

# How to validate colleagues in a high pressure environment.



## The importance of validation in the workplace

I was teaching a very difficult Year 3 class for one day a week, it was so hard it made me question my ability as an experienced teacher and leader. I mentioned to the class teacher that I really didn't know how she coped for the other four days a week. Suddenly she was crying, I apologised profusely but she said, 'thank you, I was beginning to think it was just me, it feels good to have this acknowledged.'

A moment of validation where she felt heard amongst all the noise, was all she needed. I went back the week after and she had found a new strength and confidence to implement more strategies, instead of feeling defeated. She was more open, wanted to talk and was more inclined to ask for help.

It's so hard to see things from another's perspective when you are already in the thick of the noise, pressure, busyness of the everyday. And if you hear it, will it cost more money? Will it require new resources? An outside agency? An additional member of staff?

Maybe or maybe not, but it will definitely create space for someone to figure out what's needed to improve the situation for everyone, so they are in a better place to teach and ultimately be able to raise standards for children.



Validation is a significant aspect of creating space for others to be able to accept their feelings, thoughts, and experiences as valid, even if you don't necessarily agree with them. This practice fosters trust, empathy, and mutual respect. Which builds an organisation where people feel safe, accepted and understood. They will want to work harder and do better when their needs are met in this way. This can be a smart, efficient and highly effective way to support someone to be able to take action and move on. Ignoring experiences and trying to move on swiftly can lead to bigger problems.

## **Ways to Validate**

### 1. **Listen Actively**

Pay full attention when someone is speaking. This means putting away distractions, making eye contact, and showing genuine interest in what they are saying. This is not always easy in the digital world we live in. Active listening demonstrates that you value their words and are invested in the conversation.

### 2. **Acknowledge Feelings**

Acknowledge the other person's feelings without judgment. Phrases like "I understand why you feel that way" or "It sounds like you're really upset", can go a long way in making someone feel heard and understood.

### 3. **Show Empathy**

Try to put yourself in the other person's shoes to understand their perspective. Empathy involves more than just hearing their words; it requires you to feel with them and express understanding and compassion.

### 4. **Avoid Judgment**

Refrain from passing judgment or offering unsolicited advice. Validation is not about solving problems but about acknowledging emotions and experiences. Let the person know that their feelings are valid and that it's okay to feel the way they do.

### 5. **Reflect and Paraphrase**

Reflect back what the person has said to show that you are listening and understanding. Paraphrasing their words can confirm that you have accurately grasped their message and emotions and can help them to process what they are saying and feeling.

### 6. **Offer Support**

Let them know you are there for them and offer support if needed. Simple gestures, like asking how you can help or just being present, can provide comfort and reassurance.

By incorporating these validation techniques into your interactions, you can strengthen your relationships and cultivate a more supportive and empathetic environment.

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