RELATIONSHIPS & FAMILY • EMOTION-FOCUSED & DBT SKILLS

The 3-Step Emotional Validation Script

De-escalate teen emotional meltdowns by validating feelings before offering solutions.

CLINICAL INSTRUCTIONS: One line per step in your own words. Short, honest answers are easier to trust.

Participant Name: _____ **Date:** _____ **Target: 15m**

1 RESIST THE 'FIX-IT' URGE

When your teen vents about a bad grade, friend drama, or pressure, bite your tongue. Do not give advice or say 'It is not a big deal.'

CLINICAL HINT: Giving advice too early communicates: 'Your feelings are inconvenient to me.'

2 NAME THE UNDERLYING EMOTION ACCURATELY

Say: 'That sounds exhausting. You worked really hard and felt let down' or 'You are feeling betrayed because you trusted them.'

CLINICAL HINT: Accurate emotional labeling lowers amygdala reactivity in under 60 seconds.

3 NORMALIZE THE STRUGGLE IN CONTEXT

Say: 'Anyone in your position would feel hurt after that happened. It makes total sense why you are upset right now.'

CLINICAL HINT: Validation does not mean you endorse bad behavior; it means you see their pain.

4 THE COLLABORATIVE SUPPORT ASK

Only after their shoulders drop, ask: 'Do you want me to just listen and give you a hug, or do you want to brainstorm solutions together?'

CLINICAL HINT: Empower your teen to choose between comfort and problem-solving.