

126. Unlocking Self-Validation: Breaking Free from Invalidation Patterns

00:00

Welcome to the Empowered brain, the only podcast using science, psychology and coaching to help you rewire your brain and create a life you love with your host, Dr. Vanessa Calderon, a Harvard grad physician, master coach, and mother of two.

00:18

Hello, sweet friends, welcome back to the podcast, I am so thrilled to be here with all of you again, because, for one, I just love all of you so much. And I feel so honored to be on this journey with you, you know, helping you create patterns of love and self-compassion and helping you unlock the most joy that you can be. So we're doing that again, today, we're gonna be talking about a very, very, very important skill that's going to help you create big things in the world, things that you really want to create in the world. And it's also going to help you just become the most you possible, which I think really is one of the most important things for us on this journey of life is really coming back to ourselves coming home to ourselves. That is self-validation. And we're going to talk about that in just a second.

But first, a few updates. Number one, I want to remind you that if there is a topic that you want to be covered on the podcast, please DM me on Instagram at VanessaCalderonMD, Instagram, you can just send me a quick DM letting me know what it is that you want to be covered. I've had a lot of you reach out to me and let me know what you want covered. And those podcasts are in the works. So I'm so excited to be able to bring that to you.

Another important update or actual invitation I have for all of you and a request is I would love to invite you to leave a comment here on the podcast rate the podcast and review it. The reviews actually really, really help get other people access to this podcast. That's just the way the algorithm works. So when you give us a thumbs up, you rate the podcast, and you review the podcast, if you're listening to it on a platform where you can review like iTunes, please leave a review, it's really, really helpful, I would really appreciate it.

And the last thing that I'm just so thrilled about. And this is an update about our program, that journey, there's two really exciting things that we've added. So if you're not aware, I run the most incredible coaching program. It's called the journey where I work with a lot of really smart women from all over the world who are achieving really big things in the world.

They're just ambitious and excited and want to create big things in the world. And many of them feel stuck or they feel burnt out or they feel exhausted or they feel like they're not reaching their potential. And inside the journey, we help uncover all the things that are keeping women stuck, including things like procrastination and impostor syndrome, and a whole bunch of other things that lead to us not

eventually not achieving self-actualization, which is what we're all on this journey of life to achieve. So a few updates. So that program, we just added a book club, and I'm a big book club nerd. So I'm so excited that we now have a book club.

03:21

The first book we're reading is called *The Pain We Carry*. I have it here in front of me. The book is incredible. It's by Natalie Gutierrez. I listened to it first on Audible and it was amazing. And so then I went back and I bought the book and I've read the entire book again because it is just so good. So I'm bringing it to my program. So if you are interested in joining us on that book club journey, join the program. Join us Inside the journey Vanessa Calderon, md.com backslash join. Again, it's Vanessa Calderon, md.com backslash join so that you can check out the program and join us on the journey, you can get in on our very first book club. Another really exciting update is we are adding one-on-one coaching inside the program. And if you join us before November 15. So you still have a few weeks if you join us before November 15.

You'll get access to that one-on-one coaching for half the price, which is really exciting. Alright, sweet friends. Let's get started on today's podcast. Again, the podcast today is where I get to teach you a really important skill, the skill of self-validation. So I'm gonna share a story with all of you first as to why this is so important. So many, many years ago when I was trying to get pregnant with my second kid, we had a really tough time. I had two miscarriages pretty early with the first two miscarriages before six to eight weeks. And so you know, if you've never had a miscarriage, I really hope that you never have to experience one because it's cramping and bleeding and discomfort. But I'm an ER doctor and I see miscarriages all the time.

05:00

So miscarriages early in pregnancy didn't really mean anything to me, it didn't make it mean. You know, I just thought it was just part of physiology. And then we got pregnant a third time. And that pregnancy lasted a little bit longer. And I miscarried that one too. And when I miscarried for the third time, oh my gosh, I was just full of emotion and sadness. And I felt like a failure and I felt so disappointed. And because I had carried that pregnancy a little bit longer. The miscarriage was actually really painful, with a lot of cramping and a lot of bleeding.

05:35

So, when I started to miscarry that third pregnancy, I was also an ER doctor. And it was also the chief of my department and a medical director. And I had his shift scheduled that day. And I had a shift scheduled in the middle of the day. So if you ever go to the ER or your physician or you're an ER doc, you know, middle-of-the-day shifts are like the craziest. They're always so busy. So to shift scheduled that day, and instead of calling out sick, I went to my shift because I wanted to go to my shift, I thought I needed to be there. I thought I needed to be strong. I thought that I couldn't show emotion. I thought that I just had to grin and bear it. And by the way, I hadn't told anybody about my miscarriages. The only person that knew was my husband hadn't told my family hadn't told my mom or my sisters, because I was ashamed. And so I get to the ER, and I'm actively miscarrying, so I'm cramping and bleeding, and I'm still trying to like, you know, be a great physician. And I'm trying to be fast, because we're in the ER, I'm trying to see as many patients as I can. And I'm running around the ER doing what

I do. And one of the nurses there, who was a very dear friend of mine, said something to me. I went, I went over to talk to a patient that was still on the ambulance gurney and she was there, triaging the patient. And I got all the information I needed. And she was trying to make a joke with me. And I guess I didn't respond. And so I walked away. And she came up to me in the doctor's room where I was doing my charting a few seconds later and said, What's going on with you, you're so grumpy today. And when she said that, oh, my gosh, it took everything inside of me not to start bawling and crying. I'm getting emotional right now just thinking about it.

07:17

And so I immediately just went to the bathroom and cleaned myself up, you know, I cried a little bit and wiped my tears away. And I came back out and I started working. And I told her, oh, sorry, I'm just on my period.

07:31

And they totally invalidated, how I felt and invalidated what I was experiencing.

07:37

And I didn't give myself the space that I needed at that moment.

07:42

And that's what we sometimes do to ourselves. When we invalidate ourselves, we judge ourselves, we judge our past experiences, and we tell ourselves that we shouldn't be weak and that we shouldn't be sad. And we try to fit in and we try to belong, and we try to be this person, you know, that we think other people expect us to be.

08:03

And that leads us to our podcast today. So the podcast today is about validation and self-validation. So I want to talk about what self-validation is first, and then I'm going to go into some examples of how we invalidate ourselves, and what we can start doing today to start validating ourselves. Alright, so what exactly is self-validation? Self-validation is this act of recognizing and affirming our own thoughts, feelings or beliefs, and our experiences, and recognizing and affirming them as legitimate and worthy of acceptance, worthy of acceptance. I'm feeling sad, and that's okay. That's worthy of Me accepting me being sad, and acknowledging what I'm thinking and feeling. It's an incredibly important aspect of self-compassion, which I talk a lot about on this podcast, and of emotional well-being.

09:05

Self-validation really is us accepting and validating our own internal experiences without seeking external approval, or external validation from other people. Now, I know many of you listening our ambitious and are high achievers and are incredibly smart, and work really hard. One of the things that gets muddied with that part of us as we're sort of growing through life is we start seeking an incredible amount of external validation. We're looking for that all of the time. As we're getting older and we're growing up, we're looking for people to tell us that we're doing okay or that they're proud of us or whatever it is.

09:48

And so, what we end up doing is we start validating ourselves. So let's go through some examples of how we invalidate ourselves. So

10:00

Let's talk about how we invalidate ourselves first and why. So why do we invalidate ourselves? One of the big reasons why we invalidate ourselves is because we're doing our best to just fit in, we're doing our best to not be judged.

10:17

And in so doing, we end up invalidating how we think and how we feel. And we invalidate the things that we do and the actions that we want to take. Because we are afraid that we, if we assert ourselves will be judged as too assertive, or if you're a woman and you assert yourself, you'll be judged as the B word, right?

10:36

Or you're afraid to set boundaries because you don't want to be judged as somebody who's selfish. That's a huge one again, for women, what's the worst word you can ever call a woman selfish? So we end up validating ourselves because we want to fit in. And I start with that one because I want you guys to see how you know, as part of Maslow's hierarchy, belonging is the third rung of Maslow's hierarchy. So of course, we want to fit in, of course, we want to belong. And when we're young, we don't understand that what we're doing is invalidating ourselves to fit in and be wrong. But now, as we're all older, and we're doing this work of, you know, mindfulness and awareness, and all of this reprogramming of our brain, we are now at a point when we can say, Holy smokes, I don't want to invalidate myself anymore. What purpose does that serve, I want to be the most me that I can be. So that's the first reason.

The second reason we invalidate ourselves is learned behavior, past experiences, you know, maybe you saw your mother or your father or another caregiver, you had invalidated yourself. Maybe they were always sacrificing or maybe knew that they were going through something tough or difficult, but they didn't want to be sad. Or they didn't want to show emotion. They always wanted to be positive. So you started invalidating, any feelings you had of sadness or has anything been hard for you? Maybe you were invalidated by a caregiver, maybe you were someone that was, you know, beautifully emotional as a child. And maybe you were told to stop being emotional. If you identify as a male and you are emotional. Maybe you were told that boys don't cry. So maybe you were invalidated. And you learned to invalidate yourself.

12:29

Another big reason is past trauma. So if you grew up in a home, where you experienced a lot of childhood trauma,

12:39

and you grew up having to compartmentalize so that you can actually like to leave your home and go to school and learn something without like thinking all the things that were happening at your home, and

you learn to compartmentalize really well, now as an adult, you might continue to invalidate how you feel. Because you might be afraid that if you let yourself feel you're gonna spiral into sadness spiral into depression, become this blob of emotion. And you are so afraid of what that will mean for you. Maybe it'll make you weak, maybe it'll make you less productive. Maybe you think your world will fall apart if you let yourself feel or if you validate how you feel.

13:20

Another big reason why we invalidate ourselves is self-esteem. So what do I mean by this? I mean, if you are already someone who has self-esteem issues, where you doubt yourself, you experienced the imposter phenomenon. If that's already who you are, then any thoughts or emotions or thoughts, you're going to invalidate those two? Because you might believe that you are inherently flawed or inherently unworthy? Let me just pause there for a second because if that's you, I want to pause and I want to remind you that that is absolute BS, that you are an incredible human being. You come from the source, you come from the universe, you come from the cosmos, and there is nothing about you that is flawed, there is nothing about you that is unworthy, you are incredibly worthy, you are beautiful, and you're perfectly imperfect.

14:14

So if you believe those things about you, though, and you and you, you're still sort of sitting through those negative thoughts spirals, then whenever you have an emotion that might be negative, you might start to invalidate that emotion. Same thing with imposter syndrome. When you feel insecure, you might start invalidating the need to deserve success or the recognition that you worked so hard for.

14:38

Alright, so those are some of the reasons why we invalidate ourselves. Now, how does this actually show up for us in real life, like how does it look when we invalidate ourselves?

14:48

One big one is self-criticism, self-criticism, so you might say this out loud to yourself, or you might be thinking this to yourself. I'm so stupid for making that mistake.

15:00

or berating yourself for another perceived flaw that you have like, why can I just be happier? Why am I always so sad? Why I'm Why am I always so depressed? Why am I always so angry? Why can't I just be like them? Why am I always so hungry? Why do I always need to eat? So constantly berating yourself for perceived flaws or mistakes? Those are forms of invalidation, self invalidation. And really, at its core, what we're doing when we invalidate ourselves is we are rejecting ourselves. Instead of calling it self invalidation, we can just call it self rejection, because that's exactly what we're doing. We're rejecting our thoughts, our feelings, and our actions.

15:42

To hurt the next reason why we do this often is we have been taught or we deny our emotions, and minimize our experience. So let's say that you're actually pretty upset somebody hurt your feelings. And instead of saying, Wow, I'm really angry about this, you tell yourself, I shouldn't be angry about this, I

should just get over it. When really, you're clearly upset. Or you say something to yourself, like, oh, it's not that big of a deal when something really is bothering you.

You know, I had one of my students that I coached the other day who was feeling really irritated because she's always showing up for everybody at home. And she really had, she had some plants that she wanted to go do on her own. But she felt like she needed to be there for everyone else. And then she felt irritated. And then instead of validating her feelings of irritation, she said to herself, I shouldn't feel irritated about this, this is so stupid, I should just get over it. Like I should just be here with my family.

So those are examples of how we invalidate another one, which is gonna sound silly, but I know a lot of us do this if we ignore our basic needs. For example, when you're tired, instead of just going to bed at night, you choose to stay up and invalidate your need for rest, to finish more emails, or maybe to finish some Netflix series that you're watching. Or you invalidate your need to go to the bathroom, your bladder is full. And instead of going to the bathroom, you ask yourself, How much more can I do before I have to before I actually have to go to the bathroom? I was so guilty of that one working in the ER trying to get as much done as possible, I would ignore my bathroom, it's up until the very last second, thank you God for never helping if so and I never had an accident, thankfully. But the point is those are ways that we invalidate ourselves. Another big one that really falls under this category of ignoring our basic needs is not setting or not enforcing personal boundaries, boundaries, that center our well-being that center, our personal wellness.

17:42

So another way that we invalidate ourselves is by invalidating our achievements, which a lot of us are really good at when someone gives you a compliment, what do you say, oh, no, no, no, it was my team, or I was just lucky. Will you push those compliments away? That's another way that we invalidate ourselves. And lastly, we doubt ourselves, you doubt your intuition. You doubt your gut emotions, you doubt your decisions, you doubt your abilities. Maybe you say things to yourself, like I can't possibly do that I can't possibly get that done. Or when you have this gut feeling or your intuition, instead of moving forward with that you start doubting what you're feeling or thinking thinking like, How is this even possible? Or maybe somebody else knows the answer, and you go look for the answer outside of you.

18:27

So when we do this regularly, when we do this regularly, what we start realizing is that we create this pattern in our brain, this programming in our brain, where we start telling ourselves that what we think and what we feel isn't good enough.

18:45

And because of that, you start seeking validation outside of you, you start seeking external validation, and you start looking for other people to tell you that you aren't good enough. You want them to tell you that you know what you thought what you said, was great was good enough, you're seeking their praise, you're looking for cues around you if like, Am I Am I beautiful enough? Do they like me? Do they think I'm funny? Am I successful enough? All of those types of things, you start looking for that outside of you, instead of intentionally understanding and learning and coming up with your own definition of

what success means to you. What does it mean to you to be good enough? You know, what does it mean to you to be successful or beautiful, all of those types of things, you look for that outside of you.

19:33

Alright, so I'm gonna go through a few ways for us to actually start to practice self-validation. So how can you start to practice self-validation today?

19:42

The very first thing we all need to do is have awareness, right? We need to be aware when we're actually invalidating ourselves. So I talk a lot about the practice of noticing. Noticing is this practice where a thought comes up or a feeling comes up and you're able to pause and note it. Oh,

20:00

Oh, I noticed that I'm being judgmental, I noticed that I'm pushing away my feelings, I noticed that I'm judging myself, I noticed that I'm practicing self-rejection right now, or self-validation. And if you note it that way, super objective, then what you don't do is you don't judge the thought or the feeling. You don't judge the self-rejection or the self-invalidation. You note it with objectivity. And that's really important because when you can note something with objectivity, it opens up an entire, an entire portal into self-compassion.

You can just see it as there's something I've been practicing for a long time. I've been practicing feeling really insecure in groups of white men, for example. And so you can start noticing what you're thinking what you're feeling. And if it's helpful say to yourself, look at that thought I've been practicing for a long time, because that's all it is. Everything you think everything you feel, they're all wired. They're all patterns. They're all things we've been practicing for a long time. This means when you start noticing and having awareness, you can change what you practice. And instead of practicing invalidation, you can practice self-validation.

Alright, so the first is to have that awareness. So I've talked a lot about the cognitive thought model here. That's another tool of awareness. So your thoughts, create your feelings, your feelings, create your actions, your actions, create your results. But really, I've also taught the core mnemonic here. So a few episodes back, I taught the call mnemonic, C O A L, which is another tool of self-awareness. So I want you to go back, listen to those podcasts, and see which one resonates with you more that you can start using to practice your own self-awareness. So once you are aware of your thoughts or your feelings, the next thing you want to do is you want to practice emotional validation. validate your own thoughts, your own emotions, by acknowledging that they exist. That's it. You don't have to make them be good. You don't have to make them be bad. All you have to do is acknowledge that they're there, regardless of their intensity. Like if you're feeling sad, and feeling really sad right now. It's okay to be sad. That's what I tell myself. I'm feeling really pissed off right now.

Okay, it's okay to be angry, it's okay to be pissed, I'm feeling tired, or I'm feeling irritated. It's okay, I can be irritated, that's okay. It's safe to be irritated, or I'm feeling tired, it's okay to be tired. It doesn't make me lazy, because I'm tired. Because a lot of us have a lot of trauma around the idea of even resting right, we're afraid to rest, because we think it makes us lazy. So whatever it is that you're feeling, you

have awareness about the thought or the feeling. And then you validate it by just stating it out loud and telling yourself that it's okay to be sad or tired or angry or irritated. That's it, it's okay, it's safe.

22:48

And then from there, you can shift to self-compassion. Because when you validate yourself with that level of kindness, with that level of understanding with that level of objectivity, instead of judgment, especially during these difficult times, that in itself is a form of self-compassion, just validating yourself as a beautiful practice of self-compassion. And from there, you can ask yourself, what is it that I need right now? What do I need? And sometimes what you need is to rest, or maybe you need a break. Maybe you need to cry, maybe you need to scream really loud. Maybe you need to just breathe.

23:26

Maybe you need to set a boundary. So you ask yourself what it is that you need in that moment after you validate yourself. And then you just pause and wait to listen. Wait to see what comes up for you. What is it that I need right now?

23:42

Now, if you are someone like me, if you're someone like me who was constantly looking for external validation, I did this all of the time, in everything I did, I was looking for somebody just noticing me. If you're constantly looking for external validation, then here's here's some ways that you can start moving past that. Number one, ask yourself, what is it that they give you that you need? What kind of external validation do you need? What are you looking for from other people? What is it that you need from them? For example, I was always looking for external validation because I was looking for someone to be proud of me. I wanted to hear I'm so proud of you.

24:26

Maybe you're looking for someone to tell you that you're really smart, or that you're really successful, or that you're really beautiful. What is it that you're looking for outside of you? Once you note what you're looking for outside of you, the next step is to start giving that to yourself.

24:43

Start giving that to yourself. So what does this look like? So for me, because I was always looking for somebody to be proud of me. I started actively practicing being proud of myself. Now this sounds a little silly, but it was such a beautiful practice and it totally worked. So I'm gonna invite you all to do it for yours.

25:00

have, what I would do is I would get my journal out. And you know, I had already developed a practice of journaling. So as part of my journaling practice, I would end every journal entry with Vanessa, I'm so proud of you, I love you.

25:14

And sometimes I would just start by writing myself a letter as to why I was so proud of myself, especially in the beginning, when he started doing this work for me and realized how I was always

looking for that outside of me, I started off a journal entry being like Vanessa, these are all the reasons why I'm proud of you. And I would just let it flow. And I still do that I still wake up every morning, and I put my right hand over my heart because I've taught you guys that releases oxytocin, which is a feel-good hormone. And I'll say to myself, good morning, Vanessa, I love you. And good morning, Vanessa, I'm so proud of you. And I started giving myself that external validation. What that has allowed me to do in that practice, is it's allowed me to start doing things that are way outside of my comfort zone, I started this business, I have gone out and have done these big teaching engagements, I've done these things that are way outside of my comfort zone.

26:09

Because I can continue to be proud of myself, I don't need anybody out there to tell me that they're proud of me. Because if I did, I'd be working so much harder, looking for that validation coming from somewhere outside of me, but I don't need that anymore. And again, it's not black and white. It's not like imperfect, and always feels good to be acknowledged. Right? But the point is that when you start giving yourself the things you're looking outside of yourself for, you can now rely on yourself for that validation for that love for that kindness, and you no longer need to look outside of yourself for that. So that's my invitation to all of you. If you are someone constantly looking for external validation, which I know a lot of my students are, I want you to ask yourself, what is it that they give me that I need? What is it that I need from them?

Listen to what comes up for you. And then start giving that to yourself. If it's you're looking for someone to tell you that you're beautiful, every day when you look in the mirror, give yourself a little wink and tell yourself. Hey, Vanessa, you're so beautiful today. Oh, I love you. I do that because I just think it's nice. And I think it's kind you know, I think it's kind of seen I think nice things to myself. And I want to invite you to do the same. Alright, sweet friends. I hope you enjoyed this episode. And I hope that you can use the tools that you've learned here today to continue to go out and do really big beautiful bold things in the world with self-compassion, with kindness with love, because the more you love yourself, the easier it'll be for you to be successful. And the more you love yourself, the easier it will be for you to love others. Alright with friends. I love you all so much

27:54

Hey, sweet friends, if you love what you're learning, then you've got to join us on the journey. It's my all-inclusive program and the best community out there giving you the education you never knew you needed to help you create a life you love. Join us at [Vanessa Calderon md.com/join](https://VanessaCalderon.md.com/join). I'll see you there.