

Validation & Invalidation.

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I remember a few years ago and I was moving some personal items from storage while I was at my parents farm and had left them in the back seat of their car. Mum and I went to visit some of their family friends as we pulled up at their house. My Mum looked down and saw the photo frames which had pictures of me with ex boyfriends in loving embraces and arms around each other and I remember my Mum, embarrassed, trying to push the photo frames under the seat so her friends would not see them. It was invalidating.

Many children have the experience of growing up and being invalidated by their environment in various different ways but for LGBT+ children it is compounded by the fact that our sexuality in many cases is not validated, held or cherished by the environment or the caregivers in that environment. Pia Melody, respected author and expert on childhood development and developmental immaturity says that the main requirement for good parenting is for the parent to affirm, nurture and set respectful limits on a child whilst also giving them time, attention & direction. Healthy parenting requires healthy mirroring.

Alan Downs, author of the bestselling gay text, *The Velvet Rage*, says there are several ways parents invalidate their children as they develop over time. There's the rejected child, the sexually shamed child, the ignored child, the kid who had too much expectation placed on him/her, the religiously shamed child and the over controlled child. Chronic exposure to an invalidating environment is inherently traumatizing because it obstructs the ability to self-validate.

In a healthy non shame based family children grow up seeking validation from parents for what they draw, how they behave, their achievements and given the right environment the child transitions into being able to self-validate and develop healthy self-esteem as they grow up. The child starts to own and feel good about their own thoughts, feelings and beliefs.

Many LGBT + people struggle to really develop this state fully due to the invalidating of our sexuality from family, society, work space etc. What can happen often for us is that we never make the transition fully so we continue to seek validation in various ways - more drugs more parties more money, a better job, a better body, attention, being better and more exciting at sex having the best clothes and so on - but trying to seek validation externally ultimately does not work. A strong sense of self fails to develop.

When an LGBTI person goes through a crisis for whatever reason and then decides to seek treatment much of the work that occurs in process groups, individual psychotherapy and simply being in a safe supportive community is the beginning of learning how to self-validate. Peers and therapists witness us, mirror us, challenge us, show us empathy - our feelings and thoughts are validated and in the right environment the transition to

being able to self-validate begins again. Self-esteem improves, boundaries are learned, practiced and understood. Many skills are also integrated so while the full process may continue for years to come the process is understood and a healthy recovery begins.

Resort 12 is a totally safe, supportive and secure environment where the therapists have walked this path themselves and are qualified to guide LGBT+ people on the path too. If you feel that low self-esteem, feeling unworthy and an inability to self validate are issues in your life please consider that Resort 12 might be the solution you are looking for.