



## Appendix G: Validating and Invalidating Statements and Curious Questions<sup>†</sup>

Remember not to focus on what happened; focus on how the patient feels about the situation. To address feelings, you must use emotional language, not rational or judgmental language. Nonverbal cues such as body language, eye contact, and tone of voice are just as important as the words that you say.

### ► Examples of validating statements

- "I can see that you are very (upset, sad, frightened, scared)."
- "Here's what I'm hearing you say." (*Summarize with fact checking.*)
- "I can see how hard you are working."
- "Wow, that (she/he) must have made you feel really angry/sad, etc."
- "I can see this is important to you."
- "It makes sense you would be so upset about that."
- "I can see you're overwhelmed. Can we talk?"
- "It's going to be hard... and I know you will figure it out."
- "Tell me what that's like for you."

### ► Examples of curious questions

- "Can I ask some questions?"
- "Tell me more."
- "What are you feeling?"
- "What am I not getting?"
- "Can you give me a stress #? 1 = I'm OK, 10 = I'm drowning!!"
- "Are you safe?"
- "Tell me what worries you."

### ► Examples of invalidating statements

- "I hated it when that happened to me." (*Make it about you.*)
- "You should feel lucky, thankful..." "What's the big deal?" (*Tell them how they should feel.*)
- "What you really should do is..." (*Try to give advice.*)
- "Well, life's not fair..." (*Make "life" statements.*)
- "What you did was wrong/bad...good/great..." (*Make judgmental statements.*)
- "I bet they were just..." (*Rationalize another person's behavior.*)

<sup>†</sup>Adapted from: [www.borderlinepersonalitydisorder.com](http://www.borderlinepersonalitydisorder.com)