

Validation

A NEWSLETTER FOR THE VALIDATION TRAINING INSTITUTE



CLINICAL COLUMN

"Dealing with Aggression" Part One

By Validation Founder, Naomi Feil

FALL 2001

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Part One"

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"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.

❖ NOTE: Naomi Feil's workshop schedule, plus new articles on Validation are found on our VALIDATION WEBSITE. Visit our website at www.vfvalidation.org

Please send your \$20 yearly membership fee:

The Validation Training Center, 21987 Byron Road, Cleveland, Ohio 44122. This is our only funding source for THE VALIDATION NEWSLETTER. Your support empowers us to spread the Validation message, and enables us to reach families worldwide.



Validation News Around the World

- ❖ **Germany** - European Manager, Vicki de Klerk-Rubin and the German Red Cross have negotiated a new Authorized Validation Organization Contract. It will be used worldwide.
- ❖ **Japan** - *The Validation Breakthrough* is being published in Japanese and will be distributed soon.
- ❖ **Spain** - Editorial Herder, a Spanish publishing house, wishes to translate our book, *Validation: the Feil Method* and distribute it in Spanish-speaking countries worldwide.
- ❖ **Australia** - Ann Gurnett, Certified Validation Teacher, has organized a South Australian Validation Centre. Contact: Ann Gurnett EN. CVT. T. & T, c/o 1/9 Newhaven/Glenelg, North 5045, Adelaide, South Australia.
- ❖ **United States** - We welcome our new trustee, Ms. Betty Kemper, President of the Kemper Co., Managing Senior Living Communities. Also, in the U.S., The Validation Training Institute is receiving many letters. One thanked us for the "gift of Validation that helped our mother die with dignity." Alan Rosenbloom, former head of the American Association of Homes and Services for the Aging, and VP of the Pennsylvania Healthcare Association, is interested in working with Michael Leader, County Meadows CEO, to bring Validation into the mainstream of Healthcare services.

Upcoming Validation Events

- ❖ The next European Validation Association meeting will be held in Stockholm, Sweden, October 26, 27 and 28, 2001. Teacher meetings will be held on October 24 and 25. All those interested in Validation are invited. Contact our European Manager, Vicki de Klerk-Rubin, Wohllebengasse 7, #9, 1040 Vienna, Austria, for details.
- ❖ The next Validation Worker Course taught by Vicki de Klerk-Rubin will begin on February 6, 2002. The First Validation Group Practitioner Course in the U.S. graduated 13 Certified Group Practitioners on May 4, 2001. There are 15 Certified Validation Workers. Contact Jana Stoddard at Country Meadows, 830 Cherry Drive, Pa., 17033 Phone: 800-322-3441, to register or for detailed information.
- ❖ Certified Group Practitioners will begin the first Validation Teacher Courses on January 10, 2002.



"How Validation Assisted in Re-establishing an Improved Quality of Life for my Wife: a Carer's Perspective" Part One

By Ken B. E. Raff, Melbourne, Australia

John Baley in his biography of his wife, Iris Murdoch, the eminent English novelist who died a few weeks back, speaking of their life before Alzheimer's developed, says, "I never traveled in the spirit after Iris when she was away for a brief period, and I don't think she ever needed or wanted to rush back to me. We were separate but never separated."

Earlier in the book he had written, "One needs very much to feel that the unique individuality of one's spouse has not been lost in the common symptoms of a clinical condition."

Baley speaks of a relationship level often ignored or said not to exist. On one occasion, a G.P. told me that I 'must' cease visiting my wife two or three times a day in the nursing home. Instead, he said, I must build a new life for myself because the woman who was my wife was gone. Now, I trust that within the time remaining me, I shall demonstrate that, assisted by Validation, my woman is the same person before and after Alzheimer's, albeit on a different level -- a level that has for me, and I hope for her, a genuine reality.

I am not a qualified Validation practitioner. I speak from my own experience using Validation principles to improve my wife's quality of life. I believe my specific husband/wife situation meets the general concern of all carers. We share common ground -- the belief that Validation principles can bring untold peace and benefits to both carer and sufferer, possibly even negate the need for nursing home care in some cases.

At the end of November, 1994, my wife was

admitted to a nursing home following Alzheimer's diagnoses at a holding hospital. No alternatives to a nursing home were offered or suggested, and I, and our family, bowed to expert opinion. From there everything went down hill. My wife was drugged until her behavior modified to suit the establishment. She gradually slipped away from me. No hope was offered. Experts painted a despairing picture -- continuous decline into oblivion, the person gone, the body still physically alive.

Over the next 12-18 months my wife steadily deteriorated, becoming an old lady, bent double, walking with difficulty, tongue constantly acting unnaturally, at times on vitamin-supplemented food, eyes permanently glazed, increasingly incontinent. Whenever I queried this deterioration, I was informed it was part of her condition. However, on one occasion, the staff member let slip that drugs could be contributing. When seeking a home for my wife, a Sister at another home told me the home's policy was to get residents off drugs as soon as possible after admission, if practical. After researching the drugs being administered to my wife, I found they contributed to her deterioration. She was eventually taken off most drugs; this process completed the day I brought her home. (The doctor and staff forecast dire consequences from this drug reduction, but they never occurred.)

With the breaking of her drug regime, gradual improvement manifested. I became aware my wife was conscious of where she was. This, for me, was an intolerable situation. A seed was sown which rapidly sprouted; I should consider bringing her home. But how? The staff said my wife was at



A Carer's Perspective" part one

By Ken B. E. Raff, Melbourne, Australia (continued)

times difficult to manage, with occasional violence, incontinence, etc. How could I possibly contemplate caring for her on my own?

In July, 1997, the way opened. I read about Validation in an article. Through my granddaughter's Internet use, I acquired *Validation Breakthrough*. Hope became a potential reality. The 'how' of bringing my wife home became clearer as I read. I learned my wife was not gone, as the G.P. had said, but was still very much present, though living in a different level of consciousness. I had no problem with this concept. For many years, I had read from life philosophers who frequently wrote of the consciousness we 'know' as the tip of the iceberg (i.e. Carl Jung's collective unconscious). The psychologist W.M. James wrote early this century:

"... the normal waking consciousness — 'rational consciousness' as we call it is but one special type of consciousness, whilst all about it, parted from it by the filmiest of screens, there lie potential forms of consciousness entirely different..."

I had even come across this concept in a splendid book for hacking golfers like me, *The Inner Game of Golf*, by Timothy Galloway. Previously, I never thought to apply this concept to my wife's condition, and had no option but to meet her as a person who was in the process of becoming an empty shell (on the terms of the 'experts'). Now, a way opened to the re-establish our relationship on a new level. Bruce Wilson in his book, *Reasons of the Heart*, when seeking to understand a most unusual personal experience, said, "I had allowed myself to be trapped into just one way of experiencing reality: the way of secular intellectual

reason." The scene was set and I brought my wife home September 30, 1997.

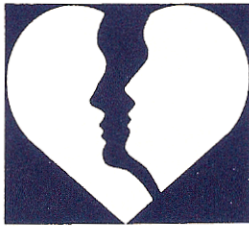
It was then that the hard physical, mental and emotional work really began. Validation had inspired me by setting a goal before me, a goal summed up in the words of Ronaldson and McLaren:

"...the use of Validation enables the elderly person's feelings to be acknowledged and supported within the framework of their own reality ..."

I was learning to see my wife anew, as a person living in her own world, different from mine, but very real to her. Validation taught me I must see my task as moving into her world and living there with her, rather than trying to bring her into mine. This was not easy, as my wife could still be extremely difficult. The Validation teaching that all behavior has meaning helped me gradually look for the meaning behind her behavior, to rid myself of the cultural conditioning which dismisses demented people as 'mad,' effectively closing off any meeting with them where they were.

The second section of Ken's article will be in our next newsletter.

Please send your Validation experiences to VTI. Your stories show Validation is at work transforming lives of both practitioners and family members around the world.



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International Validation Symposium Recap

By Fran Bulloff, Validation Board Member

I was privileged to present "How to Become an Authorized Validation Training Center" at the second International Validation Symposium.

Among the 125 people attending were five from Europe. Hershey, Pennsylvania was an excellent choice because it is home to the U.S. Validation Training Center. Michael Leader, Country Meadows CEO, hosted the meeting, spearheading enthusiasm. European presenters were: Vicki de Klerk-Rubin, Austria; Carsten Niebergall, Switzerland, Wolfgang Hahl, Germany, and Kathia Munsch, France. Their presentations made all of us appre-

ciate how Validation helps disoriented older people globally.

Naomi Feil recapped the ups and downs of developing Validation and was formally recognized for her unique contribution to geriatric care. Scott Averill was the first recipient of the "Julius and Helen Weil Outstanding Validation Achievement Award" for championing the cause of Validation. The Hershey Lodge offered a beautiful setting for informal networking as well as delightful excursions, and of course, Hershey Chocolate World!