

Needs

What are needs?

If you look up the word “need” in any dictionary or thesaurus, you will see words and phrases such as: necessity, want, requirement, something desired. Needs – we all have them. We have basic needs or requirements like food and shelter. We also have wants or desires such as financial success or a rewarding career. In the context of personal growth or leadership development, the definition of needs that is most fitting would be “requirement.” That is, what do you require or need to be your best?

The answer to this question depends on the situation. If you are unemployed, you need a job. If you have a job, you may need to feel appreciated or valued. If you are working on a team, you may need to feel included. Needs are something that we require in a situation that allows us to feel safe, empowered to contribute, or respected and valued.

Some needs can be emotional. Noted coach and author Talane Miedaner proposes: “Emotional needs are ...what you must have in order to be your best”. When your needs aren’t being met you will probably feel irritable, unloved or unappreciated, angry, resentful, jealous, deprived – any or all of these unpleasant feelings indicate that some need of yours is not being met.¹ Whether basic or emotional, when your needs are not met, you become needy – an undeniably undesirable state for a sustained length of time.

Why is it important to get our needs met?

When we get our needs met, we can be our best selves. We are free to use our talents and add value to a given situation. If our needs are not met, we tend to display behaviors that thwart our ability to be present and perform at our best level. When someone’s needs are unmet on a team, it can create tension, disengagement and conflict.

For example, if someone has a need to be appreciated, and a team member’s hard work goes unnoticed, that could lead to the team member becoming angry and disengaged.

¹ Coach Yourself to Success. 2000. Talane Miedaner.

Needs Exercise

Identify Your Needs

Below is a list of words often used to describe the kinds of personal needs discussed in the previous section. Some may seem like variations on a single need. For example, the need “to be loved” might be expressed slightly differently as “to be... cherished, adored, cared for, accepted, or valued”. As you read through the list, identify those that resonate more strongly with you personally. The list is a starting point. If some don’t seem quite right, note what changes make them more meaningful or add your own in the blank spaces at the end. The goal is to identify your top 3-5 needs. If you have difficulty selecting only 3-5 needs, start by identifying your top 10, then narrow to 3-5 needs by asking yourself, “Which is more important need X or need Y?”.

abundance	consistency	loyalty	to be self-reliant
to be accepted	control	to manage	to share
to acclaim	to do the right thing	to be needed	sincerity
to be acknowledged	to dominate	to be noticed	strength
to be adored	to follow	order	to be treasured
to be approved of	to be free	peace	to be useful
balance	to have a cause/vocation	perfection	to be valued
to be busy	honesty	to please	to work
calmness	to be important	power	_____
to be cared for	to improve	to be protected	_____
to be certain	to be included	quietness	_____
to be cherished	to be independent	to be remembered	_____
to be comfortable	to influence	to satisfy others	_____
to command	to be listened to	to be saved	_____
to communicate	to be loved	security	_____

Adapted from “Coach Yourself to Success” – Miedaner, 2000

If you are struggling to identify your top 3-5 needs from the list above, think of situations where you habitually feel irritable, unloved or unappreciated, angry, resentful, jealous, deprived. These circumstances are clues that your needs are not being met. In these situations, what might be your needs? Do you need to be recognized, praised, or acknowledged? Do you need to be in control, have beauty, have order or be informed?