**Validation**

Validation: communication to another person that his or her responses make sense and are understandable to you in a particular situation. The goal is to search for, recognize, and reflect back the validity inherent in the response to events. In other words, what is valid about the emotions being communicated and, despite irrational thinking patterns, illustrating an understanding as why the child is experiencing these emotions based on child’s current or past experiences? To confirm, to verify, to authenticate. Validation can be verbal or nonverbal.

Validation = being non-judgmental out loud, acknowledging someone else’s point of view, conveying understanding and empathy without trying to fix things or challenge the patient

Agreeing and understanding are not the same thing! We don’t have to agree with someone to validate them.

Sample validating statements:  
“I can tell how difficult this is for you.”   
“I understand how you feel.”   
“I understand your point of view.”   
“It makes sense to me why you are feeling this way.”

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|  | **Validating** | **Invalidating** |
| Actively Listen | Providing your child undivided attention; looking at them while they talk | Checking your cell phone for messages while talking to your child; multitasking in any way |
| Be mindful of verbal and nonverbal reactions | Making eye contact; nodding; mirroring the child’s affect | Rolling eyes, walking away, sighing; saying “you shouldn’t feel that way” |
| Observe what the other person is feeling in the moment. Look for a word or words to describe the feeling. | “I want to make sure I understand. You’re feeling anxious and worried because you have a test coming up, is that right?” | “I’m sure that’s not it”; “that’s no reason to be upset”; “I don’t understand”, “that doesn’t make sense” |
| Reflect the feeling back without judgement. | “I want to make sure I understand. You’re feeling anxious and worried because you have a test coming up, is that right?” | “I get that you’re anxious, but you have to get this work done.” “If you don’t get this under control, you’re [insert consequence here].” |
| Show tolerance! Look for ways the emotions, thoughts and actions makes sense given the context of the situation and your child’s previous experiences. | “I don’t blame you for feeling hopeless about school; things keep piling up and you feel like you’re drowning in expectations.” | “This is just the way it is”; “You have to…”; “If you try harder, you can do this”; “You’re too smart to let your emotions get in the way” |

**Levels of Validation**

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| **Levels of Validation** | | |
| Level 6 | Show Equality | “You know, when I am asked to give a presentation at work, sometimes I dread the thought of doing it, I worry about the possible outcomes too.” |
| Level 5 | Acknowledge the Valid | “I’m not surprised that you want to avoid going to school; every day is a huge challenge for you to make it through with all of the anxiety you’ve been having about failing or fitting in socially. Most people would want to avoid something so difficult.” |
| Level 4 | Communicate Understanding | “It makes sense that you feel anxious because I’m asking you to challenge your worry thought and that is really hard to do.” |
| Level 3 | “Read Minds”/Reflect What you See | “I noticed your leg has been shaking while we’ve been talking, you must be anxious.” |
| Level 2 | Reflect Back/Restate | “So you’re mad because you feel like I don’t listen to you when you have important things to say; am I understanding correctly?” |
| Level 1 | Be Present/Pay Attention | Eye contact, full attention. |

Linehan, M.M. (2015). *DBT Skills Training Manual, Second Edition*. Gilford Press, New York.

Rathus, J.H., & Miller, A.L. (2015). *DBT Skills Manual for Adolescents*. Gilford Press, New York.

**Reassurance**

Reassurance: the act of removing one’s doubts or fears; a verbal or nonverbal action that is done to make someone feel less afraid, upset, or doubtful; (aka. anything that artificially reduces anxiety or offers certainty when certainty is not available)

Reassurance is more *dangerous* for individuals with anxiety disorders than that which they fear!

**The Problem with Reassurance**

So why is reassurance such a big deal? To put it in clinical terms, when an individual seeks reassurance, they reinforce that they are unable to tolerate the discomfort of the uncertainty they are experiencing. At the same time, they reinforce that the best way to alleviate the discomfort of that uncertainty is to compulsively seek reassurance.

Concurrently, reassurance as a behavior sends the message to the brain that whatever unwanted thought set these events into motion must be terribly significant.  *“If he goes through all of this just to know for sure, then this thought must be really important!”*

Finally, reassurance is addictive. If reassurance were a substance, it would be considered right up there with crack cocaine. One is never enough, a few makes you want more, tolerance is constantly on the rise, and withdrawal hurts. In other words, people with OCD and related conditions who compulsively seek reassurance get a quick fix, but actually worsen their discomfort in the long term.

OCD Center of LA: http://www.ocdla.com/blog/reassurance-seeking-ocd-anxiety-597

Sometimes we offer reassurance to children when we feel anxiety, doubt, or discomfort – resist the urge as this reinforces intolerance of emotion for ourselves as well as our children.

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| **Reassurance** | **Validation** |
| “Don’t worry, everything is going to be OK.” | “Given what you’ve been through, I can imagine how hard this is for you” |
| “You’re alright.” | “It sounds like this situation is still really anxiety provoking; it’s impressive you have been able to handle that anxiety.” |
| “Nothing bad is going to happen.” | “Not having certainty about the outcome of an exposure is scary.” “I can understand how much easier this would be to handle if we knew that everything is going to be alright.” |
| Engaging in non-verbal reassurance (holding hands, rubbing back, nodding) in response to anxious requests or anxious behaviors. | “I can see your leg shaking which is typically a sign that you’re anxious. How would you rate your anxiety right now? It looks like it might be pretty high.” |
| Answering the same question over and over again. | “We talked about this yesterday, I’m wondering if you’re feeling anxious about having the answer |
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