**Clarification and Validation**

I guess what I hear you saying is….

Are you saying that…?

If I hear you correctly, you are telling me

I’m not sure I totally get what you are saying, but here’s what I think you are saying…

I may be reading between the lines, what I hear is…

If I am spinning this, please let me know…

After you clarify, please ask, “Is that accurate? Is there more?”

Most people can only effectively listen up to five sentences. If the talker is talking for more than 5, ask if you can interrupt them to clarify. Or ask for pen and paper. Ask them to pause, so that you can follow what they are saying. If they complain that you are interrupting them and they are not done, show them this document. When they understand that the process works most effectively with shorter speeches, most people are willing to engage in this way. If not, ask for a time out, break. If that continues and you cannot listen, ask them to accommodate your ability to listen. It is much harder to listen than to talk. Get into couples counseling if this dynamic continues.

You might be frustrated that you cannot understand their statement. Ask them for more context, ask them to be more direct and be sure that you are in a head space where you can listen effectively. It might be you, not them. Do not assume they are at fault. Assume that the onus is on you to listen better, and they will work with you to be understood. Most people desperately want to be understood.

Are you intimate enough that you can anticipate (not mind read)? Own it as a guess and tell them what your guess is about what they are saying.

Note: If you think they are “Wrong” in their perspective, clarifying becomes harder. This is not about right or wrong, it is about understanding the person speaking. If you cannot let this go, your ability to listen is severely compromised. If you find yourself getting defensive, go ahead and take a moment.

We don’t clarify every statement, just the ones that seem to have gone off the rails. Hmmm, that response doesn’t seem to fit. Maybe there is a misunderstanding.

The more you clarify, you notice patterns in yourself and others, especially those close to you. This can greatly reduce your conflict.

Please practice clarifying and asking for feedback on how you are clarifying. “Is that accurate?” helps a ton because we often do not hear them accurately the first few times. Rather than get frustrated by this, prepare for it. Expect it and work with nature, not against it.

**Validation**

Validation can be sound effects, it can be miming, or doing charades.

It can be letting the person know that you acknowledge their feelings. That you understand where they’re coming from, that you get it.

When people feel understood they are less likely to fight.

Can you validate the emotion even if you disagree?

It takes a lot of empathy to do that.

Can you go into full empathy and understand where the person is coming from, even when you disagree?

Can you not judge them or try to persuade or convert them?

What does validation sound like?

“I acknowledge your feelings. Your feelings are valid.” Even if you disagree with behavior or how they expressed.

“I get where you’re coming from.”

Sound effects:

Oooh

Ahhhh

Mmmm

Uh huh

With the sound effects, you’re saying, “I feel your pain.”

“From your perspective, that makes a lot of sense.”

“I get the story that you’re telling yourself makes you feel that way. It’s OK that we see it differently.”

Then, you may add, “Perhaps in five minutes or so I can tell you my perspective as well.” You’re not saying it aloud but -There’s a lot of similarity and there’s some differences too. If you try to do this before they are ready, they will not hear you.

Let’s not try to convince one another that our way is the one-way and the only way. That’s probably not going to be successful.

With validation especially, when there’s a difference of opinion, difference of age, culture, gender etc. validation is your most important tool.

What you’re saying is “I will not judge you even when we are different. Differences are not the problem.”

Valuing the difference, appreciating the difference, instead of judging the difference, makes a difference.

For the next week, practice making sound effects that show the person that you understand them that you get them you feel their pain. The week after that try saying I get where you’re coming from. Try your best to go into full empathy. Then demonstrated verbally that you get where they’re coming from. Don’t just say you get where they’re coming from unless you can tell them in words where they’re coming from

The week after that catch yourself with judgments. If you find yourself listening to somebody, going into full empathy mode, and then judging them, you missed the point.

The goal is not to judge people.

The goal is to allow people to be who they are. The goal is not “make them in our image and likeness.”

If you’re listening to somebody just to change them, that’s violent.

Research has shown that if you want somebody to change, accepting them is the first step towards getting them to change. So, your goal is to understand and accept and if they’re going to change, that will help with the change.

Practicing a new habit:

Most people, even when they know that they should acknowledge, and validate, need prompting. They need practice until they make up their own habit.

What will you do to practice validating and acknowledging feelings, without interrupting, without converting, without judging?

“I get where you’re coming from.”

“That sucks”

Stop yourself from seeing anything more. This is not about you. Don’t make it about you. Don’t change the focus from being the listener to being the talker.

In five minutes ask the person if they would be open to hearing your perspective as well. That’s when you can make it about you.

Practice, practice this, practice this.