
Respect vs. Invalidation

Understanding invalidation in its various forms and choosing to embrace respect in our personal and professional interactions is a key component to achieving success.

Respect is being considerate toward somebody, valuing someone, holding someone in high regard or esteem, having admiration for someone or something. Conversely, invalidation deflects attention away from strengths and positive outcomes and focuses on weaknesses and negative outcomes.

Typically, if we respect someone then we honour who he/she is. Common beliefs that transcend culture is a belief that you must respect your parents, respect your elders, respect your manager, and respect people in authority. At times we may struggle with respecting the actions of our parents, elders, managers and people in authority who have not gained our respect, yet we 'pretend' to respect them because we are expected to.

We have all watched movies where the bad guy is the one that the whole community upholds as perfect and warranting of everyone's respect. Over time their actions start to be questioned and finally, someone who is 'brave enough' speaks out. This person is usually ridiculed and isolated from the community. If the movie follows the theme of good vs. bad as most do, then over time the bad guy will be found out and the good person who spoke out will be acknowledged. Unfortunately, in real life, we know sometimes the courageous person who took a stand will not be acknowledged for their good deed.

Most of our understanding of respect is built around how we respect others. We will have developed very specific values around respect, all taught to us at a very young age. As we moved through the education system we were taught about respecting our teachers and the system itself. We were taught to respect our parents and certain people in the community. Sometimes we were even taught who not to respect. All of the beliefs you were taught about respect were based on the judgement of someone else. If someone respected a particular person or action then they would tell you this is respect.

Self Application

So check in with yourself. What does your picture of respect look like? Draw it now.

We learn to gauge respect through our observations and build a list of the actions that demonstrate what respect is and is not. However, this list is built around our judgements of what we have been led to believe. Observation of how you feel or show respect will greatly help you to understand how you judge and measure respect. Respect and judgement are so entwined that you can't separate them. What may be a sign of respect for you may not be for the person closest to you. The judgement we then hold is that our sign of respect is the correct way of measuring it. And so the judgements continue.

Respect is not an outward judgement of someone but rather an inward feeling about yourself. Respect is how you judge yourself and how much you like who you are. However, there is a connection between inward and outward actions. How you respect yourself will be identical to how you respect others. How much self-respect you have will match how much respect you have for others.

Inward respect = outward respect

When we judge others, we judge ourselves. What we find respectful in others, we find respectful in ourselves. What we find disrespectful in others we find disrespectful in ourselves. The way you judge yourself and the harshness of it will reflect directly on how harshly you judge respect in others.

Outer judgement = inner judgement

So what can we do? First, let go of all judgement – it is damaging and harmful to you. Imagine how you would go about creating a world where you spent time each day respecting yourself. Describe moments in your day where you felt valued, admired and cared for. List as many as you like.

As you go through this process, observe for a moment how you are feeling. You will have shifted away from thinking about how you judge respect in others – a negative energy process, to how to make yourself feel wonderful – a very positive energy process. This is a very important key to going forward. Each time you feel yourself slipping into judgement then go back to your list of how to make yourself feel valued and admired. Focus on doing something that will fill you with high regard for yourself.

Judging others is a sign of your need to build your self-respect. Invalidation is the process of negating any acts of self-respect.

If you have a passport or drivers licenses or ID card and it expires, it becomes invalid. It is basically worthless. You can cut it up and throw it away. This is something we are very familiar with and have no problems doing.

We determine that someone has no use and so they are invalid. Therefore we invalidate them. We understand when its time to throw away an invalid document but why would we do this to ourselves or someone else? We decide that we have no value and so we invalidate ourselves. The greatest gift you have is you. The purpose of life is to be with people. As humans, we need to engage and be with other human beings. This is a function of us. So why would we invalidate ourselves or someone else?

We invalidate ourselves by the language we use when we talk about ourselves. We invalidate ourselves by the actions we take. We invalidate ourselves by the decisions we make. Others cannot invalidate us. It is our choice as to whether we allow others to invalidate us. If your self-respect is low then you may be more vulnerable to accepting an invalidating comment or action.

If we see ourselves as worthy then we see everyone as worthy. If we value who we are, we value others.

Building a reserve of worthiness and self-respect is how we live a healthy positive life. Tiredness, stress, and anxiety deplete our reserve of self-respect. Imagine you woke up every

day and made an intention to respect yourself and others. Every time you made a decision you considered this intent first. Imagine the result of your decision.

The moment that we recognise that respect is our responsibility we stop asking people around us to respect us. Our very actions will show we respect ourselves and each other. The choice is yours.

Reflection

1. What do you respect yourself?
2. What are the behaviours you demonstrate when you are not feeling self respect?
3. Where do you want to build respect for yourself and what is the plan you will create to do this?

Coaching Application

Validation is a similar concept to Acknowledgment and is very much related to the present. Sometimes the most valuable thing we can give our clients is confirmation that they are doing the right thing, or at least, are on the right track.

Uncertainty and change can be scary at times. We are conditioned as human beings to believe there is only one right choice or course of action to take. The truth is there are a number of choices.

When validating a client, we are letting them know we support them. For the client, you may be the only support person they have. We all know the importance of great supports. Work with your client to help them identify the people in their life that can support them.

Listen to the words your clients use to describe their situation. Write down comments they make and then read them back to them. Ask them what was their belief about themselves when they said this? Work with your client to visualize what personal respect would look like for them.

A fantastic exercise is to ask your clients to identify a person they really respect. Then ask them to outline the behaviours of this person so they can see how they model self-respect. What we value in others is what we value for ourselves.

Reflection

1. How do you model self-respect as a coach to your client?
2. What are some powerful questions you could ask your client if you are uncertain about their self-respect?
3. What are some behaviours that would reinforce self-respect and invalidation?