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?

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

Feelings when Needs are not met

Feelings when Needs are met

What do you need?

Emotional Literacy: Reconnecting with Ourselves and Others

Beatrix Roeller, Tufts University, School of Engineering

Introduction

Connect

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)

- AUTHORITY
- SELF-EXPRESSION
- INTRINSIC/FUN/MF
- PHYSICAL WELLBEING
- SAFETY

RELATIONSHIPS

- CELEBRATION OF LIFE
- SPIRITUAL

Connect to yourself = Self-empathy

Ask yourself: How am I feeling? Explore the why: which of my needs are fulfilled and which are not? 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.

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
- Thom Bond: www.compassioncourse.org
- Joe Brummer: www.joebrummer.com
- Ike Lasater: www.ikelasater.com
- Liv Larson: www.livlarsson.com
- Miki Kashtan: www.mikikashtan.org
- Dian Killian: www.workcollaboratively.com

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

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.

Most of us learn that feelings result from other people’s actions. Take control by recognizing that feelings are the result of how your needs are fulfilled: I feel…because my need for…has been met/not met.