

# Empathic Listening and Validation

## 1- INTRODUCTION

Take the empathy quiz – see email in Dating and Relationships e-mail folder. It's from Love and Logic.

2- It's not about the nail: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-4EDhdAHRog>.

I do not have the power to make it all better for anyone else. I can offer my help, but I cannot make it all better.

Do not use "should" and "ought to" words. They strongly imply expectation and obligation rather than choice.

3- The universal need: Every person needs to feel that I am of worth, my feelings matter, someone really cares about them.

4- Children's game of Hot Potato. Problems are much like hot potatoes. The object is to pass them on as quickly as possible. **Always remember where the responsibility for the problem belongs. If you do that, then you can continue to ask questions until what is needed is within the bounds you can handle.**

A parent comes to you about a failing grade for their child. They may state things like, "I don't know what to do." At that point, you can use a validating question such as, "What would you like to do?" "What have you tried so far?" "What are your options?" **I don't know is always a lie.**

A parent says, "What would you do if you were me?" you can respond, "I don't know. What have you tried? What else could you do?" **let the person with the problem come up with the solution.**

If they still don't have an answer, you can offer some possible ideas, but stay firmly in the place that they are responsible for the problem and that they will know the best solution.

### **Rather than saying**

You should.

This is the way to do it.

You can't possibly be serious about that.

Do it that way and you'll be sorry.

Take my word for it, there's only one way to go.

### **Say**

You might want to think about...

Consider this.

That's an interesting way  
to think about that.  
Have you thought  
about...? Give it a try.  
All things considered, if  
it was my decision, I'd...

5- I do not have the power to make anything all better for anyone else- I can offer my help,  
but I cannot make it all better.

6- RULES OF VALIDATION:

- LISTEN to what is being said
- LISTEN to the feelings
- LISTEN to the needs being expressed
- UNDERSTAND by putting yourself in the other person's shoes as best you can

Brown- the pre-requisite for real empathy is compassion. We can only respond empathically if  
we are willing to be present to someone's pain.

7 ASKING QUESTIONS:

- Use how, what, when, where, do and is. Never use WHY?
- Avoid using the word, "BUT" when possible after a validating statement.
- Use operative words- listen to the feelings and then use those as you respond with empathy. (Statement: I am feeling *sad*? Question: What are you feeling *sad* about?)  
(Statement: "My children are having such a *hard time*? Question: What are they having a *hard time* with?)

8 VALIDATING STATEMENTS:

Oh

I'll bet that's hard.

I hear what you are saying.

I think I might have felt the same way.

Tell me more.

That's painful.

That must be... (use operative word)

9 VALIDATING QUESTIONS:

How did that make you feel?

What would you like to do?

What do you think would work?

What was that like?

What do you think caused the problem?

Listen with lots of validating phrases first. Then, ask validating questions as needed. **Learn the value of silence while you wait for an answer.**

### **STICKY NOTE ACTIVITY: WRITE DOWN YOUR 3 FAVORITE VALIDATING STATEMENTS.**

#### 10 TIMING FOR TEACHING:

Do not teach in the heat of the moment.

Do NOT give Positive Mental Attitude statements UNTIL AFTER the person has stated them himself. Let him walk through all of the junk he wants to walk through first.

If something a student, child, spouse does bugs you- wait 24 hours. Then, if it is still bugging you, look for an opportunity to address it.

#### 11 - VALIDATING WITH TEENAGERS: Don't get furious- get curious! Ask questions.

Use the "what if's" on p. 284

Often teenagers will express their ideas and views that appear to be in opposition to family values. Parents usually tense up and start defending or "selling" the family values all over again, thinking they need to make a strong case against their teens opposing viewpoint. Don't do it. You don't have to agree with their thinking—just listen and try to understand where they're coming from.

In the process of speaking their minds, our youth often see the folly of their own thinking. Even if they don't express their realization, they are likely to act upon it. If we interrupt them with our seasoned point of view, they must switch into a defense mode, which only strengthens their views, however far from accurate they may be. **The more we preach the more they will feel compelled to keep defending that point of view through their actions.** Validation shows we believe in them and their common sense.

**It is important to remember that everyone has the right to choose. When we remove that right by telling them what to do before they even have a chance to consider what is best for them, we literally force them into choosing the opposite.**

Story of Leland and Gayle

#### 12- Respond with Empathy, Not Reason

- Empathy first – in response to a child protest, question, or complaint
- Logic, information, demands come second
- Empathy – state your child's feeling
- Child protests when you tell him to turn off the

TV. Your 1st response, “You want to keep watching TV.” then you add, “But it is time to go to bed.”

Student tells you that they were not able to complete their homework because.... You respond, “I can hear that you were busy last night. It sounds like you have a lot going on. Your homework is still due today and will be marked late...”

- Empathy validates the child’s feeling.
- Empathy lets the child know you “hear” him.
- Empathy lets your child calm down and hear you (and cooperate).

Re-take the empathy quiz – see email in Dating and Relationships e-mail folder. It’s from Love and Logic.

13– In human relationships - SLOW IS FAST

14 VALIDATING DOES NOT MEAN GIVING UP PERSONAL BOUNDARIES:

[LOOK AT THE BOUNDARIES BOOK IN HEIDI’S TEXT](#)

Personal boundaries are your value system in action. In setting respectful boundaries, you must be

- Kind (empathy first- logic second)
- Gentle
- Respectful
- Firm

15 – Boundaries and Compassion - From Brené Brown: “The most compassionate people I interviewed also have the most well-defined and well-respected boundaries. They assume that people are doing the best they can, and they also ask for what they need, and they don’t put up with a lot of crap. I lived the opposite way; I assumed that people weren’t doing their best, so I judged them and constantly fought being disappointed which was easier than setting boundaries. Boundaries are hard when you want to be liked and when you are a pleaser hell-bent on being easy, fun, and flexible. Compassionate people ask for what they need. The trick to staying out of resentment is maintaining better boundaries- blaming others less and holding myself more accountable for asking for what I need and want.

Living BIG is saying: “Yes, I’m going to be generous in my assumptions and intentions while standing solidly in my integrity and being very clear about what’s acceptable and what’s not acceptable.”

HANDLING CRITICISM AND JUDGMENT:

16 -PEOPLE ARE DOING THE BEST THEY CAN:

Tell story from Brené Brown's book- pages 110-113

IF YOU FIGURE OUT HOW YOU WANT TO MAKE SOMEONE FEEL, YOU CAN ALWAYS USE THAT TO UNDERSTAND HOW YOU'RE FEELING

When we stop caring what other people think, we lose our capacity for connection. But when we are defined by what people think, we lose the courage to be vulnerable. The solution is getting totally clear on the people whose opinions actually matter. These should be people who love you not despite your imperfections and vulnerability but because of them. (Write them down on a 1" square paper)

17 – Boundaries - Watch this clip: <https://vimeo.com/274228723> Boundaries with Brene Brown

Choose discomfort over resentment <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zDIQQx1KNZc>

What's okay and what's not okay

BIG – What Boundaries need to be in place for me to stay in my integrity and make the most Generous assumptions about you.

18 -THE STORY I'M MAKING UP IS... (STORMY FIRST DRAFT).

Rumbling become part of the culture- clean communication, curiosity, circling back...Our arguments are usually intensified by the stories we tell ourselves.

**ACTIVITY: WRITE IN YOUR JOURNAL ABOUT A TIME YOU MADE UP A STORY ABOUT A SITUATION AND LATER FOUND OUT IT WAS WRONG.**

19- Conflict Management Style Clip

CONFLICT MANAGEMENT STYLE (by Thomas Kilmann)

Visual overview: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PFlydyH2H8Y>

20 – Arthur Brooks BYU Speech <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qSflt1qrROM>

Do the I Don't Have to Make Everything All Better Worksheet you Created and exercises from the book pages 274-286

21 - MANIFESTO OF THE BRAVE AND BROKEN-HEARTED

*There is no greater threat to the critics and cynics and fearmongers  
Than those of us who are willing to fall  
Because we have learned how to rise.*

*With skinned knees and bruised hearts;  
We choose owning our stories of struggle,  
Over hiding, over hustling, over pretending.*

*When we deny our stories, they define us.  
When we run from struggle, we are never free.  
So, we turn toward truth and look it in the eye.*

*We will not be characters in our stories.  
Not villains, not victims, not even heroes.*

*We are the authors of our lives.  
We write our own daring endings.*

*We craft love from heartbreak,  
Compassion from shame,  
Grace from disappointment,  
Courage from failure.  
Showing up is our power.  
Story is our way home.  
Truth is our song.  
We are the brave and brokenhearted.  
We are rising strong.*