



October 2025 Newsletter

FROM THE DESK OF VICKI DE KLERK: A Change in Leadership

When Naomi Feil founded the Validation Training Institute (VTI) in 1982, she poured her heart, energy, and vision into it. For more than three decades, Naomi led VTI with passion and conviction, sharing the Validation method with people all over the world. Her tireless work established Validation as the premier, evidence-based, person-centered communication method in the field of aging and dementia care.

When I stepped into the role of Executive Director in 2014, I had already spent years supporting and learning from my mother. At 82, Naomi wanted to devote her time to what she loved most—bringing Validation alive in workshops, touching hearts, and transforming the way people connect with older adults who are disoriented.

My task was to bring structure and sustainability to the organization so that her vision could continue to grow. Together with a dedicated team, we developed the AVO system, certification levels, and curricula, and created a comprehensive Quality Manual. We rebuilt our website, expanded our staff to include a Webmaster, a Communications Director, and a Marketing Director, and began offering online learning as early as 2009. New Board members brought fresh ideas and strengthened our strategic direction.

Now, as I approach my 70th birthday, I notice that my pace is slowing. My memory, energy, and focus have changed. And yet, my gratitude and pride have only grown deeper. VTI has evolved into a strong, professional, and international organization, with a vibrant community of Validators continuing the work my mother began.

It is now time for me to pass the leadership torch. On January 1, 2026, Tamorra Sims will become VTI's new Executive Director.

Tamorra brings more than a decade of leadership experience in aging services, dementia advocacy, and program innovation. Most recently, as National Director at Sagora Senior Living, she led wellness initiatives across more than 90 senior living communities, integrating evidence-based dementia training and person-centered care. Her leadership has resulted in measurable improvements in resident well-being, care quality, and organizational growth.

“I am honored to join VTI and carry forward Naomi Feil’s vision,” Tamorra shared. “Validation has transformed how we understand and support people living with dementia. I am excited to work with the VTI community to expand its global impact.”

In the coming months, I’ll be working closely with Tamorra to ensure a smooth and thoughtful transition. After that, I’ll continue doing what I love—teaching, presenting, and spreading the spirit of Validation wherever I can.

Naomi always reminded us that connection is at the heart of everything. I look forward to continuing that legacy—one conversation, one workshop, one moment of empathy at a time.

Warmly,

Vicki de Klerk-Rubin

Executive Director, Validation Training Institute

Teacher Feature: Maria Hedman Holmblad (Sweden)

What happens when one nurse discovers a new way to truly *connect* with people living with cognitive decline? For Maria Hedman Holmblad, that moment came in the late 1990s—when she first witnessed staff using the Validation Method to reach residents once thought unreachable. The results were extraordinary: agitation eased, families reconnected, and her ward went from using the *most* neuroleptics in the municipality to the *least*.

That experience changed everything. Maria became a certified Validation Teacher in 2016 and has spent decades championing the method across Sweden—leading EU-funded projects, training care staff, and hosting webinars that have reached hundreds. Today, she continues her mission through workshops, social media, and a weekly newsletter answering caregivers’ most pressing questions. Her message is simple and powerful: *Validation works—and every care home should know it.*

[Read the full story here](#)



Caregiver Superhero Series: Validation with Vicki de Klerk

In Zinnia TV's *Caregiver Superhero Support Series*, VTI Executive Director Vicki de Klerk-Rubin shared the heart of the Validation Method — a way to connect with older adults living in their own reality with empathy and respect. Vicki discussed how Validation helps caregivers move past correcting or redirecting, toward understanding the emotions and needs behind behaviors. Through stories and practical examples, she showed how empathy builds trust and keeps communication alive, even in advanced stages of cognitive decline.

📺 [Watch the full webinar here](#)



Coming November 1: From Roots to the Stars

Every tree begins with strong roots. This fall, we'll invite you to journey from the roots of Naomi Feil's vision to the stars—the older adults who shine at the heart of everything we do.

Discover how each part of the Validation “tree”—roots, trunk, branches, leaves, and stars—tells a story of growth, connection, and hope.

📅 Fall Fundraiser launches November 1.

(Stay tuned for the full story)



Teacher Feature: Inbal Leeom (Israel)

When Inbal Leeom, a gerontologist and occupational therapist, became a Validation Teacher in 2019, she didn't just add a new skill—she became part of a movement. Working hand in hand with AVO Israel, she has helped bring the Validation Method into hospitals, day centers, and universities across the country—reaching health professionals, policymakers, and students alike.

Inbal's story is one of resilience. Even amid national crises and conflict, she continued to teach and practice Validation—supporting caregivers, families, and even displaced kibbutz communities near the Gaza border. “Validation,” she says, “is part of the light we bring into the world.” Her work is living proof that empathy can transcend fear, and that true connection is possible even in the hardest of times.

[Read the full story here](#)

Validation training the ‘Gold standard’

Start Here - Lite Earn Gateway Certificate 1	Or Start Here - Medium Earn Gateway Certificate 2	Or Start Here - Intense
Beginning Validation Tutorial	Family Caregiver Course	Level 1 – Validation Worker
Skill Building Blocks	Validation for Medical Professionals	Level 2 – Validation Group Practitioner
Memory Care for Activity Professionals	Practical Validation Training	Level 3 – Validation Presenter
		Level 4 – Validation Teacher

Spotlight on Gateway Courses: Your Path into Validation

Ready to begin—or go deeper—with Validation? Our Gateway Certificates offer a clear, step-by-step path for learners at every level.

Gateway 1: Start Here

Perfect for anyone curious about Validation. Learn the essentials, practice six core techniques, or discover how to bring Validation into your activity programs.

→ *Courses include:* Beginning Validation, Skill Building Blocks, and Memory Care for Activity Professionals.

Gateway 2: Build Skills with Coaching

For caregivers, professionals, and families who want to apply Validation in real life—with guidance and feedback from certified teachers.

→ *Courses include:* Family Caregiver Course, Validation for Medical Professionals, and Practical Validation.

Every Gateway Certificate builds confidence, skill, and connection—helping you create more meaningful moments with the older adults in your care.

[Explore all courses and find your Gateway today.](#)

Evaluating the Efficacy of Online and Blended Learning Training Courses in the Validation Approach

Dr. Vicki de Klerk, Validation Training Institute
Sterns, Harvey, PhD,
University of Akron

INTERVENTION:

Online and blended Validation courses strengthen caregiver confidence and improve communication with older adults.

METHODS:

Design:

Mixed-method study using pre- and post-training surveys (Google Forms).
Data collected across one year.

Courses include:

Beginning Validation Tutorial
Skill Building Block
Family Caregiver Course
Memory Care: Validation for Activity Professionals
Validation for Medical Professionals
Practical Validation
Level 1 Worker Course

Measures:

Validation Knowledge Survey –
knowledge acquisition
SEERB Scale – self-efficacy in
managing behaviors
PSS-10 – perceived stress (longer
courses only)



BACKGROUND

The Validation Method fosters empathy, dignity, and connection for people living with cognitive change. This study investigates the impact of online and blended training on caregiver outcomes.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- Does online or blended Validation training improve caregiver self-efficacy and reduce stress?
- What challenges occur when using digital surveys to measure these outcomes?



FINDINGS

- Increased self-efficacy in responding to challenging behaviors
- Reduced perceived stress after training
- Technical barriers: mismatched email addresses and survey alignment issues
- Knowledge measure limitations: some questions failed to capture meaningful learning.

IMPLICATIONS for PRACTICE

Online and blended Validation training improve caregiver confidence and reduce stress.

To strengthen outcomes, future programs should:

- Refine knowledge-assessment tools
- Improve survey design tracking

These steps will enhance evaluation accuracy and quality of care.

FINANCIAL DISCLOSURE

- No funders provided financial support.

For more information, scan this QR code.



Validation Training Institute Presents at the Gerontological Society of America's Scientific Conference in Boston

This November, the Validation Training Institute (VTI) will take part in the Gerontological Society of America's Annual Scientific Conference in Boston. Board of Trustees member Dr. Harvey Sterns and Executive Director Vicki de Klerk will present a poster session titled:

“Evaluating the Efficacy of Online and Blended Learning Training Courses in the Validation Approach.”

This presentation reflects a full year of data collection across all VTI training programs. In 2023, we introduced pre- and post-course surveys to explore how much participants learned, whether they felt more competent when responding to challenging situations, and whether their stress levels changed after training.

What we learned:

Participants reported feeling more confident and capable in their interactions with disoriented older adults.

Many also reported feeling less stress after completing the training.

Our original knowledge questionnaire, however, did not accurately measure learning outcomes—so we took that as an opportunity to improve.

Looking ahead:

We have already revised our Validation knowledge questionnaire and are now gathering new data using the updated version. The results will be analyzed and shared next year.

At VTI, our goal is to ensure that Validation training remains the gold standard in communication with older adults who are disoriented. Research and reflection help us keep growing—so that our teaching stays both scientifically grounded and deeply human.

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Validation Training Institute

P.O. Box 871, Pleasant Hill
OR 97455 United States

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