What are my Needs?

("I need...)

❧

A healthy relationship is built on one underlying premise: It is a relationship that is built on *friendship* and meets the basic human needs of the two people involved. Friendships do not exist for "what I can get"; they exist for "what I can give". My life is not just about "me"; it is about "we", and "we" includes "me" *and* "you". We are fellow travelers who are choosing to share a journey together to be there for one another and to help each other along the way. It is not a matter of dependence; it is a matter of sharing, support and giving what is needed for the growth of the two people involved. As we learn to give up all of the thoughts, emotions and behaviors that are expressions of our exclusive self-interests, we open up the way for an attitude of friendship. Friendship is not sacrifice; it is nurturing *the relationship* where both parties benefit.

To give appropriately to a relationship, it is essential to be aware of the needs of both individuals. While we both have human needs, so do we also have our individual needs. If I am not aware of my partners needs, I am unable to respond appropriately. And if I don't make my needs known, my partner cannot respond appropriately to me. Needs also change and transform. They are not static. They rise and fall and are more or less arranged in a hierarchy given the time and place. The need that is "on top" in a certain moment or situation, will be replaced by other needs that rise to the foreground.

It is important to be aware that, when I have a need and choose to express it, I don't come from the place, "You *must* fill it". What *I* need and what *you* are able to meet may not always be in concert. We may have conflicting needs in a given moment and we must work that out. It is also important to make the distinction between what I "need" and what I "want" and "desire". A true need is nurturing to my existence when it is satisfied. A want, on the other hand, is not detrimental to my existence if it is not met. It is only an inconvenience or perhaps a disappointment. I won't die if my wants are not filled. If I don't get what I "want" or "desire", I may be unhappy for the moment but I realize that I can let this go.

Another important distinction to make that is related to wants and needs is demands and expectations. I can turn any want or need into an expectation and if my expectations are not realized I may escalate it to a demand. Expectations and demands are requests that are typically unspoken. I don't make my expectations and demands clear and known and so when they are not met I become upset. But I also don't generally reveal the need or want that is *behind* the expectation. Unspoken and un-negotiated demands and expectations, generate resentment in my partner and, instead of my partner truly knowing my deeper needs and wants, he or she only sees me as trying to control.

A further distinction to make about needs is the difference between so called "neurotic" needs and genuine needs. Neurotic needs are ones that are generally left over from my childhood and are residues of unmet genuine needs. Neurotic needs

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are not "bad" nor do they mean I am "sick" in any way. Behind every so-called neurotic need is a genuine need. The key is to get to, and understand, the genuine need and make it known to my partner. That way I am learning to "take responsibility" for what I truly need and ask rather than turning it into an unspoken expectation. Those kinds of expectations are really dependencies.

The bottom line to every human need is our need to be loved and accepted. There are hundreds of different ways to express love and there are hundreds of different ways that each of us likes to be loved. If there is any one purpose to our relationship, if there is any one lesson that both of us are trying to learn, it is a lesson in love. When we can make our needs known to one another it facilitates the lesson.

The following is a general list of human needs. Go through the list and check off the ones that are important to you and then check off what you believe are important to your partner. Then rank yours and what you believe are your partner's 5 highest needs. Then go ahead and discuss with your partner your guesses and assumptions and then take a little while to clarify each of your top 5 needs.

My Needs

Emotional Needs	Rank top 5 (1,2…)	
	Mine	**Partner**
To be told that I am loved	❑	❑
To be told, that I am valued and a vital part of my partner's life	❑	❑
To have a sense of belonging to and with my partner	❑	❑
To be respected as an individual	❑	❑
To be needed for other than the role and tasks I perform	❑	❑
To know that I am a priority in my partner's life	❑	❑
To know that I am special, above everyone else in my partner's life	❑	❑
To feel that my partner is proud to call me his or her own	❑	❑
To be trusted as a responsible partner	❑	❑
To feel that my partner would choose me again	❑	❑
To know that I am and can be forgiven for my transgressions, flaws and inadequacies	❑	❑
To be accepted—flaws, fallacies and all	❑	❑
To know that my partner and I are, above all else, close and trusted friends	❑	❑
To be desired and desirable	❑	❑
To be appreciated for who and what I am and do	❑	❑
To have passion between me and my partner	❑	❑

Physical Needs

	Mine	Partner
To be touched and caressed	❑	❑
To be kissed, even if casually	❑	❑
To be hugged or held	❑	❑
To know that I am welcomed in my partner's personal space	❑	❑
To be physically welcomed when encountering my partner	❑	❑
To know that I am part of a couple when interacting with the world	❑	❑
To be encouraged and welcomed by non-verbal communications	❑	❑
Tenderness	❑	❑
To have a satisfying and rewarding sexual life	❑	❑

Spiritual Needs

	Mine	Partner
To know that my personal spiritual values are supported without judgment	❑	❑
To feel that my partner respects my spiritual needs	❑	❑
To share a spiritual life, even if that spiritual life is experienced differently by my partner	❑	❑
To know and feel that my individual beliefs and differences are respected, if not shared	❑	❑

Social Needs

To be remembered with calls and acknowledgements when apart	❏	❏
That my partner will plan and structure his or her activities to include me	❏	❏
That social activities are shared rather than experienced individually	❏	❏
Appropriate tenderness and support when in public	❏	❏
To be encouraged and supported physically and emotionally when in public	❏	❏
To hear sweet things in a social environment	❏	❏
To be encouraged and supported in social situations	❏	
To be treated with politeness and regard in social situations	❏	❏
To share fun and joy in social situations	❏	❏
To be connected with my partner	❏	❏
To share joy and laughter	❏	❏
To feel that I am the most important person in my partner's life when in a crowded, busy social environment	❏	❏

Security Needs	❏	❏
To know that my partner will stand by me in times of distress or conflict	❏	❏
That my partner will rally to my aid if needed	❏	❏
To have input and control with regard to the emotional aspects of our relationship		❏
To be supported by my partner	❏	❏
To know that my partner is loyal and committed	❏	❏
To know that my relationship will not be put at risk and hang in the balance because of disagreements and confrontations	❏	❏
To know that my partner is 100% committed	❏	❏
To know that my partner is there for me in times of third party conflicts and problems	❏	❏
To know that my partner is a safe and soft place to fall into.	❏	❏