

FALL 2009



A NEWSLETTER FOR THE VALIDATION TRAINING INSTITUTE



*Listening with respect.*

## CLINICAL COLUMN

by Naomi Feil

### ANOTHER: "WHAT DO YOU SAY WHEN"

*You are an 80 year old spouse caring for a 90 year old diagnosed with a dementia:*

HARRY and ELLEN

#### SETTING

*Neither Harry Albert nor his wife, Ellen, paid attention to me, watching, in their tattered living room. Cracking under the strain of living with her 90 year old husband, with a diagnosis of "Alzheimer's", Ellen had asked me to help. Harry muttered out loud to nobody and everybody, his rasping voice, insulting, accusing:*

"There she is! I see her sneaking around behind me. That old woman has got to go." Harry sat straight at his mammoth desk, his thin frame a rod, jabbing his cane like a dagger, at his wife. His black eyes slits, his paunch heaving, his lower lip pursed, chin jutting.

"Lady, will you please get the hell out of my house and let me write." Harry roared at Ellen. "My editor needs this story today. You are a pain in the ass, lady!" Then, without warning, he turned to me, snickering, "Tell the old bitch that she's a pain in the ass."

"Harry, I am your wife. Your editor is dead. He died 8 years ago. Look at your typewriter. You're typing without paper." Ellen's voice cracked, like a broken record spinning.

"Because you stole my paper. You stole my story. Ten pages. You know how long it took me to write ten pages?" Harry roared, pounding his cane on

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the worn, wood floor for emphasis. To me, he explained:

"She has a nerve. Bossing me around. The old hag. Won't let me finish my story. She's stealing my pens, so I can't write. Where's my red pen. The one I always use? Where did you hide it, old woman?"

Ellen glared. "I didn't hide your pen. Look under your mattress. There are 12 pens stuck under there, where you hid them. And 19 more in your dresser." Ellen's face, now flushed with suppressed fury, became rigid.

"Liar. Thief. Get out of my house or I'll throw you out." Harry pounded, threatening.

Ellen gave Harry a dirty look. "Fine." Glancing at her husband in disgust and me in defeat, she slammed the door behind her.

"The nerve of her, stealing my pens and then saying I hid them." Harry swiveled his desk chair to face me.

"Good riddance!"

### **BACKGROUND**

Harry was never mentally ill. During the depression, he learned to melt tiny pieces of lard to make soap for his mother. He sold newspapers to augment his father's income. He went to night school. His parents praised him because he worked hard. For Harry, work meant being loved. Work meant being.

An accomplished journalist, he had authored two books and numerous journal articles. His wife and three children reported that he was a good father and husband, but never openly revealed his anger or love, nor was he demonstrative. He minimized disappointments. Normally neurotic, he devoted most of his waking hours to work. When life soured, he worked.

The Validation worker looks not only at brain damage. Validation theory, a holistic model, also views the old person's life. *Combinations of*

*physical, psychological and social factors expose the meaning behind behaviors of very old people.*

Humanistic psychologists and biochemical researchers, (Rogers, Erickson, Maslow, Barrell & Price) hold that deep emotions, when suppressed, can become toxic, producing pain. *When expressed to an empathetic listener, painful emotions lose their strength, and often dissipate.* Very old human beings who have buried emotions from childhood to old age, hurt. Finally, they long to vent.

Validation Practitioners the world over have reported that strong emotions dissipate when validated. Verbal Validation helps the old person lighten his load. The Validation Worker (VW) listens with empathy

### **VERBAL VALIDATION: IN PRACTICE**

*To build trust with Harry, I began "Re-phrasing," with empathy.* (Feil, 2002, 2003). I had to feel Harry's anger. I listened closely, never mimicking, but picking up Harry's tempo, voice tone and his key word: "*Riddance*." And, I called him: "*Mr.*" Harry Albert did not grow up in a generation that called a stranger by his first name.

"Mr. Albert, you want to *get rid* of her?"

Harry answered, his voice whiney. "She stole my favorite pen. Why she steals my pens, I don't know. She can't write a sentence you can read. What's worse, she bosses and nags at me day and night."

*(Using "Polarity"): What bothers you the most when she nags?* Harry's brow furrows, his eyes light. "It's her voice. When she yells, I can't think. She drives me crazy." Harry sighs, relieved. His anger, dissipated.

### **SOCIAL HISTORY**

Harry's mother bossed him. His three children confided that their father was afraid of his mother. Always a "good boy," he had never rebelled. He

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## ANOTHER: "WHAT DO YOU SAY WHEN" *continued*

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obeyed. Ellen has become the target of Harry's swallowed anger. In Validation theory, Ellen, his wife, is a "symbol" of his mother. **A symbol is an object, like Harry's pen, or a person, like Ellen, in present time, that substitutes for someone or something from the past.** His pen symbolizes his lost writing ability. Damaged recent memory, inability to focus, and painful arthritis rob Harry of his identity. He can't accept his physical losses. To be a worthwhile human being, Harry **must** write. He had never faced his fears of failure. In old age, he blames his wife for stealing his writing ability. Unable to say, "I can't write, but am still worthwhile," he hoards pens to hold onto his sense of self. He accuses Ellen of stealing. Ellen is the reason that he can no longer write!

When Ellen faced him with an intolerable reality, by showing him the pens he had hidden in the night, Harry became furious. His denial surged. Deep down, in a pocket of awareness, Harry knew the truth; that he had hidden the pens himself. The more Ellen argued and insisted, "Harry, you hid the pens yourself," the more Harry fought: "I did not! You hid them to spite me!"

This old man can not handle reality. It is too painful. But, the VW does not lie by saying, "Yes, I hid your pens." The old person can spot a lie. Knowing that he is being patronized and manipulated, Harry will not trust the liar. The validating relationship must be genuine. But, the VW does not argue: "You hid the pens yourself." Old human beings who have never been honest with themselves, cling to familiar defenses: blaming others when things go wrong. When confronted with reality, they feel attacked, and will fight back with fury. At age 90, when each day means another loss, Harry cannot risk losing his equilibrium to gain insight. He cannot change. **The Validation worker accepts the old person where he is.**

Many months later, Ellen learned not to argue, but to help her husband express his rage and

frustration. *She listened. She learned Validation. She learned empathy.*

When Harry accused her she used "Polarity." (Feil, 2002, 2003.) Now, she understood that Harry must blame her to cover his memory loss. With *empathy*, Ellen asked: "Am I that bossy, Harry? Do I boss you *all* the time?"

Harry looked at Ellen, nodding emphatically, his eyes wide, his voice grateful. "Yeah. Every day, you're after me, from morning 'til night. Why do you hide my pens? I need them to write."

"Harry, were those ball point pens or was it your special, favorite red pen you use with the extra sharp point?"

Ellen avoided confrontation and explored, using open, factual, non-threatening words, "Who? What? Where? When?" She avoided the word, "why." Harry does not want to know why he accuses Ellen of stealing. He wants no insight into his behavior. "Why" demands an intellectual response, and raises Harry's defenses.

Knowing that the pen symbolizes Harry's identity as a writer and a strong man, Ellen helped her husband express his loss without exposing his fears of losing his manhood.

"You know, my red pen. It has a fine point. It writes smoothly. That red pen only gave me trouble once in my life."

Ellen, knowing that Harry was spitting out grief, listened. Harry released his fears: The red pen symbolized losses: losing his eyesight; his skill with words; his recent memory; his mental agility; his sense of self-worth.

Using the Validation technique, "Reminiscing," Ellen asked: "Harry, when did that red pen first give you trouble?"

Harry's brow furrowed. His left hand shook. His voice turned hoarse, gritty. "In the army hospital. Nothing wrong with my hand. I just couldn't write. Something happened. The words wouldn't come. I

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## ANOTHER: "WHAT DO YOU SAY WHEN" *continued* VALIDATION NEWS AROUND THE WORLD



threw that pen away, but the nurse stuck it in my backpack. Remember? You found it."

The pain and shame that Harry felt at age 26, when he could no longer write is the same pain and shame he feels now at age 90. Ellen had learned an important Validation principle: **Similar emotions attract.** They leap through time. Together, Harry and Ellen remember. The red pen is the key, opening the door to the past.

Ellen helps Harry find a way to cope in present time with another Validation technique: *Help the person restore past coping skills*: "Harry, how did you get that pen to work?"

Harry grins, sheepishly. "You're gonna think I'm crazy, but I started talking to it. I yelled at it. I threw it as hard as I could. I remember, I hit the doctor passing by. He picked up old red and handed that pen to me with a grin: "It's yours. That's a writer's pen." That army doc gave me back my life. I started writing again. With a quick wink, Harry picks up his shoe, shakes it, revealing his red pen: "That Army doc knew what he was talking about. See, Ellen, it still writes."

### References:

De Klerk-Rubin, V. "Validation Techniques for Dementia Care," Health Professions Press, Baltimore, Maryland, 2008.

Feil, N., "V/F VALIDATION: The Feil Method, Edward Feil Productions, Cleveland, Ohio. Revised, 2003.

Feil, N., "The VALIDATION BREAKTHROUGH," Health Professions Press, Inc. Baltimore, Maryland, Revised, 2003.

## VALIDATION NEWS AROUND THE WORLD

### Website Revised & Expanded

*I am happy to announce that VTI has revised and expanded its website! The website address will*

*remain the same: [www.vfvalidation.org](http://www.vfvalidation.org). Validation Teachers will have their own username and password to download the latest developments in theory and practice, including curricula and power point presentations. Following the website launch in English, we will follow with German, French, Swedish, Spanish and Italian versions.*

*Please email me upcoming courses and workshops. If you are a certified Validation Teacher or AVO, please email a username and password to access teaching materials. Send any training brochures or updates to be posted on the website. I am excited to provide this important resource to enhance your work with Validation.*

*From Website Manager  
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## IN JAPAN

### • From AVO - JAPAN

The first Worker courses taught by four certified Japanese Validation Teachers have begun. Vicki de Klerk and the Japanese AVO have developed a special 6-block curriculum serving the needs of Japanese culture.

## IN EUROPE

### • From European Manager, Vicki de Klerk, Certified Validation Master®

*Validation is vibrant and valued in Europe. A Validation Teacher Working Group from 8 countries is completing a QUALITY MANUAL giving guidelines and procedures to ensure quality in Validation. Validation practice, teaching, curricula and evaluation of skills are covered. After 2 years of team writing, the Validation Quality Manual will be available via the VTI website.*

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### • From SWITZERLAND

\*The 2009 European Validation Association will be held in Zurich, Switzerland, on October 24 & 25, 2009. All are welcome. Please contact: carsten.niebergall@tertianum.ch. The Swiss AVO is hosting a 2-day Teacher Meeting, October 21 and 22, followed by a half-day Symposium on October 23.

### • From AVOs - ITALY

We are happy to welcome two new Authorized Validation Organizations: In Emilia Romagna, Liguria, Toscana and Umbria: ASP Giovanni XXIII. Contact: Luciana Ribani, v.ribani@aspgiovanni23.it In Lombardia, Veneto, Friuli-Venezia, Giulia & Trentino-Alto Adige: Fondazione Castellini. Contact: Cinzia Siviero, cinzia-siviero@tiscali.it We are confident that our Italian AVOs will be implementing Validation to help many old people and their families.

## In the UNITED STATES

### • From CLEVELAND, OHIO

*The Board of Trustees of the Validation Training Institute, Inc., Cleveland, Ohio, has approved a proposal presented by Trustee, Steve Klotz, "to establish an Operational Task Force to develop strategic plans for the advancement of Validation in the United States... Validation has reached a tipping point—a crucial moment when momentum has gathered behind this method...and it is poised to move forward into the mainstream of senior care interest, practice, and culture in this country..."*

*Steve Klotz, CVT®*

### • From AVO- COUNTRY MEADOWS, HERSHEY, PA.

Trustee, Steve Klotz, CVT®, has designed and is teaching a 3-day "Validation Associate" training program at all Country Meadows campuses.

He has produced 2 editions of the CM newsletter, VALIDATION ADVANCES. With Rita Altman, he will collaborate on a book, "Validation-based Activities and Programs" for older people. The next Validation Worker course will be held at Country Meadows Executive Offices, from August 27, 2009, to June 25, 2010. For detailed information, contact Jana Stoddard, 717-533-2474, email: jstoddard@countrymeadows.com.

### • From SUNRISE LIVING CENTERS, MCLEAN, VIRGINIA

Trustee, Rita Altman, Certified Validation Master®, is planning a Validation Worker Course to begin February 2010. Plans are underway to complete the Authorized Validation Organization contract. Ms. Altman will apply for a grant to conduct a qualitative research study to evaluate the results of Validation Groups. This can be a step towards a quantitative study.

### • From OVERBROOK, KANSAS

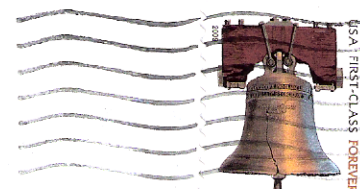
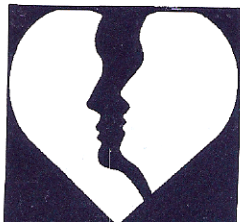
Trustee, Scott Averill, CVT®, administrator of Brookside and Wellsville Retirement Communities, reports: "...Validation is alive and well in the Heartland of America. We have two vibrant Validation groups that meet each week, with an average of 12 to 15 residents." Results are evidenced in the poetic expressions of 88 year old resident, Al Aaron: "...those groups...become a thread which is a bridge to see my life as a beautiful tapestry."

### • From AVO, THE PACIFIC COAST VALIDATION CENTER

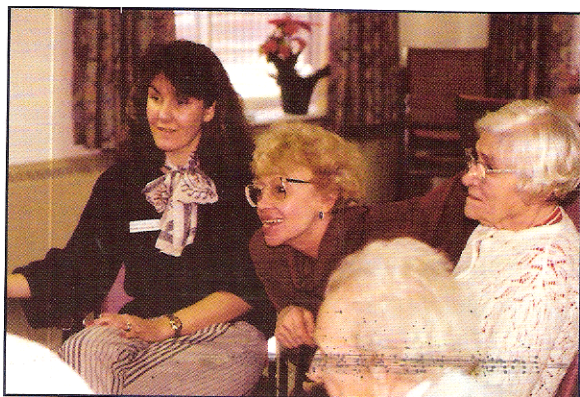
Jean Garboden, Chief Operations Officer, Ridgeline Management Company, reports that staff at Chateau Gardens Memory Care Community, inspired by Validation, have helped a resident in "Repetitive Motion" die in peace at Chateau Gardens instead of in the hospital.

..."She was more verbal...speaking often in full sentences...she could sing songs...remembering words that we did not know...they (staff) each felt honored to have been in her presence..."

FALL 2009



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## GRATEFUL ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Kudos to Rosemary Golias, who for years has inspired thousands of caregivers to use Validation. Her tireless efforts have created a Validation Community in the Minnesota area.

Rosemary has organized a Certified Validation Worker Course from November 9, 2009 to July 27, 2010, in Minneapolis. There will be 5, two-day sessions over a period of 9 months. The Validation Group Practitioner course will begin on November 5, 2009 to July 23, 2010, in Minneapolis. This will entail 3, 2-day sessions over a period of 9 months.

To our readers:

We welcome your stories, comments and suggestions. Please write to: Editor, Validation Newsletter, 21987 Byron Road, Cleveland, Ohio, 44122.  
Email: [naomifeil@aol.com](mailto:naomifeil@aol.com)

A Validation Workshop, conducted by Naomi Feil will take place on May 7, 2010, in Duluth, MN.

\* \* \*

Kudos to Jana Stoddard, whose many years of dedication to Validation has been an inspiration to Validation Teachers, Practitioners, caregivers and students in the United States. Jana has been a vital spirit that has helped Validation grow. The Validation Board of Trustees is very grateful.

Please send your \$20.00 tax-deductible contribution and become a member of the Validation Training Institute Association. This membership entitles you to continuing Validation Newsletters. Your support is our only funding source, empowering us to spread the Validation Message.  
***Thank you!***