SMART Goals Exercise

Successfully acquiring a new skill or behavior requires a focus on ACTIONS—things that you choose to do, perform, or take part in. Well-chosen actions lead naturally to the ultimate outcomes people seek. They are the centerpiece of what coaches call SMART goals. These goals are:

S = Specific. "I will get better at validating emotion" is a vague outcome. "I will practice validating emotion while talking with my son" is a specific goal that will likely help you achieve the outcome of “getting better at validating emotion.”
M = Measurable. "I will validate emotion this week" is too loose. "I will practice validating emotion at least once per conversation with my son this week" is a measurable goal—there is nothing vague about it.
A = Actionable. Actionable goals can be validated from the outside. "I will listen to my son and validate one piece of emotional content at least one time this week" is actionable. If I am sitting at the table with you and your son, and I see you listen and validate the emotional content of one of his statements, I can see that you are likely on your way to getting better at validating emotion.
R = Realistic. "I will validate emotions every time I talk to my son" is likely not realistic. If you set your goal too high, and then you don't succeed, you may feel bad about yourself. Set your goal at a reasonable level to make sure you succeed. After all, success breeds success. Achieving even one tiny action goal—perhaps " I will practice validating emotion at least once in a conversation with my son this week "—will set you up for bigger and better future goals. Always start small.
T = Timed. "I will get better at validating emotion" is not a SMART goal because it has no timeframe. To reach a goal, you must have a set time within which you will complete that goal. Set new action goals each week, and make sure your goals can be accomplished by your next goal-setting date.

Now that you know what a SMART goal is, create one that will help you reach an outcome you desire.

My SMART goal:

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And remember, perfection is not the goal, it’s consistent practice that counts.