

5 Ways to Validate Yourself: Be Part of Your Support System

“You have been criticizing yourself for years, and it hasn’t worked. Try approving of yourself and see what happens.” ~Louise L. Hay

We all have techniques we depend on to lift our spirits when we’re feeling down about ourselves or our lives. A while back I realized something about the ones I’d found most effective when struggling to forgive or accept myself: Many of them involved seeking validation from other people. Some of my most [effective mood-boosters](#) included:

- Reading emails from readers who’d benefitted from my writing
- Calling loved ones and reminding myself of how much they valued me
- Sharing my experiences and recognizing, through the resultant conversations, that I wasn’t alone with my feelings and struggles

These are all perfectly valid approaches to feeling better, but they all hinge on praise and external support. Getting help from others is only one part of the equation. We also need to be able to validate, support, and help ourselves. With this in mind, I’ve come up with a few ideas to create a little more balance in my support system, making myself a more central part of it. If you’re also looking to increase your capacity for self-soothing so you can depend less on validation from others, you may find these ideas helpful:

1. Make a “you” section in your daily gratitude journal. Of course, this assumes you already keep a [gratitude journal](#) to recognize and celebrate all the good things in your day. If you don’t, you can still take a few minutes every day to [give yourself some credit](#). Note down the things you’ve done well, the choices you’ve made that you’re proud of, the progress you’ve made, and even the things that required no action at all—for example, the time you gave yourself to simply be. When you regularly praise yourself, self-validation becomes a habit you can depend on when you need it the most.

2. Before seeking external validation, ask yourself, “What do I hope that person tells me?” Then tell it to yourself. Odds are, you aren’t always [looking for someone’s advice](#) or opinion when you come to them with a painful story. You’re looking for them to confirm you didn’t do anything wrong—or if you did, that you’re not a bad person for it. Essentially, you’re looking for someone else to see the best in you and believe in you. Give yourself what you’re seeking from them before making that call. Then by all means, make it if you want to. The goal isn’t to stop reaching out to others. It’s to be there for yourself. The words you want to hear from someone else will be far more powerful if you fully believe what they’re saying.

3. Recognize when you’re judging your feelings. If you’re in the habit of feeling bad about [feeling down](#) or insecure, or generally having emotional reactions to emotions, you will inevitably end up feeling stuck and helpless. Get in the habit of telling yourself, “I have a right to feel how I feel.” This will help you understand your feelings and work through them much more easily, because you won’t be so deeply embedded in negativity about yourself. Once you’ve accepted your feelings, you’ll then be free to seek support for the actual problem—not your [self-judgment](#) about having to deal with it.

4. See yourself as the parent to the child version of you. I know this one might sound odd—bear with me! Many of us didn't receive the type of love, support, and kindness we needed growing up, and this may have taught us to treat ourselves harshly and critically. When you're looking for that warm, fuzzy feeling that emerges when someone you trust tells you, "Everything is going to be okay," imagine yourself saying it to your younger self. Picture that little kid who tried so hard, meant no harm, and just wanted to be loved and cherished. This will likely help in deflating your self-criticism and fill you with a genuine sense of [compassion for yourself](#). Once again, this doesn't need to be an alternative to seeking compassion from others; it just provides a secure foundation from which you'll be better able to receive that.

5. Get in the habit of asking yourself, "What do I need right now?" Oftentimes, when we're feeling down on ourselves, we feel a (sometimes subconscious) desire to punish ourselves. When we reject or deprive ourselves in this way, we exacerbate our feelings, because we then feel bad about two things: the original incident and the pain we're causing ourselves. If you're feeling down, or down on yourself, ask yourself: "What does my body need? What does my mind need? What does my spirit need?" Or otherwise expressed: What will make you feel better, more stable, healthier, and more balanced? You may find that you need to take a walk to feel more energized, take a nap to feel better rested, practice deep breathing to clear your head, or drink some water to hydrate yourself. This is validating yourself in action. Whenever you [address your needs](#), you reinforce to yourself that they are important, regardless of whatever you did or didn't do previously.

One more thing has helped me tremendously in validating myself: accepting that it's okay to need reminders like these. There was a time when I saw this as something shameful - an indication that other people who seemed self-assured were somehow better than me. I wondered why self-kindness didn't always come instinctively. But when I stopped judging myself, I remembered all the experiences that helped shape my critical inner voice. It wasn't a sign of weakness that I needed to put in some effort; it was a sign of strength that I was willing to do it. It's one of life's great ironies, that it feels so natural to feel bad about feeling bad. All this does is keep us stuck. When we stop blaming ourselves for having room to grow, we're free to focus our energy on doing it.

Do you have any techniques for validating yourself?

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