

Validation

A NEWSLETTER FOR THE VALIDATION TRAINING INSTITUTE



SPRING 2000



CLINICAL COLUMN

"What Do I Say Next?"

Part Two

"You Gotta Have Empathy!"

By Naomi Feil, M.S.W., A.C.S.W.

Without empathy, the old cognitively impaired person is alone. In Part One, Sally Walker, CVP (Certified Validation Practitioner) had tried verbal Validation techniques that did not help. Still terrified without her mother, 92 year old Mattie Johnson pushed Sally aside and headed for the door. In a crisis, Validation works only when the worker uses empathy to create a **Validating Moment**: the worker connects *emotionally* with the old person. In this moment, trust happens. Nurtured, bonded, the old person is no longer alone. Without this yeast, Validation techniques often fall flat. What is this thing called empathy? Empathy is a shift from thinking to feeling, from wanting to accomplish something to *being with* someone; being with someone without thinking about it. Empathy is a "moment of shared meaning." (Buber, 1955). Sally said the right words but did not feel the old woman's panic. Sally did not inhale Mattie's need to be with her mother. Afraid that the old woman would escape and get hurt, Sally's intent was to keep Mattie



"You Gotta Have Empathy!"

(continued)

in the nursing home. Sally's mind raced, trying to remember verbal Validation. What should she say next? Sally had learned Carl Roger's principle of "unconditional positive regard," but did not cross over to Mattie's emotional world. Sally, involved in her thoughts, blocked out Mattie's fears. Mattie, with the intuitive knowing of the Time Confused, sensed that this stranger wanted to thwart her. Mattie yearned to find her family, her familiar house, the things she loved. Moving in past-time, Mattie Johnson rebuffed Sally who did not move with her.

What gets in empathy's way: our own thoughts, motives and fears. Our revulsion and denial of the manifestations of mentally disabled old people can preclude our normal capacity for empathy. Will I be like her when I get old? We scramble to protect ourselves from painful emotions. We expect very old people to act the way they used to act. We want them to conform to our value judgements of socially correct, appropriate, "adult" behavior. Ensnared in our thoughts and feelings, can we, for a moment, enter the reality of an old disoriented person's past time?

How can we learn empathy? First, we need to *want to be* with the old person. Empathy springs to life from a genuine need for fulfillment by creating a heightened awareness of oneself with another. You must be enriched. Second, you must be vulnerable: open to another's emotions; aware of your own value judgements, motives and feelings that lock out the emotions of the old person. Wrapped in her need to keep Mattie in the nursing home, Sally ignored the old woman's need. Third, you must be able to shelve your own emotions, judgements and goals to be open to the emotions of the other. In other words, you must **CENTER**. Sally, gripped by crisis, forgot to Center. With practice, the CVP learns to Center in seconds. (Feil, 1992). Fourth, FOCUS on this human being. Ingest this old person, from top to toe. Nothing else matters. You have no time to think. You are too busy absorbing. Thoughts interfere with spontaneity. You have no intent to change this person. You are open to what happens. "We feel deeply connected...we are at one with the other person...like a blow to the stomach," (Davis, 1990). Empathy takes us unawares.



What Do I Say Next? continued

We are not in control at this moment. Empathy creates something. We experience a jolt: the shift from cognitive mindfulness to deep identification, when the emotions of the old person join ours, and birth a new knowing. "A special alignment occurs." The CVT has crossed over, transcending clock time. Sally's attention strayed. She could not stay in the moment. She worried about the future: "What if Mattie got outside?" Sally's intention was not to observe and absorb, but to manage.

Fifth, return to conscious, cognitive awareness fortified with the bond of empathy. Use verbal and non-verbal Validation. Sally can now touch Mattie, where her mother touched her, gently, on the cheek. In Time-Confusion, Mattie obliterates the painful knowledge that her mother is dead. She has never learned to survive alone, without a loved one. Because she has lost her ability to think logically, Mattie Johnson cannot classify people or things. One person blends with another. Thoughts jumble. Present time is sprinkled with the past. Enveloped in empathy, the old woman responds to the familiar mother's touch. Each cell remembers where it was touched in infancy. Mattie embraces Sally, who

becomes a mother figure. Now, Mattie hears Sally. Now, Verbal Validation works: "It's scary to be alone, without your mother, in a strange place?" Sally asks with empathy. The old woman trusts the young worker. To discard her loneliness, Mattie pours out her longing for her mother and her panic at being abandoned. Her feelings expressed, Mattie is relieved. Arm-in-arm, the two move together towards an activity.

REFERENCES

1. Buber, M. *Between Man and Man*. Boston Mass. Beacon Press: 1955
2. Feil, N. *V/F Validation: The Feil Method*. Cleveland, Ohio. Edward Feil Productions: 1992.
3. Davis, C.M. "What is Empathy, and Can Empathy Be Taught?" *Physical Therapist*. 1990;70:707-715.



VTI News Update

VTI has standardized certification world-wide. There are 4 Certification levels: **Validation Practitioner, Group Validation Practitioner, Validation Teacher, and Validation Master.**

Tests were mailed in April 1999 to all former Validation Therapists. Those who did not complete the test no longer hold the title, "Validation Therapist." Those who have successfully completed the test are now Validation Teachers®. The title, "Validation Therapist" no longer exists. In the United States, the following have successfully completed the Group Validation Practitioner® level: Pat Bukosky, Wisconsin; Lowell J. Dodson, Kansas; Sally Drumm, Maryland; Marilyn E. A. Fjeld, Colorado. Certified Validation Group Practitioners® are experts in forming and conducting Validation Groups.

The following have successfully completed the Validation Teacher® level: Scott Averill, Kansas; Dale Beaulieu, Kansas; Claudeen Buettner, Idaho; Ann Gurnett, Australia; Lori Williams, New Jersey; Evelyn Sutton, Ohio; Diana Jacobson, Kansas; Rita O'Brien, Maine. Certified Validation Teachers® are experts in all levels of Validation theory and practice, and can serve as consultants to healthcare facilities.

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Validation was mentioned in the January 31st issue of NEWSWEEK magazine in an article, subtitled, "*Revolutionary new approaches in providing care...*" Perhaps this will help Validation to be increasingly included in mainstream American healthcare.

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VALIDATION NEWS IN EUROPE AND AUSTRALIA

In April 1999, the Australian Validation Center sponsored a two-day Validation Therapy conference, celebrating 10 years of Validation in Australia. The Center offers continuing courses for the Validation Practitioner.

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Vicki de Klerk Rubin, VTI's European Manager, has published **THE VALIDATION TRAINING INSTITUTE BROCHURE**, offering information on Validation, the Institute, levels of certification, and standard VTI Training Programs in Europe, with a list of authorized European Validation Training Centers currently offering Validation Training.

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Nine countries attended the European Validation Association conference in Klagenfurt, Austria on October 30th & 31st. European Centers have certified a growing number of Validation Teachers® and Practitioners®.



VTI News Update Continued

VALIDATION CERTIFICATION COURSE FLOURISHES!

VTI's first formal Validation Certification course at the George M. Leader Institute in Hershey, Pennsylvania will be completing its fourth session on February 17th and 18th. Seventeen participants will be tested at the final session in April. The Certified Validation Practitioners® will then continue on to become Certified Group Validation Practitioners®. The Group Practitioner workshops will be held on September 28-29, December 14-15, and May 3-4, 2001.

Prerequisites for the Group Validation Practitioner course are as follows: Level 1 certification or the equivalent; the ability, logistics and intent to form and conduct a weekly Validation group for at least six months; the intention to give and receive feedback from the course leader and participants. Vicki de Klerk Rubin, Validation Teacher® from Austria, who has conducted Validation courses for many years in Europe, will teach this course. Contact Jana Stoddard, coordinator, George M. Leader Institute, phone: 717-533-2474, fax: 717-533-6202, for more information.

THE VALIDATION TRAINING PROGRAM IS HERE!

The only formal **VALIDATION TRAINING PROGRAM** can now be yours. Published and distributed by Health Professions Press, P.O. Box 10624, Baltimore, Maryland 21285, phone: 1-888-337-8808, fax: 410-337-8539, the program is ready-to-use. This multi-media program is adapted to work for a wide range of caregivers; from families in a 2-hour intensive session to professionals in a full semester course. The **VALIDATION PROGRAM** includes separate **MANUALS** for 2 levels of expertise, 21 overheads and new VHS videocassettes. The **VALIDATION PROGRAM** was funded through a grant from The Institute for Quality Improvement in Long Term Healthcare, Southwest Texas State University, San Marcos, Texas.

NOTE:

Naomi Feil's 2000 schedule can be found on our **VALIDATION WEBSITE**. Visit our website at <http://www.vfvalidation.org>

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NOTE:

WATCH for a remarkable, moving article by Ken B.E. Raff, Melbourne, Australia, entitled "*How Validation Assisted in Re-establishing an Improved Quality of Life for my Wife: A Carer's Perspective,*" in our next issue.

SPRING 2000



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Dare to Go There

An interpretation of the Validation Method by Nan Langlois, RNC, CLNC



Listen Nurse! And you will hear! Look Nurse! And you will see! That there is a person here! My face may be wrinkled and my eyes short on sight, but life struggles from birth to death to win the fight. Issues and relationships may be unresolved, triumphs and failures are all part of one's duty to life to continue on despite the strife.

Watch Nurse! And use all your energies to identify me. Amongst the twisted fingers, spine and legs lives a feeling living human being. There are needs and stages yet to meet. Fear not! Dare to go there! Dare to go deep within!

Reach out Nurse! Look close and witness the value of life, hidden and lost, which once again can be found. My battle against the losses and pleasures of the past create the motion in my life. A person resides deep within. Follow your senses to reach me; for then, and not until then, we shall meet.

Listen and look with your heart! Feel what I feel.

Learn what I know! Come into my world where moment to moment brings my reality. The past is not forgotten, and the present is not mine; but I remember and know who I am, and what I was. Enter and dare to go there.

Perhaps, I am mute, blind and deaf. Perhaps my body is twisted with a hump in my back. But there is a wisdom, trapped within, awaiting release. You can comfort me and free the spirit that lies within. Listen Nurse! Give me dignity. Look Nurse! Give me my peace.

Listen Nurse! Listen Nurse! You have the means to reach within. See the anger and frustration; the disappointment, the fear, the joy and the happiness. My eyes will lead you there. Reach, touch and feel my joys and sorrows. Allow me to have the emotion and mind state. Let my present be yours for your reality certainly isn't mine! Never forget to look for me where I am. Understand by following me in my search for yesterday and lost memories. Explore my world through "my mind's eye," and we both will share the wisdom of living to be the very, old - old.