

Validation:

Communicating acceptance



Validation is communicating that another's thoughts or feelings are *legitimate* for them. It communicates acceptance of the person and can improve our communication. Carmen's and my communication and our relationship have improved dramatically as we built this tool into our communication patterns. It aligns with Ephesians 4:29: "Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen." I think also of Proverbs 15:1; "A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger." The Bible admonishes us to communicate in positive ways.

Couples need to communicate positively, even when working through conflict or communicating difficult problems in their relationships. Validation helps keep communication positive, but will seem foreign and mechanical. It is foreign because our natural tendency is to get defensive, justify, or even attack when someone brings up an issue or problem. Or we may attack when we bring up the problem rather than seek understanding and resolution. We are *all* different and see things differently; when we communicate acceptance in spite of our differences, it will improve our ability to resolve conflict and work through problems.

You validate your spouse, or anyone for that matter, by using statements like; "I can understand why you would see it that way." "It makes sense that you would feel that way." "I can see that you are upset." "That must be difficult for you." It is a matter of being present and open to the way the other person thinks or feels. It's not about right or wrong. It is acknowledging the other person's point of view as *legitimate for them*. Under the circumstances, we can understand (or at least see) that they would think or feel a certain way.

The challenge is to work this positive way of communicating into our everyday communications. It may not be easy after many years of communicating in unhealthy ways, but it *is* possible! Be present; genuinely listen to what the other person is saying, reflect back what you heard them say to make sure you heard them correctly, and then *validate*: communicate acceptance of them as a person, even if you disagree with what they are saying. Learn more about validation through the links below and practice until validation becomes natural.

Helpful Resources: *Fortified Marriages Resource page: www.fortifiedmarriages.com*

Articles to Check Out:

What is Validation and Why Do I Need to Know? By Karyn Hall

Validation is the Third Step to Conflict Resolution in L.U.V.E. By Greg Smalley

Practice Validation with a Step-by-Step Communication Exercise - The Couples Dialogue