



Awareness of NEEDS

The “Life Energy” in Each of Us

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At the core of NVC is the awareness of the “life energy” that stirs in each of us in every moment. We see this life energy related to a quality we cherish which sustains life. It may be expressed as a particular dream, need, want, longing or desire whose fulfillment or lack of fulfillment causes our feelings.

In NVC, we try to identify the “universal human needs” that are common to all human beings. We distinguish these fundamental needs from more specific (time-place-person-action) wants and desires which reflect strategies to fulfill these needs. The distinction of “needs” vs. “strategies” is crucial in NVC.

The following list of needs is neither exhaustive nor definitive. While needs are universal, the words to express them are simply words, and different people may use different words to convey a perceived need. As we develop our vocabulary of needs, our objective is not correctness, but awareness ...

| SELF-AWARENESS | AUTHENTICITY | TRANSPARENCY | SOLIDARITY |
|---------------------|-----------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| Autonomy/Choice | Honesty | Affection | Community |
| Beauty | Integrity | Communication | Contribute |
| Body sensations | Freedom | Closeness | Equality |
| Feelings | Growth | Companionship | Inclusion |
| Intentions | Learning | Compassion | Justice |
| Interdependence | Play / Fun | Connection | Mutuality |
| Intrinsic value | Self-Reliance | Consideration | Participation |
| Needs | Competence | Empathy | Recognition |
| Responsibility | Resources | Feedback | Simplicity |
| Unity | Self-Connection | Harmony / Ease | |
| Wholeness | Self-Compassion | Intimacy | |
| | Self-Acceptance | Nurturing | PHYSICAL |
| SIGNIFICANCE | Self-Expression | Respect | WELL-BEING |
| Celebration | Creativity | Security | Air |
| Clarity / Insight | Be fully alive | Express sexuality | Food |
| Communion | Challenge | Stability | Health / Healing |
| Hope / Trust | Stimulation | Support | Movement |
| Inspiration | Spontaneity | Touch | Rest / Sleep |
| Meaning | Discovery | Trust | Safety |
| Mourning | Exploration | Understanding | Shelter |
| To be valued | Personal Space | Warmth | Water |

* adapted from "Nonviolent Communication Workbook" by Lucy Leu, CNVC, 2001

Exercises to Build Awareness of Needs ...

1. Read over the entire needs list slowly—out loud if you are comfortable doing so—pausing at least 5 or 10 seconds on each need.
 2. Pick a need from the list and spend at least 1 or 2 minutes to experience each of the following ...
 - ... remember a moment when that need was NOT met for you ...
 - ... as you focus on remembering this past moment, notice any body sensations within you ...
 - ... what feelings arise in you? ...
 - ... simply BE with this feeling & need for a few minutes ...
- (continued on back...)

Taking Responsibility for our Feelings

We take responsibility for our own feelings by connecting them to the need within us that is either being met or not met. For example,

"I am disappointed because I would like companionship."

Contrast this expression to the more common way we often blame others for our feelings:

"You never want to spend time with me ... why are you so selfish."

When we blame others for our feelings we tend to stimulate feelings of guilt in the other person. If we express our needs we have a better chance of getting them met.

Need vs. Request

Need: Universal human quality without reference to place, person or time

Request: A specific strategy to meet a need that usually involves a particular person doing something at a particular time

EXAMPLE

I have a need for companionship. I can imagine that need being met by making a particular request of you: "Would you be willing to meet with me at 2pm today at Williams Restaurant for a cup of coffee and conversation?" If you say "No," then I may try other dates or times or places with you that might work. Or I may ask someone else to meet me.

For every need, there are an enormous (i.e. infinite) range of possible strategies that could meet that need.

Self-full vs. Selfish vs. Selfless

Selfish: I only value my own needs

Selfless: I only value others' needs

Self-full: I value my own needs and others' needs equally

The Path to Emotional Liberation

Stage 1, **Emotional slavery:** We believe we are responsible for the feelings of others.

Stage 2, **Obnoxious:** We no longer want to be responsible for the feelings of others ... and often express it with anger

Stage 3, **Emotional liberation:** We accept responsibility for our own intentions & actions, but not the feelings of others. We respond to the needs of others only out of compassion & a desire to contribute, never guilt, fear or shame.

Exercise (cont.)

3. Now imagine this need being *richly & completely fulfilled* for you, and then spend at least 1 or 2 minutes to experience each of the following...

... what are you imagining would be happening? ...

... notice any body sensations within you ...

... what feelings arise in you? ...

... simply BE with this feeling & need for a few minutes ...

... what request might you make of yourself that would contribute toward this need being fulfilled in your life?