

Naomi's Clinical Column from the Fall 2012 Newsletter

In the last two years, I have received more and more questions regarding sexual acting out behaviors of very old people. Here are a few examples, and Validation Helping methods for: spouses, adult children, home health workers, institutional caregivers, and physicians.

Tom Albert had always been a true gentleman; courteous, controlled, charming. He was always faithful. He expressed sexual needs only occasionally. His wife, Sally, sadly admitted that Tom was never demonstrative. What has happened to this 92-year-old? He had been a successful engineer... "Robert Cooper, Ph.D., (2006), argues that we actually, have four brains, not one...the brain in our head (neo-cortex, limbic brain, and reptilian brain), the brain in our gut (the enteric nervous system), the brain in our heart (the neuro-cardiovascular system), and the one in our spine (the cranial-sacral system). In truth, all of these structures functioning together are one unified brain.)"[1] with damage to his cognitive structures, his sensory apparatus, his social controls, his proprioceptive self-awareness, Tom no longer knew where he was. His vision and hearing were impaired. Judgment, clock-time, vanished. Very old people, having lost cognition and perception often return to early-learned movements. They yearn to communicate with touch. Somatic memories return. Like eating, talking, and walking, feeling with one's hands and sexual needs, are one of our basic human behaviors. Tom's suppressed sexual needs surfaced. When caregivers tried to re-direct him to another activity, Tom returned to his sexual acting out behaviors. His feelings and human needs ignored, diversion did not work.

Validation is a holistic method. The Validation worker is aware of the interplay of bio-physiological and psychological behaviors. The Validating caregiver is non-judgmental, recognizing that this old human being has suppressed sexual feelings for a lifetime, and in old age, returns to early acting out behaviors. But, intellectual awareness is not enough. In order to fully empathize, to step into the shoes of the old person, the caregiver must be self-honest and self-aware.

Tom and his Wife

Sally shifted, backed up, embarrassed. "Where did you get those beautiful boobs, sweetie pie?" Tom, her husband of 55 years leered, his lips twitching, his eyes, bright, wanting with a twinkle. Tom's voice, usually melodious, deep, controlled, now squeaked. His bony, arthritic fingers, yellowish nails groped. This stooped, caricature of a man could not be her handsome husband. Sally sobbed, "Stop it, Tom! Don't touch me!"

How a Wife Validates:

*Own your feelings: "He's disgusting. His beady brown eyes leering at me. All he wants is a prostitute. I hate him!" Put your feelings away until later, in the top shelf of the closet of your mind.

*Don't Judge: "His brain has changed. He's lost control. He is not doing this to hurt me. He's lost his perception of how I feel."

*Center to be open: Take 8 deep breaths in through your nose and out of your "Center." ("Validation Breakthrough" and "VFValidation")[2]

*Calibrate: Look at Tom's eyes, his hands, his muscles; listen to his breathing and his voice-tone. Sense his sexual need.

*Re-phrase: Say what he feels, matching his feelings: "Tom, you want to touch my breasts."

*Reminisce: "Do you remember our first date? We danced so close."

*Use Music: "Let Me Call You Sweetheart..." Sing the Love Song softly, as you gently place his arm around your neck and begin to dance with him.

*Use Polarity: Ask the extreme. "What do you like the most about me?"

*"I love your voice. Let's sing together." You have helped Tom's satisfy his need to touch, be close, and be loved. If you move with him each time he acts out, using music, the acting out behavior will lessen.

*Express your feelings: Call someone in your Support Group or a Family Member who understands Validation: "Tom is driving me crazy. Do you know what he did this morning...?"

Tom and his Home Health Aide

SMACK! Jennie Jones, Tom's caregiver's soft voice became livid in outrage. The washcloth hit the floor. "Let go of my hand. I don't get paid to rub your penis. Your wife can hire a prostitute." Tom chuckled, tightening his golfer grip on her thin wrist. "Sweetie, you are luscious. Just a little squeeze. You can also kiss it." Tom's lusty voice pleaded with a trace of good-natured humor. Jenny mobilized her 100 pounds, and shoved Tom on the toilet seat. The 92-year-old man flopped down, grabbing Jennie's breast on the way. Furious, Jennie shouted, "Don't you dare touch me."

How a Home Health Aide Validates:

*Own Your Feelings: "The nerve of him! He needs a good smack where it hurts. What a dirty old man. I want to quit this job! Enough is enough."

*Don't Judge: "Ok. I didn't take that Caregiver Course for nothing. He doesn't recognize me. I can't take this personally. His brain won't let him control himself. He can't help it."

*Center: "Take 8 deep breaths, in and out of my Center."

*Calibrate: "His eyes are small and bright. His grip is tight. His voice is cracked and high. He is chuckling. He really is enjoying this."

*Re-phrase: Match the smile in his voice: "You really like sex, don't you, Mr. Jones?"

*RE-minisce: "Did you have good sex with your wife? Were you 18 when you met her?"

*Use Music and Movement: "Did you sing with her?" Take his hands and move with him, singing, "You Are My Sunshine," Keep singing as you finish dressing him. Use a beachball and play catch with him for at least ten minutes each day.

*Review what has happened with your Supervisor. Express your feelings.

Tom and his Physician

Like a flash of lightning, the stethoscope hit the floor. "Mr. Albert! Please! Behave yourself! I thought you were a gentleman!" Dr. Margot Morris, M.D., horrified, struggled to retrieve her strangled stethoscope and avoid Tom's grasping hand, now strong with desire. "Man! am I gentle, baby. You can feel it grow. "The woman within the Physician warned, her voice menacing, "Keep your hands to yourself!"

How a Physician Validates:

* Own Your Feelings: "I don't need this! Why didn't I up his medication? I told his wife he needed institutionalization. This man needs a male doctor."

*Don't Judge: "Tom Albert was always a controlled man. He suppressed his sexual needs. At 92, he's lost his social controls. He is not consciously aware that his behavior is inappropriate."

*CENTER.

*Calibrate: "His eyes are bright, but his gaze not focused; he doesn't recognize me; his face is flushed; muscles tight; lips loose, mouth open; breath comes in spurts; his grip is strong; feet firmly planted.

*Rephrase: "You are a gentle man, Mr. Albert?"

*Reminisce: How did you learn to make love to a woman? Where did you meet your wife?

*Polarity: What do you like the most about her?"

*His Preferred Sense is visual. He uses his mind's eye to see. His vision is impaired. "What does she look like? Her eyes? The color of her hair?" As he remembers, Tom becomes more verbal. He loosens his grip on Dr. Morris' wrist.

*Meet with a colleague, discuss your feelings and a possible referral to a male physician.

Tom and his daughter

"I love you, Daddy, now go to sleep." Sharon's soft, soothing voice vanishes, unheard, into thin air. Tom is deaf. Bending close to her father. Tucking the blanket lovingly, Sharon didn't see Tom's itchy fingers, with the swiftness of Houdini, pulling her body on top of him. "Mademoiselle from Armentieres, parlez-vous. She hasn't been screwed in 20 years." Tom roared, singing with joy. His large, misshapen hands caressed Sharon's buttocks, blue veins bulging. "Sharon gasped, her breath in spurts. Her cry a sob. "Daddy, what are you doing?"

How an Adult Child Validates:

*Own Your feelings: "Oh God! Is this incest? My own father. He was never like this. My Daddy was a wonderful man. What's happened to him. This is not my father. Help!"

*Don't Judge: The doctor said his brain damage can cause loss of control. He can't see and he doesn't know who I am. He can't tell time anymore. He's moving in the past. He was in France during the war. He was only 18. He thinks I'm a woman he met in the war.

*CENTER

*Match his Emotions: The daughter begins to sing with Tom, slowly moving away from him, holding his hand, singing "Mademoiselle from Armentieres," matching his rhythm and pitch. They sing war songs together, then a lullaby and Tom falls asleep. The daughter calls the Validation Practitioner, or a trusted friend, or a physician trained to understand the "Maloriented" and "Time Confused" old person. She expresses her feelings about her father, and learns Validation techniques.

[1] "Bodymind is One Word," Illana Rubenfeld, Ph.D., and Camilla Griggers, Ph.D., SOMATICS, 2009, VOLUME XV1, NUMBER 1, NOVATO, CALIFORNIA 94945.

[2]. See website, www.vfvalidation.org for books on Validation Techniques