VALIDATION SKILLS

Module 4
Agenda

1. What is validation?
2. Three-part empathy
3. What is involved?
4. Why, when and how to use validation
What is validation?

- Validation = saying something to show you ‘get where someone’s coming from’ and accept their experience.

- People with BPD are much more sensitive to feeling invalidated.

- Their self-esteem is fragile, and invalidation leads to fear and anger, or despair and desperation.

- Validation increases self-esteem and the feeling of being understood.

I understand you’re feeling angry.
Validation = ‘three-part empathy’

Three-part empathy:

1. **Empathic Resonance**
   Understand where the person is ‘at’

2. **Expressed Empathy**
   Communicate this understanding

3. **Received Empathy**
   Do it effectively so the person experiences it as validating or empathic

• Empathy = understanding and imaginatively entering into another’s feelings whilst not being taken over by those feelings

• Validation is transactional – when someone feels you understand them, they’re more likely to try to understand you
What is involved?

• **Active observing:** Gathering information about what has happened/is happening

• **Reflection:** Reflecting back to the person your understanding with a non-judgemental attitude

• **Direct validation:** Confirming the person’s experience as understandable

**Validation is in the eye of the beholder…**

• A comment or action with intention to validate is only validating if the other person experiences it that way

• If your attempts aren’t validating, you can apologize and try again
Why is validation useful?

Validation...
- Enhances wellbeing and perceptions of relationships
- Decreases agitation

Commonly others attribute any lack of progress in a person with BPD to a lack of motivation and effort
- It may also feel like you’re being manipulated
- **However**, it’s essential you maintain the belief that they’re doing the best they can
- Mostly they’re just trying to manage their feelings and, in desperation, persuade others to help
When to use validation

- There are situations where you’ll have to work to find something to validate: finding the ‘kernel of truth’
- e.g. don’t want to validate self-harm as a solution, but helpful to validate how distressed the person must have been

Six common forms of validation:
1. Listening
2. Accurate reflection
3. Articulating the unverbalized
4. Normalizing in the context of a person’s biological sensitivity
5. Normalizing in the context of the current situation
6. Practical validation
For more information...

www.bpdfamily.com

www.rethink.org

www.borderlinepersonalitydisorder.com