



## CLINICAL COLUMN

### "Dealing with Aggression" Part One

*By Validation Founder, Naomi Feil*

“Get out of my room, you bitch!” Agnes Jones’ voice was low, menacing; her rasping breath tore her daughter’s heart. Jill, Agnes’ 52-year-old daughter, paled and fled. Her mother’s face followed her: tight lips, shrewd brown eyes narrowed and scheming. Her mother’s cold hateful voice shadowed Jill from the Colonial Assisted Living Center to her own home. “I’ll never go back there. I will never see my mother again. My own mother hates me.” Furious at the injustice, Jill sobbed in pain.

“Why do you treat your daughter like that?” The well-meaning nursing assistant rebuked 89-year-old Agnes Jones. “She deserves it!” Agnes spat. “She’s too busy to have me live with her. She has plenty of room. She’s got a maid to clean her house. But no, she doesn’t want to be bothered by her sick mother. I brought her into this world. I nursed her when she was sick. Now that I’m old and useless, she only comes to see me because she’s scared that I’ll take her out of my will. I still have some money, you know, even if this fancy place stole most of it.”

“Why can’t you be grateful that a loving daughter visits you almost every day?” The nursing assistant was getting impatient.

“It’s easy for you to talk. You’re young. You’re not stuck in a



## "Dealing with Aggression" (continued)

lousy place with a lot of old, crabby people you can't stand. Just get out and leave me alone." Agnes' shrill voice dismissed the 28-year-old nursing assistant who vowed never to waste time with this woman again.

Admonished by the nursing assistant, Agnes' fury escalated. Anger had always been the antidote for her fears. To survive the fear of being alone, she blamed her husband for leaving her when he died. To deal with physical pain, she blamed the doctors for her debilitating arthritis. To endure old age, she blamed her daughter for not appreciating her and neglecting her. At age 89, Agnes could not and would not change her familiar pattern of blaming to cope with crises.

Agnes swore at the housekeeping person: "Get

the hell out of my drawer. I know what you're doing. You're stealing my pearls." Agnes had hidden her pearls herself. The activity worker had tried "Re-direction" and "Diversion" to calm her. "I won't waste my time playing bingo with those old fogies. Leave me alone." She wanted to have nothing to do with anybody.

How do you deal with an aggressive old woman like Agnes Jones? How can you "Validate" her? At age 52, Agnes' daughter, Jill, was open to "Validation." It took six months, but Jill persisted. Her yearning to connect with her mother kept her going.

In the next *Validation Newsletter*, the CLINICAL COLUMN will illustrate specific Validation techniques Jill learned to stay connected to her mother.