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# VALIDATION

*How the Skill Set That Revolutionized Psychology Will Transform Your Relationships, Increase Your Influence, and Change Your Life*

**By Caroline Fleck, PhD**

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**The key concept from psychology that unlocks true and lasting behavioral change.**

We all spend an absurd amount of energy trying to get people to listen to us, and despite our best efforts, we often fail. But what if the secret to changing behavior was to demonstrate acceptance?

Enter validation — communication that one is mindful, understands, and empathizes with another person's experience, thereby accepting it as valid. When validation-based treatment, also known as Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT), was introduced over thirty years ago, it revolutionized psychology and facilitated change even amongst those patients who were highly resistant to it. Yet, its practice has remained largely buried in treatment manuals and research articles written for psychologists — until now.

With **VALIDATION: How the Skill Set That Revolutionized Psychology Will Transform Your Relationships, Increase Your Influence, and Change Your Life** (Avery; on sale February 18, 2025), psychologist and DBT expert Dr. Caroline Fleck brings these validation techniques out of therapy and into everyday life to help anyone decrease conflict, strengthen relationships, and change behaviors—in themselves and in others.

Part memoir and part practical guide, Dr. Caroline Fleck explains how and why validation is a catalyst for transformation. She draws on her two decades of experience to show how *anyone* can develop the DBT skills of a therapist through the “Validation Ladder”: an actionable eight-step model that will help cultivate and communicate acceptance across relationships and unlock the potential for growth.

Validation: How the Skill Set That Revolutionized Psychology Will Transform Your Relationships  
Increase Your Influence, and Change Your Life by Caroline Fleck, PhD  
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By following Dr. Flack's model of validation, readers will experience:

1. **Improved relationships:** Increased intimacy, camaraderie, trust, and psychological safety are to be expected after you've succeeded in deeply validating someone's experience. Changing how people feel inevitably affects how they behave. If you've increased trust and safety through validation, you can expect to see more transparency and engagement in the relationship.
2. **Decreased conflict:** Incorporating validation into difficult conversations keeps them from going in circles or descending into arguments. People tend to use force or "attack" when they believe they can't get their point across otherwise. Similarly, folks become defensive when they feel the need to defend a position that isn't being respected. A validating response leaves nothing to attack, much less anything to defend against.
3. **Increased influence:** It's hard to solve a problem or convince people of something if they think you don't understand where they're coming from. Validating people helps you not only communicate understanding but cultivate it. As a result, folks are more likely to talk *and* listen to you.
4. **Increased ability to drive behavior change:** Validation is free to provide, everyone wants it, and unlike candy, people don't get sick of it. These attributes make validation a powerful reinforcement that can drive all sorts of behavioral changes, like getting someone to exercise and possibly even reducing opioid use.
5. **Increased self-compassion:** Validating others transforms how we relate to them and to ourselves. Just as sitting alone in meditation improves our connection with others, connecting with others via validation improves our relationship with ourselves. These benefits can be further enhanced through the practice of self-validation described later in the book.

**VALIDATION** reveals what psychologists have known for decades: change requires more than habits and reinforcement—it demands acceptance. With practice, Dr. Fleck shows how these skills become a way of life, helping us to focus on the possibilities that unfold when we see ourselves and others for who we really are.

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**Caroline Fleck, PhD**, is a licensed psychologist, an adjunct clinical instructor at Stanford University, and a business consultant. She received her doctorate in psychology and neuroscience from Duke University and holds a BA in English and psychology from the University of Michigan. She is an expert in evidence-based treatments for individuals, couples, and parents, including DBT and cognitive behavioral therapy. She is renowned for her ability to help people make critical but challenging changes and is one of Silicon Valley's most sought-after psychotherapists. See more at <https://www.drcarolinefleck.com/>

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