



Identifying Your Needs

Based on the work of Marshall Rosenberg and Nonviolent Communication (NVC).

Underneath every feeling is a need — something universally human that is either being met or unmet in that moment. Most of us were never taught to name our needs directly; we learned to override them, argue about them, or feel guilty for having them. Learning to notice and name your needs is a foundational skill: it builds self-understanding, self-efficacy, and hope, and it's often the first step toward feeling less stuck. This worksheet is a starting point, not a final list — no one is meant to relate equally to every word below.

Categories of Universal Human Needs

CONNECTION

Belonging · Acceptance · Affection · Companionship · Empathy · Intimacy · Trust · To be seen & heard · Support · Community

HONESTY

Authenticity · Integrity · To know & be known · Presence · Self-expression · Congruence

PEACE

Calm · Ease · Harmony · Order · Beauty · Predictability · Space · Balance

MEANING

Purpose · Growth · Contribution · Competence · Understanding · Mourning · Celebration · Hope

PHYSICAL WELL-BEING

Rest · Sleep · Movement · Nourishment · Touch · Safety · Shelter · Health · Sexual expression

PLAY

Joy · Humor · Spontaneity · Adventure · Creativity · Curiosity · Discovery

AUTONOMY

Choice · Freedom · Independence · Space · Self-determination · Spontaneity · Control over one's life

RESPECT & VALUE

Dignity · Recognition · Appreciation · Equality · Fairness · To matter · Validation

Questions to Get Started

1. Read through the list above slowly. Circle any word that gives you a felt sense of "yes, that one" — even if you can't explain why yet.
2. Which category do you find easiest to notice in yourself? Which is hardest to even consider having?
3. Think of a recent moment of frustration, sadness, or anger. What need might have been unmet underneath that feeling?
4. Think of a recent moment of contentment or relief. What need was being met in that moment?
5. Growing up, which of these needs were openly acknowledged in your family or community — and which were discouraged, ignored, or treated as selfish?

Between sessions: Once a day, pause and ask "What am I feeling right now, and what need is underneath it?" You don't need an answer every time — noticing the question is the practice.



Needs & Feelings Journal

A companion worksheet for connecting feelings to needs and needs to action.

Feelings are signals, not problems — they point toward needs that are met or unmet. This worksheet walks through one situation at a time. Use it as often as you'd like; a blank copy works for any moment worth examining.

1. What happened? (facts only, no judgments)

2. What did you feel? (name 1–3 feelings)

3. What need(s) were connected to that feeling? (use the categories list, or your own words)

4. Was this need met or unmet in that moment?

5. What is one small, realistic way you could tend to this need — for yourself, or by asking someone else — in the next day or two?

6. Looking back, is this a need that shows up often for you? What pattern do you notice?

Bring to session: Notice which need shows up most across the entries you fill in — recurring needs are often the ones most worth exploring together.