

The Six Human Needs

Written by Kathryn Orford – see full attribution at the end of this document

Motivational Facilitator and well known Personal Development author Anthony Robbins has created a list of emotional needs that are commonly known as “The Six Human Needs”. He is not referring to the basic survival needs eg; water, food, shelter etc. The needs that he refers to are the “emotional needs” we require as individuals.

His theory is that all human behaviour is driven by the instinct to fulfil one or more of six fundamental human needs.

The Six Human Needs

The first four Human Needs are:

Certainty or Comfort

The need for the feeling that everything is settled, secure, and that there are no nasty surprises around the corner. The ability to avoid pain and gain pleasure.

Uncertainty or Variety

The precise opposite, and potentially in conflict with the need for Certainty. The need to feel that life is interesting, diverse, exciting and challenging. If relationships become totally predictable and certain, sometimes one member will pick a fight, or be unfaithful merely to create some excitement and spontaneity which in turn feeds their need for uncertainty

Love & Connection

The need to feel love from and for others - a connection with others. The need to bond, experience intimacy, to feel oneness.

Significance

The need to feel that you have meaning to others, you are unique, special, important. (NB: potential conflict with the need for Love & Connection)

Everyone, without exception, finds a way to get these first four needs fulfilled, even if it is in a very low quality and sometimes negative way. Just think about when a child doesn't receive the positive attention they need from a parent. They will do whatever it takes to get their needs met. They may act out, throw a tantrum, be blatantly disobedient etc... but ultimately they get their parents attention and fulfil that need.

As adults, we do the same thing. Unhappiness, emotional distress and dysfunctional behaviour can arise from an individual's inability to find a consistent way to meet his/her Six Human Needs in a positive way.

For instance, the compelling, overwhelming need for Love & Connection explains why someone will stay in an abusive relationship. As terrible as the abuse is, it is a form of connection. Without appropriate help the individual chooses to stay, over the uncertainty of leaving, with the fear of living without any kind of connection.

The fifth and sixth needs are not met by everyone, yet their *consistent attainment is the key to a life of fulfilment*. Survival is possible, indeed common, without fulfilling these two needs. The life you want and deserve, however, is not.

Growth

The need for the feeling that we are growing, intellectually, spiritually, physically.

Contribution

The need to feel that we are giving of ourselves for the benefit of other living things. In other words that we are contributing to life itself.

Everyone has their own unique requirements for the fulfilment of each of the six human needs. The degree to which those requirements are being met in a positive, high quality and sustainable way defines the overall quality of their life.

Some people get their needs met in a destructive or negative way. For example they may use alcohol, cigarettes or drugs to feel “relaxed” for the moment. While others may choose to meet that need by meditating, going shopping, having sex, reading a book. The number of ways to fulfil this need is as unlimited as the number of people who use them. But remember, you choose the way in which to have your needs met, it does not choose you!

Skills Development Exercises for Further Exploration

You might like to take a moment to think about how you get your needs met? Create a quiet space where you won't be interrupted and either on a piece of paper or journal, make headings for the “Six Human Needs”.

Underneath each heading, take a look at the various areas of your life eg: primary relationship, family, friends and work environment. Jot down all the ways that you create certainty, uncertainty, significance, connection/love, contribution and growth in your life.

Then, ask yourself the following question:

- **Am I getting my needs met in a positive or negative way?**

Go back and colour code each answer. Choose a colour for meeting your needs in a positive way, and then a different colour for meeting them in a negative way. Or alternatively, you might like to put a tick next to the positives and a cross next to the negatives.

Take a moment to observe how much of your life is being directed by you in a positive, life affirming way, and how much is being met in a negative/destructive way?

If you find you are getting your needs met in a destructive way, ask yourself:

- **What could I do differently to have these needs met in a positive way?**
- **What would I need to believe/appreciate or do, in order to feel more fulfilled in this category now?**

You might like to brainstorm some ideas and jot them down. Sometimes it can be useful to ask someone that we know and trust, how they perceive our behaviours/actions.

Acknowledgements & Further Reading

This article has been produced by Kathryn Orford, Principal Coach of Your next Step Coaching in Sydney Australia. askacoach.com is grateful to Kathryn for allowing us to reprint her article here.

Kathryn's comment about further reading and attribution appear below:

"There are lots of wonderful resources that you may find useful. One that comes to mind is a workbook called: Love Yourself, Heal your Life Workbook by Louise Hay. This books (as the name suggests) guides the reader through various exercises, and insights to develop self awareness and create the impetus to make positive changes in their lives.

You can purchase "Anthony Robbins The Six Human Needs Audio CD" on Ebay.com and his official website is: www.tonyrobbins.com

I'd like to take this opportunity to thank Tony Robbins, for sharing his concept of "The Six Human Needs" and his generosity in allowing us to pass the information on, to empower others to live a happy, healthy and fulfilled life."

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