

## HOW TO LET GO OF SHAME AND THE NEED FOR VALIDATION

NATALIE: Welcome to Episode 297 of the Flying Free Podcast. Today, I'm going to share with you a little part of a live Q&A we recently did with licensed therapist, Bob Hamp. He's also an author, he also is the founder of Think Differently Academy, and he did this live Q&A with us inside of the Flying Free Kaleidoscope community. So our entire community got to spend two hours with Bob, and let me tell ya—it was phenomenal.

I asked permission to share Bob's answers just to the first two questions. We actually spent two hours together, but I asked his permission to share the first part of it with you just to give you a little taste of the good stuff that we have inside of the Kaleidoscope. We do one of these live Q&As every single month. Sometimes I bring in a guest to answer the questions and do the live Q&As and sometimes I do it myself—sometimes the coaches come in and do it with me—just as one of the many special opportunities that our beautiful butterflies get to participate in. And members who can't come live, they still get to listen to the replays whenever they want to.

Now, before we dig into today's episode, I want to read what one of our Kaleidoscope members wrote about how the Flying Free Kaleidoscope has changed her life, and more specifically how it has changed her relationship with God. And here's what she wrote: “They said that of me as a little girl that I always had to put in my two cent’s worth. Well, so be it. But I think this is worth a billion plus cent’s worth. No one in all of my sixty years on this planet has helped to make my hardworking soul more buoyant than Flying Free.

No one in the last twenty-four years of rigorous and painstaking Bible studies has helped heal my spiritual blindness like the Flying Free Kaleidoscope. No one in thirty-seven years of covert emotional and psychological and verbal abuse has helped me identify it all clearly as evil like Flying Free. No one since I met the real Jesus somehow when I was a single digit has helped me bathe and bask in his cascades of love and grace and mercy like this community. I love this place here.

My heart overflows with gratitude and tears and joy because participating in this group has coached me to bask and bathe in pure love cascading straight from heaven above like no other resource in all of my life. Remarkable.”

Now, this really thrilled me because if there is one thing that I would want on my gravestone, it would be something along the lines of, or some version of, “She helped

people experience God's unstoppable love." That is my greatest desire on this earth.

This is not what the abusers in my life would say about me, and you'll hear in this particular episode, you'll hear Bob talking about how living in an abusive environment is like living in a house of mirrors where, no matter where you look, what is reflected back is a distorted version of yourself, which causes you to feel like you are going crazy. Once you get out of that house of mirrors and you're hanging around people who are reflecting you more accurately, you begin to heal and feel normal again.

So anyway, if you want to join our Kaleidoscope community... And by the way, the word "kaleidoscope," a flock of butterflies is called a kaleidoscope, which is why we changed our name from the Flying Free Sisterhood to the Flying Free Kaleidoscope. But if you want to join us in our community, you can just head over to [joinflyingfree.com](http://joinflyingfree.com) to learn more and join right away.

And if you are a divorced Christian woman who would like support and education around rebuilding your life post-divorce, go to [joinflyinghigher.com](http://joinflyinghigher.com) to learn more and join right away over there.

But let's get into our two questions and Bob's incredible insight. You are going to discover in the next thirty minutes how to deal with shame, ways to know a relationship is abusive, what conflictual enmeshment is and how it relates to abuse, what boundaries are and what they aren't, why we crave validation from others and how do we unhook from that, and the differences between dependence, independence, and interdependence, and why understanding those differences matters.

Okay, so here's the first question: "One of the most difficult things I've been trying to disentangle from as I've left my husband's emotional and spiritual abuse is shame. Both the way my parents treated me and the way my husband abused me feeds the idea that I'm the one who has failed rather than them.

I find myself hiding the truth of our marriage from others to protect myself, and that causes even more shame. Can you talk about shame and how to release its hold on us, especially those of us who have already suffered enough from the lies we've been fed about ourselves, and we need to get rid of the shame to move forward freely?

BOB: Oh, it's good we have two hours.

NATALIE: I know. These questions are digging into really deep things.

BOB: And that one is so pervasive. We could answer that one for forty-five minutes. But it is so common and so potent. So let me give a couple of different angles on it. And the first thing I would say is if you're not familiar with my teaching on abuse, one of the key elements is this exchange of plus and minuses. We call abuse the misassignment of responsibility, and I usually draw out this diagram where the abuser puts their deficits on you and they demand your resources for their own good, which is, of course, really an impossible exchange, but that's the position of an abusive person or an abusive system.

And so when I draw that out as two circles, one filled with pluses and one filled with minuses, and the exchange is really what the abuse process is growing from, is the abusive person or system demands your resource, but here's the key element with shame is, or at least with this part of shame, is that they also place on you their deficits. And I think Natalie will nod and smile somberly because it's sad, but it's also consistent at this that there really is a legitimate transfer of experience. In other words, it's not just deficit, but the abuser often successfully puts emotions that belong to them squarely in the chest of their victims.

And so the easiest one to recognize is we may have a partner who has three or four affairs and we feel guilty and they don't.

NATALIE: So bizarre.

BOB: We may have a partner who's doing drugs and has been in jail several times, and they feel zero guilt and we feel like we're the problem. When we're in the throes of it, there's a very successful transfer not just of deficit, but the experience of that deficit. And so you can see what that has to do with shame. Abusive people ought to feel a significant amount of guilt, and yet they protest to themselves and the world that they're actually innocent while sliding their responsibility over to you, and a healthy person would feel guilt about that.

Now, I've heard a lot of conversation that there's such a thing as healthy shame. I fundamentally disagree with that concept. Natalie, I don't know if you teach that, but I've heard it from people I think are otherwise good teachers. But I think we need to make a distinction between guilt, which is healthy, and shame, which, by my definition of shame, is unhealthy, because guilt is "I've done something wrong," shame is "I am wrong. Something's bad about my character, my personhood."

And so when we start to feel that shame, it's a reflection that our partner is completely devoid of any ability to register guilt, and certainly, the only thing they would know if

they could is shame. And so they slide it all over to us.

Well, there's also the part, let me just say, again, if your listeners don't know this... Man, time flies. 2015, I finished a divorce from an abusive relationship of thirty-two years. And so I very much understand the shame that you feel when you walk out into public and you have this story that other people don't know about, but if you're going to be in conversation, it could come up.

The typical questions in a relationship, "Where's your husband?" or, "How are things going with your family?" or anything that's just a common conversation could potentially put you right in the middle of something you're trying not to dwell in.

So one of the things I say about shame, because shame, like I said... So put the first part aside, we really are taking on the experience of our abuser, and part of the journey of healing is giving them back everything that belongs to them. That's part one.

Part two, Brené Brown says it's the most primitive emotion that exists. And if you think biblically, it began in Genesis chapter three. Adam and Eve look down, they see that they're naked and they feel what? Shame. Shame is the fear of exposure, is that fundamental fear of exposure. Brené Brown defines it as the fear of disconnection. She calls it the fear of disconnection. I go a little bit further, I think, in my mind. I call it the fear of disconnection that leads to disconnection. It's like we're so afraid that if somebody sees something about us that they will disconnect in some way or even attack or accuse or in some way slide their guilt onto us as well.

So the fear of disconnection that leads to disconnection is we stay out of circulation because we're afraid of other people disconnecting from us. There's like a proactive, "I'm going to reject me so you don't reject me."

And one of the ways I describe that is that shame is a kidnapper that begs you to be complicit in your own abduction. It wants to take you out of the life that you're created for, and so it blackmails you and says, "Hey, if you show up, I'm telling on you. If you show up, I'm going to let everybody know what a terrible person you are. If you show up, I'm going to tell your story and everybody will know the truth about you," which, if we think about our circumstances, it's not actually the truth—it's the abuser's truth and in many cases, the abuser's family's truth.

And so we live with kind of this fear of, "Someone will think I'm bad." Here's the thing. I literally sat in this office yesterday at nine o'clock with somebody who's just made the decision to divorce their abusive spouse. And I said these words to him. I said, "You

absolutely will be called the bad guy. It's the most unfair thing and it is what is, and it's what your experience is going to be, and you have to be able to proceed and go, 'I know who I am, and I know that I'm going to be labeled a bad guy.'" And so this fear of rejection or this fear of disconnection that leads us to kidnap ourselves from our own story is this idea that, "They're going to think I'm the one."

Now, the solution to that in my mind... And one of the hardest parts about this is abusive relationships and the divorce from an abuser takes so much of your stamina away. What I'm about to describe, you got to kind of call a little bit of that stamina back and you've got to be able to stand up and go—I won't cuss—but you got to kind of stand up and go, "Screw that."

Natalie, we've talked about the healing process where a significant part of the healing process is finding yourself again. And part of finding yourself again is stop kidnapping yourself from your own story. And so there's this old, old movie with Mel Gibson called "Ransom." And there's a guy who's kidnapped his son and he's demanded millions of dollars from Mel Gibson to give his son back. And he's taking Mel Gibson on this cat and mouse game around town. He'd call him and say, "No, don't take the money there. Take it here," and he'd go there. And the guy'd call him again. So it's just playing on the fears and the insecurities that Mel Gibson feels about this man killing his son.

At about the seventh phone call, there's this scene in the movie that's profound and important for this conversation. It's like it suddenly dawns on Mel Gibson that he has no power unless he takes it back. This guy holds all the power as long as he's afraid, but the moment he's not afraid, this guy loses all of his power. And he pulls his car over, gets on the phone and says, "I'm not going to where you're telling me to go. Turn your television on"—Mel Gibson happens to be a television executive—he said, "Turn your television on in five minutes and watch me."

Mel Gibson takes all the money out of the suitcase, puts it in front of the television camera and sits in front of the entire country and says, "Somebody is trying to get me to give him this money to give my son back, but I have this money to get rid of, and I will give it to whoever brings the head of this kidnapper to me on a platter." And he turns the tables in the game. He goes from being blackmailed to being, "Look, I have nothing to run from and you have no power over me because I'm going to put it right here on television for everybody to see."

It's a great moment in the shift of power that happens when we can stop being afraid of what's already true. And so one of the things I say about shame is because it's this fear of showing up, it's this fear of being present and people suddenly knowing... It's

like we, since the Garden of Eden—forget just the abuse thing that we've all been through to some degree and wherever you are in your journey—from the Garden of Eden we've all been afraid that somebody will see who we are, that we've got to prove to the world that we're more than what we feel like we are, and we've got this fear that people will discover the truth about us. The roots of imposter syndrome.

And so the issue for shame isn't about finally wrestling shame to the ground. It's about looking that kidnapper in the eye and saying, "Look, I'll bring my stuff out into the light. I have nothing to fear, nothing to hide, and nothing to prove." And when we can arrive at that place of fearlessness about, "Here's my story, and while others would use it to beat me into the ground, I'm going to use it."

Look at Natalie as an example. It is her story, and not only did she divorce an abusive man in a religious setting, but she was made the bad guy. And she was made the terrible theologian, the terrible woman, the terrible Jezebel. But what has she done with that? She's turned it into power rather than run from that and kidnap herself from her own story.

And listen, I understand what I said a minute ago: It takes so much stamina to do that. But the option is to let someone else drain your energy day after day, after day, after day. And so when we can just kind of take a deep breath, show up. Show up and say, "I will be made the bad guy, and I know who I am." And that's why I said, "Screw them."

NATALIE: Yeah. Can I just jump in and say something? When you say that "stamina," when we have this fear, it just paralyzes us or we're running away or we're placating and fawning. But for me, that stamina meant I had to call up the anger that was inside of me. And I was really accused of being an angry person, and I had to go there too with my anger because I was ashamed of being an angry woman.

But that anger, that was the energy that I finally allowed to come up and go, "You know what? All of you guys are mistreating me and my kids, and now I'm mad. And now I don't care what you do to me. You can crucify me, you can burn me at the stake. I'm leaving. I'm out." And so I know some of you guys have said, "Well, I feel so bad because I'm so angry and I feel like I shouldn't be angry," no. I think being angry about the way that you as a human being or any human being is being mistreated is something that is God-given. And also, if you can harness that anger not into attacking other people, but into rising up and saying, "No more for me, I'm done with this. Whatever you have to bring on me, bring it on because I'm all in. I'm getting out."

BOB: You'll all recognize this and I'm going to be careful because I'm sharing somebody

else's story that I haven't asked, but this is a common thing across the board. So again, thinking of the woman who sat where I'm sitting right now yesterday morning at nine o'clock, and she still kind of recoils when her abusive partner says things like, "Are you saying I'm a terrible person?" And I said, "He's using your goodness against you. From now on, the answer is 'Absolutely.'" You don't back away from that and go, 'Oh no, that's not what I mean.' You say, 'Absolutely.'"

NATALIE: Or you could say too, "You're not a terrible person, but you do a lot of terrible things and you won't stop. So therefore, I'm out."

BOB: And so, since you brought up the thing about anger, Natalie, let's talk about anger for a second, because typically in the Christian world, we are told that our emotions as a whole are bad, and especially anger, and especially anger for women.

Let me just peel the cover off of the emotion conversation and say, you've been told, probably, that your emotions will lie to you. First of all, it's not in the Bible. Secondly, it's not true. Emotions have two functions. One of them, they're actually designed to be drivers, not informers, but drivers. Our emotions move us forward. They're energy in motion. And so it's the thing that moves us and it does. And so don't run away from that.

But the other thing is emotions—and this is super important—emotions are designed to be like the dials and lights on your dashboard. They indicate to you something that's on the inside. And so not only will emotions not lie to you, your emotions always tell you the truth about what you believe. And so if we learn what each emotion is designed to tell us, then we can understand it. So it's an indicator on my dashboard that's telling me something going on in my soul.

Anger in particular is designed to do two things. Number one, it's an indication that a boundary has been crossed. It's an internal indication. It's a light on our dashboard that says, "Boundary crossed, boundary crossed." And if you've been in an abusive relationship, not only has your boundary been crossed, it's been chewed up, swallowed, and spit out. And so anger is the most natural response to that.

The second thing anger is—this is where it gets a little deceptive—it's a scab over two other emotions or it's a secondary emotion to the primary emotions of pain and fear. Underneath all anger is some version of either pain or fear or both. And so anger becomes kind of this, "This is the scab I grow to protect myself because the boundary has been crossed so much."

And so exactly what Natalie said: Embrace it, but don't let it be a bad thing and don't let it get you to fulfill the expectations of your abuser or others. Let it be the thing that says, "Absolutely I'm mad. I have every right to be mad, anybody in my situation would be mad, but what I'm not going to do is I'm not going to look insane, I'm not going to do the things you tell other people are indicative of my craziness. I'm going to use my anger to make things right."

NATALIE: Yes, yes, I love that.

BOB: So I hope that covered the shame stuff well.

NATALIE: That was question number one. I just want to say, I love the way you word things. I feel like it's so interesting because we teach the same concepts, but the way you word them, it's like looking at it from another angle and it solidifies it for me, even. It solidifies the concepts that I believe, and so it's so helpful for these guys, too, to hear it from different angles so their brain can start to put all the pieces together.

Okay, here's the next question: "Why do I constantly feel the need for additional outside validation that the emotional abuse I'm experiencing is real? For context, I'm living with my husband while I wait for our lawyers to hopefully craft a custody agreement because he so far refuses to agree to a shared custody schedule for our nine and three-year-old boys.

I took him to the marriage recovery center for a relationship assessment. They said it's emotional abuse on his part. He says the abuse is mutual and brings up things I did wrong, and his family is backing him. I've listened to Natalie's videos, taken Sarah McDugal's quizzes, read Gretchen Baskerville's book, went to MRC, but I keep doubting myself and needing more validation.

BOB: So let me give two really important... Wow, these are great.

NATALIE: Now we're going to get something from Bob. Now we're going to add Bob's validation.

BOB: Well, and we're going to validate everybody listening for a couple of minutes. I'll give three answers now that you say that. First and foremost, let's say this. There's consistent research and evidence over the decades that says one of the most healing elements for people who've been through trauma is when somebody will listen to their story and validate it.



There's an automatic regulation of the nervous system that happens when somebody sits in front of you or people sit in front of you and they hear your story and they empathize with you and they verbally validate your story. It's like we crave this because our nervous system knows that it's going to be healing to us. And so that's number one.

Number two, often emotional abuse is like living in a house of mirrors. So you've got one mirror that makes you look tall and skinny, one that makes you look short and fat, one that makes you look like you're wavy, but there's no mirror that gives you an accurate picture of you because you're living with somebody who doesn't have an accurate picture of reality. And so every day you wake up to a different mirror and you go, "Who the heck am I?"

Between their overt communication, i.e. how they treat you and how they respond to you and how they interact with you, and their overt communication, the words that one day are one thing, the next day another thing, the next day another thing, and all the gaslighting and manipulation that goes on, we, as humans, to some degree, get our sense of self from the relationships that we're in where our relationships mirror back to us some picture of who we are.

So the healthier our relationships, the healthier our picture of ourselves to some degree. And so when we live in this, this fun house—not fun, but crazy house—filled with mirrors, none of which are accurate, all of which are vastly distorted, and we wake up every day and we try to fix our hair and do our makeup in a mirror that says you're short and fat one day and tall and skinny the next, one day it says you're psycho and one day that says you're the most important person in the world—you've got all of these different reflections—at some point, we also crave somebody who will just say, "You're not crazy."

Natalie, if you had \$5 for every time somebody read your book and said, "I'm not crazy," you would be a wealthy woman. And that's also the feedback we get on the videos that we do, the first time that somebody gets some really core validation that they are being abused, there's this like, "I'm not crazy." And so that's the second answer is there a part of us that feels crazy until there's some validation. We walk away from that validation back into the house of mirrors, and there we are again going, "Maybe I am crazy. Maybe I'm the bad one. Maybe I am. Maybe I am."

Because that's the constant message. It's the movement of the minuses where he's trying to put his deficits on you, and we're looking for anybody out there who will say, "You're not crazy. And so to everybody listening and watching now or later, you're not crazy. You're not crazy. Your instincts have told you all along and you're living in a

family or at least with a person, if not a system, who's sending you the opposite message that you are crazy and that you are the problem. You have to find an accurate mirror to look into.

Is there such a thing as mutual abuse? Before I get to the third answer, and don't let me forget the third answer, because it's important—they're all important—often people say, "Am I the abuser?" My first response to that is usually if you're asking, then the answer is "no," because most abusers never ask that question. They have the ongoing assumption that they're right and everybody else is wrong. They're the center and everybody else is the orbit. They're the definition of reality and everybody else is coming to their picture of truth. And so when you're questioning yourself, that's a clear sign that no, you're not an abuser.

Secondly, there is something that's called conflictual enmeshment. Conflictual enmeshment is two people—and this will make more sense when I get to the third answer—but two people who are so entangled in transferring their deficits that both of them blame the other person, both of them think the other person is the problem. there are no resources in this mutual enmeshment or this conflictual enmeshment. It's all deficit and they're both trying to take each other down every day.

Here's the difference between abuse and conflictual enmeshment. In abuse, there's a power differential. One person is always the one who's driving. And in many cases, a true abuser says, "No, I'm not driving. You're driving. You're the one with the control issues. I don't have control issues—you do."

But when there's a power differential and one person's always trying to fix the relationship and the other person has power because they are—and here's the key—less invested than you are. Mutual investment, both people have the same amount of power and they just duke it out day after day. But when there's a power differential and your partner exercises that power over you to keep you thinking you're crazy, to keep you from leaving, to keep you from having your definition of reality, that's the distinctive that makes it abusive.

NATALIE: Yep. And how you can find out if that's what your issue is or not is you start setting your own boundaries and you start unhooking from that person and see what happens. And this does not mean that you're doing whatever they want you to do. This means that you're just showing up and making your own decisions, taking control of your own life, and if they are continuously coming at you and condemning you, like for example, one gal just said, "I was told that setting boundaries against his abuse was me abusing him." That's a sign, don't you think, that he is actually... If you say "no," for

example, "No, I won't do that. No, I don't have time for that. I need a break or whatever," and they accuse you of being lazy or accuse you of this, that, or the other thing or they accuse you of, like if you give them feedback for something that they're doing and they say, "You're abusing me by giving me feedback about that," when all you're trying to do is make a connection and try to have a meeting of the minds, now we have emotional abuse, I think.

BOB: I'm going to draw something real quick. So typically a healthy relationship looks like this. You've got two people who are attached but not enmeshed. But when you've got control in a relationship, it looks like this. You've got one person and the other person assumes they have the right to all this territory. "I can control this part of your life and I have the right to do that because you are my wife, you're supposed to submit to me," they've got all these justifications for controlling you.

And so the dilemma is they actually believe that they have the right to this part of you. And so one sign that you're with somebody who's abusive is if you speak up about your needs and they feel criticized when all you're doing is speaking up about your needs, that's a sign that they're being abusive. If you speak up about mutual representation in a relationship and they feel punished or condemned or attacked, that's a sign you're being abused because what they're saying is, "I think I have the right to control this part of you."

And so what happens is you start to take back this part of yourself and they say, "See, you're controlling." And sadly, certain religious cultures will agree with them because they might teach that they have the right to that part of you. You have the right to refuse sex with your spouse. You don't even have to justify it. You have the right to refuse it. Sex is designed to be a mutually satisfying, mutually entered into, mutually enjoyable part of a mutual relationship. And if you say "no" and pay a price for it, that's a sign that you're in an abusive relationship.

Like Natalie said, if you set a boundary, here's the key to boundaries. Boundaries are not you controlling the other person. Boundaries are you controlling yourself in relationship to them. So you don't say, "You can't do that anymore." You say, "If you do that again, here's what I'm going to do. If you do that again, I'm going to leave the room. If you do that again, I'm going to leave the conversation. If you do that again, I'm going to stop doing this activity with you."

So you're not telling them, "You can't do that again." You're saying, "If you do it again, here's what my response will be." Because you're leaving them free to choose. And if they experience that as controlling, that's a sign that they think they own this part of

you here. So super important part of the conversation, part of the question, but let's get to the third answer. Like I said, every one of these could be a two-hour... We might be here a while, Natalie.

So the third answer to the question, "Why do I so crave validation from others?" this is one where we have to look and say, "Here's where I might have to deal with my own issues." Instead of saying, "Okay, no, it's them, no, it's them, no, it's them," at some point we have to look and ask ourselves this question. The foundation of mental, emotional, spiritual, and relational health is the movement from dependence to independence to interdependence in relationship. Interdependence is the opposite of, "You complete me." So children and teenagers are dependent because they still look to their parents to pay their bills, manage their outside world, manage their inside world, which is key.

The move towards independence isn't just about, "I'm making my own money," it's about, "I'm making my own decisions, I can have my own thoughts, I can manage my own internal world." The move towards independence is, "I don't need somebody else to make me whole." And you can see that the abusive person clearly is still at the dependent side of the continuum. They're still asking you to make them whole. And their abuse continues if they feel like you're letting them down in their expectation that it's your job to make them whole.

The question we have to ask ourselves is, do we also have that belief about our partner? If I'm really honest, in the early season of my recognizing the abuse of my first marriage, I honestly still expected her to make me whole. And it kept me stuck and it kept me from being able to take those early steps because still somewhere in my mind I thought, "But we can do this." And then here's the internal thought that I had to dig for a while to find was, "And then I'll be okay."

And the key to finally getting free and getting out was, "I'm okay right now." But from that position, I can move out, and, "I'm okay right now," is independence. "I'm okay right now." As I've moved from the dependence that kept me in the cycle, that kept me trying to make a bid for what was clearly making things worse and not better, but I couldn't stop myself as long as I was dependent. And I found that early on, I so wanted some other people to then take the place of that. Not as in another relationship, but as in, "Can somebody else do for me what I've not been able to do for myself?"

Remember, independence isn't just managing your money in your outside world. It's also managing your inside world. And when you become the owner of your sense of self-worth and no one else can take it from you, you're in the most powerful position of

your life, and that's a whole conversation of its own. But if what you're saying is, "My nervous system gets healing from this," makes perfect sense, and keep asking appropriate people in your life.

But if you're desperately telling everybody your story, looking for somebody to make you okay, consider that the work that you still have to do is that, "I'm still in somewhere in the continuum closer to dependence and independence. And the stronger I want to be, the more I'm going to be my own validator, and when my own validation is the most important validation to me, then I'm free. Not just free from the relationship—I'm a free person when I'm the most important validation."

Obviously we know the Lord... Hopefully I don't have to say that, but I'm going to in case someone's thinking, "What about God?" Of course God, but even at that, He's still saying, "I can't do for you what you have to do for you. I've died for you, I've come back to life for you, I've I've invited you into this intimate relationship, and you still have to be the one who says, 'Okay, I will stop trying to feed on somebody else's juice.'"

NATALIE: Yeah. You're in partnership with God. And if anyone's wondering, "How can I work on this?" if you haven't taken the "Healing Your Relationship With Yourself" course, it's now in the Kaleidoscope. You can go ahead and take that and that will walk you through steps to learn how you can actually become the leader in your own system to learn how to validate yourself in whatever's going on.