

Lesson 6

Validation

Before reading the lesson, please watch the 17 minute video *Validation*

[Click here to watch video \(http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Cbk980jV7Ao\)](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Cbk980jV7Ao)

Hugh Newman demonstrates a skill that will support you immeasurably in your coaching practice and your life: **Validation**. Hugh simply focused on the best qualities in the people he encountered, and highlighted the good those people already owned. Hugh did not lie or flatter others; he simply noticed their strengths and drew them forth. In so doing, he reminded people of their true beauty, and helped them restore their identity of greatness.

Most people suffer from low self-esteem or lack of belief in themselves. They have been criticized, judged, and emotionally or psychically battered by others, often from a young age, and they have internalized a negative self-image. They may believe they are weird, crazy, or selfish for their feelings, desires, and dreams. When you give clients credit for the beauty and power they own and embody, you help them overcome the negative beliefs that stand between them and the fulfillment of their goals.

Dr. Nelson Decker was a chiropractor who studied with a Native American shaman. One day a disheveled homeless man walked into Dr. Decker's office on the New Jersey side of the George Washington Bridge, and asked Dr. Decker for treatment. The man had no money and the doctor was put off by his appearance, so he was tempted to refuse him. Then Dr. Decker remembered advice his mentor gave him: *"Always find at least one thing you like about every person."*

Dr. Decker scanned the fellow and noticed that his shoes were tied neatly. This appreciation gave the doctor a bit of an opening to connect with the fellow, and he went on to give him time, care, and a positive treatment.

A few days later the fellow returned, looking neater and happier. “I came back to thank you for helping me,” the fellow told the doctor. “I had been wandering the streets of New York City until I felt so desperate that I went to the bridge to jump. At the last minute an inner voice told me, “Give life one more chance.” So I decided to walk across the bridge and ask someone for help. If they helped me, I figured it would be a sign that life is worth living. If not, I would return and jump. You gave me your kind attention and treatment, and that was a turning point for me.”

Dr. Decker’s validation of this fellow was silent. In your coaching practice you can achieve validation silently and verbally. After a client explains his issue to you, begin your response with some acknowledgement of a strength or beauty you can see that he may not be aware of.

For example:

“I understand why you are feeling that way. I imagine that anyone who went through an experience like that would feel the same way.”

“I know you are upset about your argument with your husband, but I think you were very courageous to speak your truth to him.”

“You are looking really bright and clear today. I feel uplifted by your smile and tone of your voice.”

The gift of validation is something you can practice and offer all day long. Waitresses, bank tellers, and the appliance repairman will light up with the smallest compliment, as well as you your spouse, kids, and parents. And don’t forget to validate yourself! The more validated you feel, the more validation you have to offer.

Exercise:

1. Begin every encounter and meeting with a validation. Find one thing you like about every person with whom you interact, and acknowledge him or her for it.

2. Make a self-validation list. What can you give yourself credit for that you might have been overlooking?
