

Worksheet 5.2.1: Emotion-focused relationships using attend, label, validate, soothe (ALVS)

The more carers can notice Edi's emotions and respond accordingly, the better able Edi will become in identifying their own emotional responses.

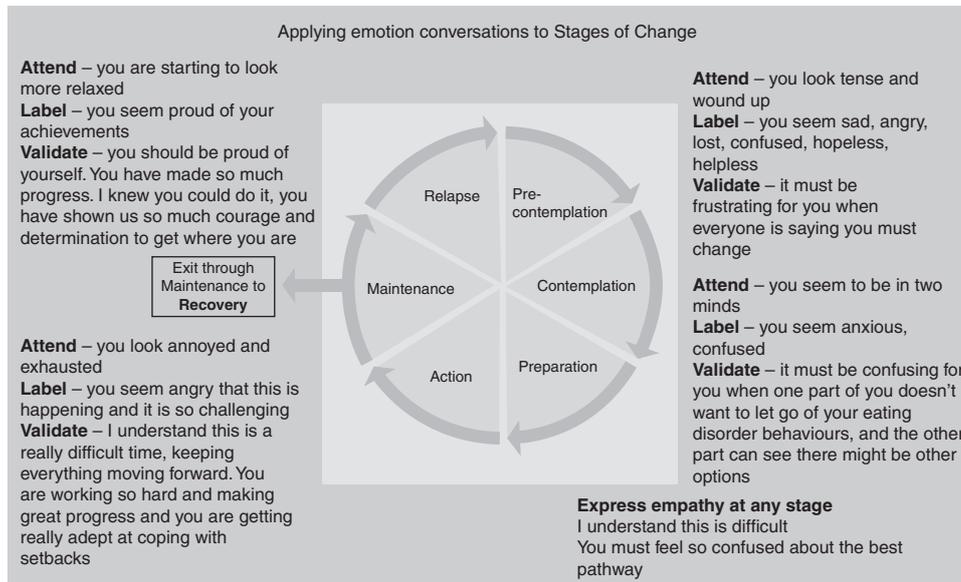


Figure 5.4 ALVS can be used wherever Edi is in the cycle of change

See *SBC*, Chapter 11, pp. 154–7, which describes five basic steps to becoming an emotional coach for Edi. Within the workshops we use a shorter four-step model – ALVS:

Attend
 Label
 Validate
 Soothe

to illustrate how attending to emotions can be really helpful in diffusing tension and opening the door to further conversation.

Example scenario

Peter, age 14, has a 16-year-old sister, Sarah, who has had anorexia for 18 months. He feels that she gets all the attention and is totally fed up. He also has noticed that his parents give him less freedom and responsibility than Sarah had at his age and his response is to start to behave badly at home. Everything has built up and up and culminates in him telling his Mum to fuck off.

Imagine you are in Dad's shoes and use ALVS to try to diffuse the situation and open the door to a sensible conversation about family values and boundaries.

Attend: Peter you swore at your Mum, that is not like you and you know that goes against all our family boundaries.

Label: You seem really wound up with a whole mix of emotions. Angry, sad, anxious, am I guessing right?

Validate: We all feel like that sometimes, you know because of the eating disorder, and how we all have to tread on eggshells, it makes us all feel very emotional and it is OK to feel like that.

Soothe: Peter you are a wonderful brother to Sarah and you have been so supportive throughout her illness. I have been thinking about how it has affected you and I realise that perhaps we haven't been able to give you the same level of freedom that Sarah had at your age. Let's sit down at the weekend and think through how we could address that. The fact that we have become over protective perhaps. We can agree some new boundaries and look forward to happier times ahead. How does that sound?

As a group or in pairs think up a scenario in which you could use ALVS with Edi. Take it in turns to be the carer.

Alternatively use this scenario:

Elizabeth comes from a big-boned family. All her female relatives are large. She was mortified when she started her periods in Year 6, and before any of her friends. She started to diet when she found a chart on a website that suggested she was two stone overweight for her age and height. She is now 14 and her eating is chaotic. She starves all day and then comes home determined to eat a healthy evening meal. Most evenings she ends up bingeing and purging. Her Mum gets very upset and the result has been that Elizabeth tries hard to hide her behaviour from Mum. Together they oscillate from intense emotional outbursts to complete emotional avoidance. Help Mum to apply the principles of ALVS to try to come alongside Elizabeth in a more empathic and supportive way.

Consider how Mum can **attend** to these signs of negative emotion and avoid getting sucked in to the negative feeling?

Think up some sentences that could be used to **label** Elizabeth's emotions in a calm and supportive manner.

Now **validate** how Elizabeth is feeling and consider a **soothing** response.