

INSIGHTS

Why validation is the best parenting skill of all



At a time when the mental health and wellbeing of children and teenagers is firmly in the spotlight, validation is an essential parenting skill.

When a child or teen comes to you when they are struggling emotionally, they want you to understand their dilemma. They don't want to be dismissed or told to 'get over it'. They generally want someone to acknowledge that their concern is real with comments such as:

"I see you're worried about going to camp. I can understand that. "

"Thanks for telling about the scary monsters in your bedroom. Let's see what we can do about them."

"I'd be afraid too if I was left alone on my own for that long."

Validation of a child's struggles helps them

Validating a child's struggles helps in a number of ways. It works to:

Build deep connection

Relationships built at the time of vulnerability go deep and are hard to break.

Promote a child's wellbeing

Validation helps kids feel safe, which is what 'worry warts' and anxious kids want. Lack of understanding rather than fear itself often impacts negatively on a child's happiness.

Overcome disappointment and build resilience

Validation encourages kids to give voice to their concern or disappointment and either takes steps to rectify it or move on.

Develop emotional intelligence

Parental validation models emotional intelligence for children and teens. It requires you to identify the emotions that may be behind their language or behaviour.

Encourage empathy

Validation requires you to stop, listen and get on the same wavelength as your child.

Four steps to validating your child's emotions

Follow these steps when your child comes to you with their worries or concerns to make sure they feel understood.

Attend

Stop what you are doing and give your child full attention.

parenting*ideas

Observe

Listen with your eyes as well as your ears.

Reflect back their worries

Get down to their eye level if necessary, saying something like, “I see you’re really concerned about this.”

Touch

If appropriate, gently touch their shoulder or give them a hug when you speak to them. This will help them feel safe and comforted.

There’s no better feeling for a child or teen who is struggling than knowing someone they value truly understands them.



Michael Grose

Michael Grose, founder of Parenting Ideas, is one of Australia’s leading parenting educators. He’s the author of 12 books for parents including *Spoonfed Generation* and the best-selling *Why First Borns Rule the World and Last Borns Want to Change It*. His latest release *Anxious Kids*, was co-authored with Dr Jodi Richardson.