

# Emotional Validation

## The Aim of the Game

Sometimes, we all just need to have our feelings heard.

It makes us feel understood.



Children's behaviour can continue to escalate until they feel that we have recognised their emotional state.

Adults often go into 'reassurance mode' or 'problem solving mode' too soon, in the effort to make things feel better.

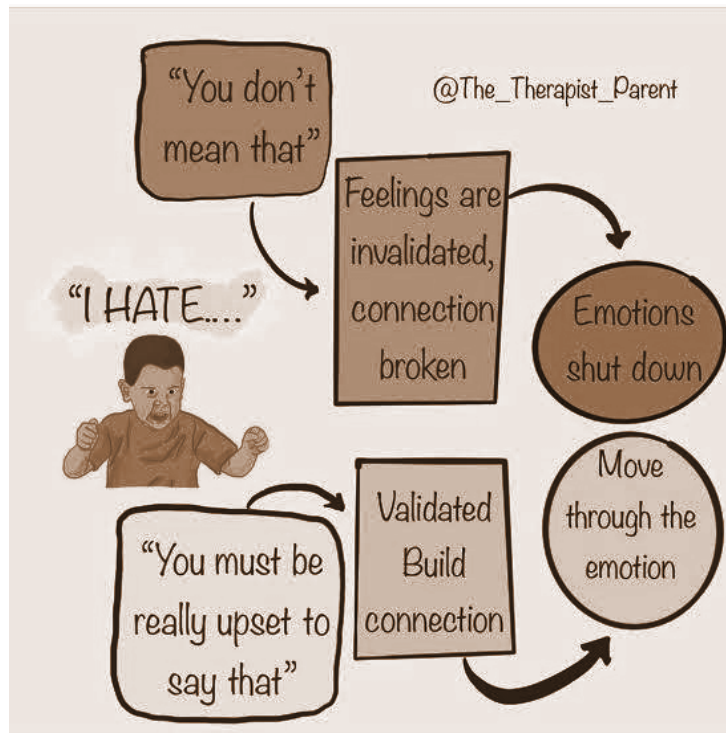
When we do this, we are skipping a step! First, try emotional validation: showing you have '**seen the feeling**'

## Why it Works

Often, children do not think that we have noticed their feelings (even if they seem obvious on the outside!)

This is different from allowing behaviours... behaviours can still be problematic, all emotions are okay!

This is why the 'planned ignoring' of behaviours can 'back fire' (the behaviour just gets louder and more difficult to ignore, until the adult must respond... which reinforces the behaviour).



Once a child feels seen and heard, there is no longer a need to keep amplifying the problem. They become more able to use self-regulation skills and more receptive to problem solving.

## Ways to do it:

- Reflecting the feeling:

e.g. “**I can tell** you are really angry right now”

e.g. “**I can see** you are overwhelmed and need space”

e.g. “**Woah**, that really upset you huh?”

\* Important note: try to name the feeling for the child. Open-ended questions like “What’s going on?” or “What are you feeling?” can overload children when they have big feelings.

- Seeking clarification:

e.g. “**Just checking**... Did I get that right?”

e.g. “**Show me** what you’re feeling / show me how big it is  
[on a visual if the child uses one]”

e.g. “**Tell me more** about that feeling...”

- Normalising the feeling:

e.g. “**I feel** mad sometimes too”

e.g. “That makes sense. **We all** find it tricky when...”

## Then what?

After validating the emotion, the child may be more receptive to reassurance or problem-solving.

They might want to co-regulate with you. You could try using some of their calming strategies alongside them.

Or, they may just need some space - push pause and talk later.