

The Validation Flower

Six petals of validation around the skills that convey empathy

Petals	Center	Based on
Six levels	OARS	Linehan; Hall

Validation: “To confirm or strengthen what is relevant, true, or effective about a response... validation also includes the communication that the person’s response makes sense” (Hall, 2011).

The center: skills to convey empathy

Open questions · Affirmations · Reflections · Summaries

The six petals

1. Listening and observing

Deep listening
Body language and eye contact, as fits the person
Verbal cues and prompts
Simple reflections

2. Accurate reflection

Thoughtful and complex reflections
An “of course” attitude
Matching tone and energy
Attunement

3. Reading between the lines

Deeper reflections
Careful guesses at deeper meaning
Unsaid thoughts, feelings and wishes

4. Understandable causes

Noting that behavior makes sense in context
How history, situation and environment shape behavior

5. Normal for anyone

Showing the response is reasonable and normal
Showing it makes sense and can work
Focusing on feelings and thoughts

6. Radical genuineness

Dropping roles and pretense
Human to human
Genuine compassion and respect

Sources

Hall, K. (2011). Validation and borderline personality disorder. National Educational Alliance for Borderline Personality Disorder.
Linehan, M. M. (2015). DBT skills training manual (2nd ed.). Guilford Press.