

Levels of Validation

Level 1: Be Present

Be present and listen intently. Show that you are paying attention by making eye contact, nodding your head, etc. You can ask questions or make comments like: "What else happened?", "Uh-huh".

Level 2: Accurate Reflection

Accurate reflection is to summarize what the person is sharing and then confirm that your reflection is correct. Here's an example: "So the reason you're upset with him is because he lied to you, is that right?"

Level 3: Read Their Behavior

Try to read the person's behavior and guess how they might be feeling. Doing this not only validates them, but helps them understand their own feelings a little better. For example, you can say something like: "I'm guessing that response from him was incredibly hurtful".

Level 4: Understanding

We react to the things based on our past experiences. Given what you know about the person's past experiences, you can try to understand where they're coming from. For example: "Since your last breakup was so hard, I can totally understand why you feel this way".

Level 5: Normalize

Let the person know that what they are feeling is completely normal, and that other people react that way too. For example: "Of course you're feeling anxious about your speech! Anyone would be nervous in your shoes".

Level 6: Be Genuine

Treat them as a real person with real feelings. Don't look down on them or be patronizing. Meet them as an equal and express genuine support and respect.

