

Wednesday Workshop: Understanding and Supporting Teen Mental Health Notes

Invalidation

When someone tells you that what you're experiencing is either

- a. Not true (you don't really feel that way) or
- b. Wrong (you shouldn't or it's inconvenient for you to feel that way)

we call it invalidation. And it usually feels terrible to be invalidated.

Invalidating means to:

- Reject
- Ignore
- Judge the person's feelings
- Judge the person

Examples of invalidation:

3 year old: "Daddy, I'm thirsty."

Daddy: "No you're not. You just had a drink."

Wife: "That really hurt my feelings."

Husband: "Don't be ridiculous; it wasn't a big deal."

Teenager: "I'm super stressed about my life."

Parent: "What do you have to be stressed about? You don't even have a job!"

Invalidation makes people feel inadequate, inferior, and insignificant. It rejects or ignores REAL feelings.

It often leads someone to respond by shutting down (hypo-arousal), or getting very angry (hyper-arousal).

Sometimes other people invalidate us and sometimes we invalidate ourselves.

Where do you see invalidation in your life?

Validation

So what is validation?

We call it validation when someone notices your reality, and comments on it. They don't even have to agree with it.

They are letting you know that your view of reality does, in fact, exist (it's real) and your view of reality is understandable (logical in some way).

Examples of validation:

"It makes sense that you are stressed. You have never been a 15-year old before and it is a lot to handle!"

"It makes sense that you would feel afraid to trust me; I have not always been a safe person for you."

"I understand that you're feeling upset; you're really hurt." (Even if you disagree with why they are hurt—this would not have hurt your feelings—you can acknowledge that their feelings are hurt).

If you struggle to make sense of someone's feelings and they seem illogical to you, the next step is to BE CURIOUS.

Examples:

"Tell me more about what is going on for you."

"Help me understand what this is like for you."

"Does this remind you of something else that happened in your life?"

When you validate someone, you put in the work to try and understand what it is like to be them. You do not compare them to someone else (or to yourself at that age). You simply give them permission to be a different person than you, and you do the work to understand what that must be like for them.

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Teen Mental Health Resource List

Age of Opportunity: A Biblical Guide to Parenting Teens by Paul David Tripp

Axis: The Culture Translator
<https://axis.org/>

Brainstorm: The Power and Purpose of the Teenage Brain by Daniel Siegal

Raising Boys & Girls (books, podcast, or anything by Sissy Goff & David Thomas)
<https://www.raisingboysandgirls.com/>

The Anxious Generation: How the Great Rewiring of Childhood is Causing an Epidemic of Mental Illness by Jonathan Haidt

Crisis Hotlines:
LaFrontera AZ Empact Suicide Prevention 480-784-1500

National Suicide Hotline: 988

Teen Lifeline: 602-248-8336

Teen Mental Health Workshop Homework

1. How did your parents communicate with you when you were a teen?
2. What was helpful and unhelpful about their communication style?
3. How has that shaped your own parenting?
4. What are your fears for your teen? How have those fears impacted your ability to stay calm and parent with wisdom?
5. What do you wish your teen knew about your experience as their parent?
6. What is one small change you would like to try this week to help improve your relationship with your teen?
7. Do you pray for your teen? Do you think they know you pray for them?