

Forget-Me-Not Spotlight

The Validation Breakthrough, 3rd Edition

By Naomi Feil and Vicki de Klerk-Rubin

A review by Shannon Nosbisch, C.D.P., co-founder of Effingham Area Alzheimer's Awareness Validation is a successful way of communicating with older adults with Alzheimer's-type dementia and responding to their challenging behaviors. The Validation method helps reduce stress, enhance dignity and increase happiness for both the elder and the caregiver. It has been used since 1989 by professionals and family caregivers to improve their relationships with residents and loved ones with dementia by acknowledging older adults' expressed feelings rather than focusing on disorientation and confusion.

In 1963, Naomi Feil, as a Social Worker, became dissatisfied with traditional therapies for older people with dementia and began to develop her own methods for helping older people cope with the cognitive impairment that is sometimes part of the aging process. Validation is currently recognized throughout the world as a state-of-the-art therapy for older people diagnosed as having Alzheimer's dementia or related disorders. If you have attended our Creative Problem Solving for Dementia Caregivers program, you have learned about some of her Validation methods.

In this book, the authors give many examples of people with challenging behaviors and how Validation worked with them. Most of the stories are composites of people they have worked with over the years. They discuss their failures as well as their accomplishments.

The book has three parts and an appendix. The first part discusses what Validation is, why it works and concepts and techniques. The Four Phases of Resolution are introduced:

- 1) Malorientation: Expressing past conflicts in disguised forms,
- 2) Time Confusion: No longer holding on to reality; retreating inward,
- 3) Repetitive Motion: Movements replace words and are used to express needs and feelings,
- 4) Vegetation: A total withdrawal inward; the person no longer speaks and there is very little interaction with his or her environment.

Throughout the book they discuss these phases to help caregivers, whether professional or family, better understand and communicate with the person they are caring for.

Validation in Practice, Part II, talks about the communication aspects for each of the phases and, the last chapter in this part discusses how to validate family members.

Part III, Group Validation, helps with setting up Validation Groups and talks about who would benefit from group Validation.

The Appendix has experiences of eleven long-term care communities across the nation and in other parts of the world and how their use of the Validation Method has worked.

By using the Validation method, positive results are observed. People living with dementia express less anger and anxiety, decreasing the need for medications; they communicate more freely and more often; and they move better and experience an improved sense of self-worth. Caregivers and/or staff members express a greater sense of fulfillment at work and feel better prepared for handling difficult situations.

Fran Bulloff, President of Validation Training Institute, says, “Naomi Feil has developed practical techniques to open doors previously shut, span bridges across vast communication divides, and bring comfort and joy to disoriented elderly, their caregivers, and loved ones.”

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