Emotional Literacy: Reconnecting with Ourselves and Others

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Introduction

All learning is emotional. Yet, what exactly are emotions? Where do they originate from? And why are they essential for establishing connections? Emotional Literacy allows us to become aware of feelings and, more importantly, needs. Behavior is driven by how our needs are satisfied, yet most of us have no awareness of our needs. Learning how to recognize needs and relate them to feelings and behavior is essential for building connections.

What divides us?

Feeling When Needs Are Met

GLAD: happy, hopeful, joyful, proud, skilled, energized, interested, confident, relieved, optimistic, touched, wonderful, pleased, overjoyed, satisfied, fulfilled

EXCITED: amazed, thrilled, inspired, interested, astonished, amazed, amazed, cheerful, eager, ecstatic, energetic, engrossed, enthralled, enthusiastic, thrilled, exhilarated, fascinated, inspired, intense, invited, intrigued, involved, jubilant, overflowing

PEACEFUL: calm, peaceful, untroubled, quiet, expansive, serene, blissful, satisfied, relaxed, secure, composed, carefree, comfortable, pleasant

PLAYFUL: energetic, effervescent, ready, alert, refreshed, stimulated, impish, alive, giddy, animated, zany, ardent, enthusiastic, exuberant, buoyant

LOVING: affectionate, appreciative, compassionate, friendly, nurtured, trusting, amorous, helpful, sensitive, tender, warm, glowing, radiant

RESTED: relaxed, alert, refreshed, alive, rejuvenated, invigorated, energized

THANKFUL: grateful, appreciative, grateful, moved, honored, recognized

Feeling When Needs Are Not Met

SAD: lonely, heavy, helpless, gloom, grief, distress, sensitive, apathetic, down, despondent, discouraged, daunted, dismayed, disheartened, despairing, disappointed, anxious, concerned, depressed, overwhelmed, unhappy

SCARED: afraid, fearful, trembled, apprehensive, nervous, panic, jittery, alarmed, frightened, frightened, anxious, struggled, distressed, frightened, petrified, paralysed, surprised, terrified, skeptical, stretched, anxious, apprehensive, susceptible

MAD: angry, aggravated, agitated, exasperated, furious, annoyed, infuriated, hostile, bitter, pessimistic, upset, resentful, disgusted, disregarded, annoyed, disappointed, angered, depressed, unfriendly, blunting, resentful, loathing

CONFUSED: frustrated, worried, perplexed, baffled, baffled, haunted, troubled, torn, embarrassed, apprehensive, bewildered, detached, disturbed, rejected, unclear, unsafe, unclear, disoriented, disorganised, unorganized

TIRED: exhausted, fatigued, lethargic, indifferent, inert, listless, lazy, beat, overwhelmed, fidgety, helpless, heavy, sleepy, withdrawn, spiritless, bored, apathetic, disinterested, apathetic, exhausted, weak, ill, weary

UNCOMFORTABLE: pained, weary, hurt, guilty, sick, impaired, miserable, restless, embarrassed, ashamed, irritable, awkward

How are you doing?

All eight billion people have the same ~300 universal needs. Gandhi and Dr. King based the principles of nonviolence on this premise.

Universal Needs (selection)

AUTONOMY
Freedom of Choice - Self-Empowerment - Authenticity - Independence - Privacy of Thought - Ownership - Self-Reliance

SELF-EXPRESSION
Creativity - Innovation - Imagination - Reflection - Analyzing - Transparency - Credibility - Honesty - Learning - Growth

INFRASPINIFUNCIF
Trust - Reassurance - Respect - Validation - Credibility - Honesty - Deference - Acceptance - Self-Reliance - Independence - Mastery

PHYSICAL WELLBEING
Air - Food - Water - Sleep - Health - Recreation - Nutrition

SAFETY
Safety - Protection from Diseases, Society of Home and Loved Ones, Peace of Mind - Wellness

CELEBRATION OF LIFE
Honor - Play - Fun - Joy - Freedom - Play - Exercise - Movement - Celebration - Mastery

SPIRITUAL
Meaning - Purpose - Grace - Flow - Structure - Ritual

What do you need?

Connecting

We all share the same needs. Connecting with needs enables mutual understanding.

Connect to yourself = Self-empathy

Ask yourself: How am I feeling? Explore the why: which of my needs are fulfilled and which are not? Seek strategies to address unmet needs. If solutions elude you, tend or mourn the unmet needs.

Connect to others = Empathy

Look beneath a behavior and ask or guess what the other person might be feeling. What needs are they trying to fulfill? Seeing their needs will enable you to connect empathically.

Further Reading

Marshall Rosenberg: Nonviolent Communication
Thorn Bond: www.compassioncourse.org
Joe Brummer: www.joebrummer.com
Ike Lasater: www.ikelasater.com
Liv Larsson: www.livlarsson.com
Miki Kashtan: www.mikikashtan.org
Dian Killian: www.workcollaboratively.com

Many of our interactions happen in the Conflict Zone. If you are looking for connections, make feelings and needs your comfort zone. Conflicts are never about needs. Conflicts arise from the strategies we choose to satisfy our needs.

To understand someone’s behavior, look at the needs that drive it. If we judge someone as “baffling,” a “difficult person,” or an “enemy,” we have not explored the person’s needs yet.

Freedom

Autonomy

Choice

Respect

Connection

Being

Understanding

Emotional Literacy

Being

Understanding

Connecting

Self-empathy

Empathy

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