



# Validation

A NEWSLETTER FOR THE VALIDATION TRAINING INSTITUTE



**"Using the techniques: POLARITY, RE-PHRASING"**  
By Naomi Feil, M.S.W., A.C.S.W.

Q. How do I Validate someone using the technique, 'Polarity'? Here is an example of a real case: Elsie J., age 88, lives in her own home, refuses physical therapy. She has had a stroke, and without physical therapy, she will become bed-ridden. Physical therapists have tried the following interventions without success:

**1. Reality Orientation and Confrontation:**

Physical Therapist: "You like to walk. Without daily physical therapy, you will never walk again."

Elsie: "Just leave me alone. I know what's best."

**2. Behavior Modification:**

Physical Therapist: "I can't come to see you anymore if you refuse physical therapy. Your daughter is spending a lot of money on you. She'll feel terrible if you waste it."

Elsie: "That's her problem, not mine. Go and help other people and leave me alone."

**3. Re-direction:**

Elsie: "Stop fussing with me! Get out of my house! I didn't ask you to come here. I have my rights!"

Physical Therapist: "What a beautiful apartment you have here. Did you decorate by yourself? Can you show me the pictures of your family?" (She prepares to massage Elsie's leg as she talks.)

Elsie: "You're not fooling me. Sweet talk me all you like, but you're not touching my leg."



**Two Validation Techniques:**

**1. POLARITY (asking the extreme)**

Physical Therapist: "What is the **worst** thing that could happen to you, if I massaged your leg?"

Elsie: "You could hurt me. I could die." (continued on page 2)

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## “Using the Validation techniques: polarity, re-phrasing”

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Physical therapist: “Did they hurt you at the hospital?”

Elsie: “They sure did. They almost killed me. I was in agony. I can’t tell you how much pain I was in. I called and called. They looked at me and left the room. They never came when I called them.”

### 2. RE-PHRASING

Physical therapist: Is it that they don’t care about you?”

Elsie: (Her voice less hostile, more trusting)  
“That’s it. Nobody cares.”

Physical Therapist: “That’s the hardest blow, isn’t it? The feeling that no one cares.”

Elsie: (her voice low, trembling) “Yes. That’s hard. It’s hard to be old and sick and alone.”

(The physical therapist and Elsie share an intimate look. Elsie feels understood.)

Physical therapist: “Do you think that I care about you?” (Elsie nods. She extends her leg.)  
“You could massage me a little, and we’ll see what happens. But as soon as it begins to hurt, you stop.”

The physical therapist nods and begins her treatment, gently.