overshadowed, and ultimately to create an internal story that who we are isn't good enough.

### Why We Try to “Fix” Instead of Validate

When someone we care about shares something painful, our nervous system doesn't stay neutral. The parts of the brain that process our own distress also activate when we witness distress in someone else — especially the anterior insula and anterior cingulate cortex, which are heavily involved in emotional resonance and empathy.

In other words, your nervous system mirrors theirs.

Because of this resonance, your brain naturally tries to reduce the discomfort it feels. Not just their discomfort, but your own. Fixing becomes a quick attempt to turn down the emotional intensity.

And while fixing often feels helpful to the fixer, it tends to feel invalidating to the person sharing. It shortcuts attunement. Instead of feeling truly met, they feel managed.

Practicing validation is the antidote. It trains your nervous system to stay grounded in the presence of someone else's emotion rather than trying to escape it. When you stay regulated, their system naturally begins to regulate too.

## How to Validate Someone Effectively

### **“I hear you.”**

This lets them know you are attentive and truly with them. It addresses one of the most universal human needs: to be seen and heard.

### **“Tell me more.”**

This shows genuine interest and signals that their inner world matters. It deepens connection for both of you.

### **“That makes sense.”**

This does not mean you agree with them. It means that from their perspective — with their history, their experiences, and their emotional capacity in that moment — their reaction or viewpoint is understandable.

### **“Thank you for sharing.”**

When someone allows you into their internal world, that is not a right. It is a privilege. Acknowledging that builds safety and trust.

### **Practice**

Use these phrases often. Practice them with intention. Notice how your relationships shift as you become more comfortable validating instead of fixing. Connection deepens when people feel seen, understood, and emotionally safe.