

Healing Attachment Needs Deficits

A. What are needs, and why are they important?

1. Almost all conflict in relationships is caused by a clash of needs. Sometimes, it is caused by a clash of values, and at times it is caused by a needs-values clash.
2. Thus, understanding your needs, and listening to the needs of your partner (friend, boss, etc) is a way to prevent these clashes from happening.
3. Understanding your needs, and those of your partner, is also a way to enhance any relationship. This is because when we are in a relationship, we are there to get needs met – intimacy, closeness, love, caring, support, safety, and so on. Therefore, by expressing needs, relationships are strengthened, because each person feels valued and appreciated as needs are expressed and ways sought for needs to be met.
4. When we understand our own needs (many are unable to do even this), we can then seek to meet these, and have our partner's support to have them met.
5. When a needs mismatch occurs – he wants one thing, she wants another – these can be negotiated once it is understood what each wants.
6. Needs are the essentials of life. While needs of water, food and shelter are perhaps obvious, emotional, spiritual, intellectual, social needs are often overlooked.
7. Physical needs we must meet include good food, nutrition, exercise, sleep and a balanced lifestyle. Emotional needs include the ability to express how we feel, to be taken seriously, to be understood when upset or angry, to say 'No' and have this honoured, to share the ups and downs with those we love and value. Our intellectual needs include the opportunity to be curious, to learn, to keep a relaxed and balanced mind, to enjoy stimulating discussions, to be introduced to new ideas. Social needs include the opportunity to relax with others, to take a break from work and stresses, to pursue leisure opportunities, to spend quality time with those we love.
8. Needs then, when they arise, are calling for your attention. Some physical or emotional inner process is demanding that you listen and act. If you don't, you may well finish up blaming someone else for the state you find yourself in, and finish up a victim. Alternatively you might persecute. If you do listen and act, you will be taking responsibility for getting yourself a life.
9. Examples of the needs that must be met for a relationship to function well include to feel safe, to be free to be oneself, to be accepted, to have support, to enjoy intimacy, to feel close, to feel loved, to be heard and understood, to be valued, to pursue your life purpose, to have our viewpoint accepted as OK, to be respected, to have time alone, to pursue interests, and so on.

Needs are of four types.

1. Needs relating to being human.
2. Needs relating to our personality and mind/body style.

3. Needs that arise because of childhood damage.
4. Needs relating to having our values respected.

1. Needs relating to being human

1. If you are inadequately meeting your needs, you may die as a result. Heart attacks may occur if adequate sleep, peace, relaxation and a balanced life are not met. We have needs on so many levels, yet most of us are making a miserable job of looking after even our basic physical needs.

2. All humans (and relationships) require nurturing, safety, acceptance, respect, valuing, appreciation, to be understood, to be heard, to be noticed, to be loved, to be liked, and to connect with others.

3. These key human needs can be well met in a good relationship – provided each partner knows how to meet these needs in self and is able to do so. It is for this reason that so many people want a relationship, yet because so few have the required skills, most people don't get their needs met in a relationship – and so the relationship fails.

4. If you feel undervalued, unimportant, disrespected, resentful, unable to communicate or connect, withdrawn, unable to shed or share emotions, swinging from passive responses to aggressive responses – then as likely as not, your needs are not being met – by yourself or by the relationship.

5. When your needs are not being met, it doesn't mean someone is wrong, or behaving badly. Needs are an individual affair. Even when needs are expressed, it will depend on the other person's conditioning or personality type as to whether or not they can understand, let alone help you meet, their request for support..

2. Needs resulting from personality and body/mind type

1. People come in all shapes, sizes, mental type and emotional type. Thus, one person may have a high need to be close to a partner, while another may prefer to spend more time apart. One person may have a high sex drive, their partner may not.

2. It helps to understand that people's different needs may simply come from the way they are wired. This doesn't make them right/wrong or better/worse.

3. Some of the differences in the way we function can be put down to genetics, environment, or choices, especially those made earlier in life. Some of these may be simple gender differences, such as the tendency for women to be more emotionally aware and expressive, while men will rely more on their mind to manage issues.

4. In general, we expect people to be like us. Therefore, we don't allow for difference, and may find ourselves expecting the other person to behave as we do. For example, one person who wakes up early and gets breakfast made may expect their partner to do the same. But if their partner is a night owl, it is unlikely they will also find getting up in the morning easy.

3. Needs resulting from childhood damage

1. When we react emotionally, it is normally a need from our past damage that is being triggered. Often that originates in childhood, but it could also have its origin in a previous unsatisfactory relationship.
2. Damage in childhood also creates needs specific to that damage. So a person who never got sufficient attention from caregivers for example, may grow up with high needs for attention or understanding, or to be heard.
3. Needs we have may reflect this damage, and we may even become 'needy' in an attempt to satiate our needs. Someone who constantly expects others to listen to them talking relentlessly, or someone who constantly demands the attention of others, is demonstrating neediness.
4. We can become 'fixated' on unmet childhood needs for the remainder of our life. Consequently, we will continue to be 'needy' ad nauseum. We may reach out to get these met, desperately demand that they be met, or withdraw and give up on getting them met.
5. Because such unmet needs can cause havoc in relationships, we must learn how to get this neediness attended to, stop living a life that is out of balance, and stop expecting our partners to compensate for our past.
6. It is not our partner's job to intuit our needs, or even to meet them. We can ask, though, for help to get them met. Therefore, when we are feeling emotional, we must determine and then express what our need is that our emotion is reminding us we want met.
7. We experience the world through our childhood damage and mind/body/personality type. We never experience reality as it is. Thus, we get into conflict by experiencing events differently to others. Because we have a need to be understood, heard, responded to according to reality as we experience it, we will inevitably get into conflict when others see events at odds to the way we see them.
8. At times, our personality type, or past damage, means that when we try to communicate with another, it simply isn't possible. We are too mismatched for understanding to occur. If these severe mismatches are too many or too severe, then a functional relationship is simply not possible.
9. Childhood damage is usually at cause when our emotional reactions are intense. These reactions often prevent us from thinking or speaking rationally, which leaves us even more unable to communicate, make ourselves understood, or understand others. Because we were often misunderstood in childhood, it may take very little misunderstanding from others to reactivate those wounds.

4. Needs relating to values clashes.

1. Whenever we come up against someone who's *values* are different than ours, we can also find ourselves reacting. This is because we like people to be like us, have our values, because we usually think that the way we see the world is 'right.'
2. However this is not a true need, because it is not essential that others have values like ours.

Nonetheless, we may react as if it is a need. In truth, this is really a *want*.

3. If we are reacting because we think we are 'right', it could be because we can see that our need is not being met, or because we consider that our value should be followed.

4. Needs may generate our values. Thus, the need to be clean and tidy becomes a value to be clean and tidy. Therefore, we may wish for the value of cleanliness to be maintained in our home, but underlying this is a need to feel safe from disease, or unpleasantness. Similarly, the value of tidiness may arise because of a need for order in our life.

B. What are Values?

1. Values are beliefs we have about what in our view is 'right'. We develop values in regards to tidiness, cleanliness, being on time, helping around the house, times to get up and go to bed, rules about 'being married till death do us part,' and so on. People with a religious viewpoint often have many values about the way people should or should not behave.
2. Some values arise from needs. For example, if we believe that children should never be hit, it may be because we empathize with them, and realize that they have a *need* for safety and a *need* not to be physically hurt.
3. Most beliefs are generated by our beliefs about the way things 'should' be. 'Marriage should be forever' is a belief which causes a person to place a *value* on staying in the marriage, even if there is a *need* to feel safe and leave it.
4. Values generated by beliefs can be changed by altering the way you see things. Values generated by needs have a more functional aspect to them, and so are not so easy to give up. For example, "God likes me when I'm good" is a belief, and so if a value of 'being good' is based on that, it can be changed by developing a different belief about God.
5. Some of the most commonly held values that cause conflict in a relationship are these:

I (or you) must please others
I (or you) must be perfect
I (or you) must hurry up
I (or you) must be strong
I (or you) must try hard

C. What are wants ?

1. Wants arise when needs or values remain unconscious to their owner, are not expressed, or not met.
2. A person may *want* a drink of alcohol, but may in fact *need* loving, or to be understood.
A person may *want* to gamble, but may *need* to process their emotions such as anxiety, hurt, etc.
3. Wants, then are what we resort to when we seem unable to meet our needs in healthy ways.
4. In relationships, wants may arise when needs have been consistently ignored. For example, a person may *want* to lash out and hit someone, whereas their *need* is to be heard and understood. A person may *want* to persecute, but their *need* may be to feel more in control.

D. Examples of needs clashes in a relationship

- * If you are bothered by the other's control, are you being (or wanting to be) controlling of yourself or others?
- * If you are feeling treated as unimportant, are you treating yourself as important by not valuing self?

- * If the other's behaviour makes you feel one down, are you believing or treating yourself as being one down?
- * If you are not being respected, are you respectful of yourself?
- * If you are feeling as though you're being treated like a fool, are you believing you are one?
- * If you are feeling hurt, do you treat yourself in a way that is neglectful and therefore hurtful, or remain passive and unlistening to your own needs? Do you fear you are not the priority, because you've learned not to be a priority?

Tune in to how you are feeling, and find out the need that is lurking just under your skin.

Needs clashes can be resolved with good communication, owning your own need, not owning the other person's need, seeking ways in which each can get their needs met, or close to.

Here are some guidelines as to how to determine when you are experiencing a values clash as opposed to a clash of needs.

VALUE	NEED
* shoulds, musts, oughts you expect from self and/or others	* functional difficulties are caused by the behaviours of others
* others have difficulty fathoming the nature of your problem	* your problem is one most people would share with you were they in your shoes
* any difficulty you have functioning is determined totally by your chosen perspective	* you cannot function adequately because of the other's behaviour
* other's behaviour triggers issues of control, standards, what is 'right'	* other's behaviour triggers issues related to loss of autonomy, safety, connection, support
* other's behaviour triggers feelings of anger, frustration, resentment, anxiety	* other's behaviour triggers feelings of helplessness, powerlessness, sadness, grief, general victim feelings

E. Your early childhood relationships set the scene for your adult ones.

1. Your connections to your early caregivers, and the way you dealt with conflict as a child, will give you clues as to your conflict style as an adult.
2. If you anxiously attempted to connect with caregivers who made this difficult for you, you may now develop similar concerns when in conflict as an adult. These concerns will drive your behaviour.
3. If you withdrew, quietened down, or tried to escape conflict as a child, you are likely to behave similarly as an adult.
4. As an adult, you will recognise that you have a 'strategy' for managing conflict. This strategy is more likely to be connected to a childhood pattern, than be useful in an adult conflictual situation.
5. Your strategy is an attempt, albeit perhaps no longer a very useful one, to meet a need. Understanding what this need might be, will be the first step towards making better use of relationship conflict.
6. The most common source of conflict in relationship occurs when unmet needs in childhood are left unmet. They may be left unmet because those needs are difficult

to either detect, express, or action or a combination of these.

7. A needs clash occurs when a couple both have unmet needs, and argue the point in order to get their own needs met as a priority. Usually this becomes a blind power play, to match the loss of power experienced in childhood.
8. When needs clashes occur, couples must honour this difference. This requires each to recognise and honour possibly inexplicable needs requirements of the other.
9. There must be a 50/50 needs meeting for couples to maintain a balanced relationship. While there may be an imbalance of needs meeting in specific areas (eg earning money, caring for kids) , overall a balance must be sought.
10. If needs are not successfully met, then we may seek wants instead. eg. If our need to connect with another is not met, a person may seek solace in alcohol, internet sex, etc.
11. Thus, in order to function successfully in any relationship, we must detect our neediness, own it, and take steps to meet these needs or seek support to get them met without getting caught in the Control Drama Triangle.
12. Successful couples learn what their unmet needs are, accept that they alone must work on these, and take steps to resolve conflict constructively, and reduce the intensity of these repeating patterns.

F. Other factors that will push your buttons.

1. Conflict can also occur when there is a similar values clash, or when wants are not successfully met, or when desires are thwarted.
2. The most common button-pushing occurs when we are thwarted from just being who we are.
3. Sometimes conflict occurs because of a clash across these options. For example one person has unmet needs, which clashes with the other's beliefs or values. Similarly, needs/wants, values/desires and so on can also arise as clashes.
4. No matter what pushes our buttons, they can only be pressed because of what is going on *within* us. What is going on *between* us simply impacts on our internal programming.
5. Thus, problems that look as though they are 'out there', are all actually going on 'in here'.

G. Why bother healing past attachment wounds?

1. Attachment is an innate motivating force. It will control our relationships, unless we control it. Suppressing or ignoring the power of attachment amounts to surrendering to its impact in our relationships.
2. Secure dependence on another complements, rather than undermines, our ability to be an autonomous individual. No-one is an island.
3. By becoming more secure in our relationship, we build a stronger and more positive sense of self. Thus, a sound interdependency is healthier than being self-sufficient or separate from others.
4. A positive connection with a significant other tranquillizes the nervous system, offers a buffer to life's stressors, and provides a platform for personal development.
5. People who have a secure attachment to another adult figure do better at reaching out to others, and are able to deal more positively with conflict and stress in life.
6. When we are emotionally responsive and accessible, we build bonds with others. This

connection to others we care about brings emotional health, happiness and stability to our lives.

7. Whenever we are fearful or uncertain, our emotions and related needs become activated. These emotions guide us to meeting our needs, and these invariably include quality connections to others.
8. Negative emotions and distress is often an attempt to signal that our connection to another is not as harmonious as we would like it to be. We engage in demand-withdraw behaviours in order to get our needs met, either those of connection or other needs.
9. **A finite number of insecure forms of attachment can be identified.** The response, when a partner is perceived as not being dependable can be organized along two dimensions: anxiety and avoidance.

Anxious – up the anti – “I’ll make you respond to me.” When the bond with an attachment figure is threatened but not severed, attachment behaviours become heightened and distress occurs. Intense emotions may include anxious clinging, pursuit, and aggressive attempts to get a response. There is difficulty soothing attachment fears and feelings.

Avoidant – cool your jets – “I will care less.” When there is no safe engagement, and particularly when there does not appear to be hope for safe responsiveness, attachment needs are suppressed, and there may be a focus on tasks and how to limit distressing engagement with the attachment figure. There are suppressed displays of emotion at separation or reunion, and instead resolute focus on tasks.

Fearful avoidant – chaos – “Come here – don’t touch, ” or even “Come, come here, to “don’t you dare come near.” The attachment figure is the source of, and solution to, fear.

Secure – “Come here and let’s soothe together.” Confident in connection with loved one, gives clear signals, reaches for and gives reassuring contact.

10. Attachment distress is communicated either by anxiety or avoidance. Anxiety manifests as anxious clinging, pursuit, aggressive attempts to control, blame or criticise. Avoidance can manifest as obsessive work-aholism, avoidance of emotional, physical or social engagement.
11. Anger, criticism, or the use of attachment with a third party are attempts to avoid the emotional pain of attachment distress.