



Validation Training Institute, Inc.

Connecting heart to heart with older adults
a non-profit, tax exempt company

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30 March 2020

Tips from VTI for Caregivers of People Living with Dementia Part III

REMEMBER TO CENTER YOURSELF

Older adults living with cognitive decline are sensitive to the atmosphere around them. For the moments that you interact with someone, make sure you have put aside your own feelings and thoughts. Practice one of the [centering exercises](#) until you can center in 2 seconds.

Validation Principle: Painful feelings that are expressed, acknowledged and validated by a trusted listener will diminish. Painful feelings that are ignored or suppressed will gain in strength.

This is as true for you as for the older adults with whom you work!

Find a good place or person with whom you can express your feelings. All the feelings and thoughts that you've put aside need to come out. We are living in a time of uncertainty and those of you who are working in the field of elder care, are under more pressure than ever.

Validation Principle: Listening with empathy builds trust, reduces anxiety and restores dignity.

Sometimes you don't have to DO anything except ask, "How are you doing?" and then listen. When you listen with empathy, you focus on the emotions the other person is expressing. It's like when you are listening to a friend; your face reflects the other person's face; your body is slightly forward showing interest and engagement in what the other person is saying. You don't need to use words.

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At this strange time, filled with great difficulties for many people, it's important to remember

CENTERING

- Centering will help you not hook into the anxiety that is prevalent by helping you find your own emotional center.
- Centering will help you put aside your own feelings for the moments you want to connect with older adults.
- Centering will help you find empathy.
- Centering can also be 3 minutes of self-care.

[VTI's YouTube Channel](#) is a free resource for everyone. It includes 3 'How-to... center' videos in English, Italian, French, German, Swedish and Chinese. Feel free to send these to everyone you know who would benefit from it. If they are not in your language, please contact me and we'll work on getting all 6 'How-to...' videos up in your language.

SELF-CARE

This is not a luxury item, this is a basic human need even though it doesn't show up on Maslow's list. If you don't have energy (physically or psychologically), you can't give good care to others. Self-care means finding the things that GIVE you energy. Is it a bath? ½ hour reading a book? Listening to your favorite piece of music? Dancing to rock n' roll in the living room? Allow yourself moments during each day to charge your batteries. This prevents burn-out and brings more joy in your life. Remember that Validation should bring joy to both you and the people you care for.

MEANINGFUL ENGAGEMENT

When you choose to engage on a deep level with people living with dementia remember:

- Often older adults will travel back in time to events that FEEL the same as what is going on in the present. So, when they hear of a crisis, a pandemic or even just feel the anxiety around them, they may feel like it's war-time. Old traumas may come up.
- These painful feelings need to be released, not bottled up. People need to express these feelings to someone who they trust, who does not judge or correct or try to fix it. They just need someone to be with them in their emotions.
- Engagement does not mean always being happy, sometimes it's sharing unhappiness, pain or fear (basic human emotions).

Those moments of close, human to human contact, create joy and well-being.

Wishing you all moments of joy,

Vicki

