

# 4 Steps to Connecting with Your Teen's Great Big Emotions

## Things to Remember:

**Real connection requires that your teen feel heard, understood and accepted!**  
 For your teen to feel **heard and understood**, postponing your agenda and listening with curiosity rather than judgement is absolutely key.

- Avoid at all costs:**
- Criticism, judgment, or defensiveness.
  - Minimizing your teen's feelings.
  - Taking responsibility for your teen's feelings or rushing to make her feel better.
  - Approaching the discussion from a place of superiority.

For your teen to feel **accepted**, validation is essential.

**Validation is:**

- Believing in your teen, and accepting **HER**, even if the behavior isn't acceptable.
- Tuning into and reflecting that you genuinely understand her emotion from her perspective, even when that's not your perspective.

**Validation is NOT:**

- Agreeing with everything your teen says or does.
- Doing whatever she asks you to do.
- Supporting unsafe or unacceptable behaviors.
- Telling her that she is right.

**Finally:** Remember that your teen's brain is undergoing huge changes right now. You can help her to weather the storm. Talk to yourself and breathe. This stuff isn't easy.

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- Prepare**

  - Take a deep breath.
  - Postpone your own agenda.
- Attune**

  - Tune into your teen's world. Try to understand your teen's world from her or his perspective, not your own.
  - Hear the emotion behind your teen's words, even if you don't agree with the details. Ask yourself, "What is it that I think my teen is feeling or experiencing right now?"
  - **Remember:** Your goal is just to understand. Ask clarifying questions if you are uncertain about what your teen is feeling.  
 e.g. "What is it about what your friend said that felt so hurtful?"
- Summarize and Reflect Back**

  - A powerful way to "be there" for your teen is to identify and reflect back her feelings, and to summarize what you heard her say using your own words.  
 e.g. It sounds like you're really frustrated and feel that it's unfair that I won't extend your curfew. Is that right?
- Validate**

  - Find some part of what your teen is saying to really validate. That means acknowledging in a non-blaming way that you understand how she is feeling given her history/belief/ perspective, ect. (see tips)  
 e.g. I can see how you'd be anxious given how important this is to you.
  - Always be genuine. If you don't "get it", go back to Attune and ask more questions.



## Validation Practice Worksheet

Our own emotions make validating harder. Slow down your response by taking a deep breath and responding from a state of calm. Ask yourself the following to gain perspective.

WHAT ARE MY TEEN'S VERBAL AND NON-VERBAL BEHAVIORS TELLING ME ABOUT WHAT EMOTION(S) SHE'S EXPERIENCING?

WHAT ARE MY OWN EMOTIONS, JUDGMENTS, AND ASSUMPTIONS THAT MAKE IT HARD TO VALIDATE MY TEEN RIGHT NOW?

CONSIDERING THINGS FROM MY TEEN'S PERSPECTIVE, WHAT IS ONE THING THAT I CAN VALIDATE HERE ABOUT HER FEELING?

WHEN LISTENING WITHOUT JUDGMENT, I CAN SHOW MY TEEN THAT I UNDERSTAND, AND ACCEPT HER WITH THE FOLLOWING VALIDATING STATEMENT.

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