



Modue 4: Basic Human Needs

This week's lesson is about the five basic human needs that Dr. Glasser talks about in Choice Theory. Your comprehension of the basic needs is crucial to your understanding of why you do the things you do. Dr. Glasser says we are born with these needs. We all have them--they are genetically programmed at birth. However, each of us experiences these needs to varying degrees. First, let me tell you what they are.

The first need is mostly physiological and it is called the need to survive, or the survival need. Of course survival involves such things as food, air, shelter, health and reproductive sex (for survival of the species) but it also encompasses such things as feeling safe and secure, which is more psychological than physiological.

A person who has a high need for survival is quite uncomfortable with change, likes to be prepared for any eventuality, doesn't typically buy on credit but pays cash for purchases, is mainly one who likes to save, and is a person who doesn't take many risks. On the other hand, a person with a low need for survival generally lives in the moment, can accommodate change quite well, is not concerned with debt, is more of a spender than a saver, and likes to take risks.

Think of where you are on a scale of 1-5, with one being low survival and five being high survival. Record your number on the "Needs Strength Profile" worksheet provided on page 109.

The second need is called love & belonging. I think of it as our need to be connected to other people. This encompasses our need for intimacy, time with friends, our connection to family, the drive we have to belong to different groups and how much we want to be liked and to minimize conflict.

People with a high need for love & belonging tend to crave intimacy with a life partner. They generally like to be physically close and enjoy a high degree of intimacy. Those high in love & belonging may have a lot of friends or a few very close friends but they enjoy their relationships with others. They are comfortable with people they know best and uncomfortable with conflict of any kind.

People with a low need for love & belonging do not require this type of closeness or time with others. They generally like to spend more time alone and have difficulty understanding the point of increased intimacy.

Think of where you are on a scale of 1-5, with one being low love & belonging and five being high love & belonging and record this number on the "Needs Strength Profile" provided.

The third need is called power. There are three basic ways for people to meet their need for power. We can gain power by powering over others. This is best represented by the bully on the playground or the boss who takes credit for your work. These people get their power need met regardless of, and sometimes because of, the effect it has on other people. A second way to meet one's need for power is by creating power with others. This occurs on a winning sports team, with a team at work who is moving successfully toward a goal and in a fully functioning family. It occurs when a group of people are supporting each other to achieve a common goal or objective. The last type of power is power within. These are those things that each of us can name that we are good at, proud of or have accomplished in our lives.

People with a high need for power like to be right and in control, they are highly organized, they want to be significant and have an impact, they need to be competent and recognized, and it is important that they be respected. Those with a low need for power seem to have no need for recognition and are generally content to work behind the scenes without any glory or accolades.

Please consider this need carefully. Because of the negative connotation often associated with the word "power" and the fact that it is often thought of as "power over" others, many people downplay their actual need for power. If you have perfectionistic tendencies, this usually springs from a high need for power. If it is important to you to be highly competent at what you do, that can also demonstrate a high need for power. And if you have a strong desire to make an impact or have influence, then you likely have a high need for power. Please consider power with and power within examples as you rate yourself in this need area.

Think of where you are on a scale of 1-5 and record your number on the "Needs Strength Profile" provided.

The fourth need is the need for freedom. This involves the ability to do things one's own way; breaking/stretching rules, particularly the ones that don't make sense; a strong use of creativity, a need for time away from others; and the ability to do what one wants when one wants to do it.

People high in this need can be viewed as selfish sometimes because they are generally moving through life, as they want without regard to others' feelings, however they are simply getting their needs met the best way they know how. They are often fiercely independent and take responsibility for meeting their own needs and expect others to do so too.

People low in the need for freedom easily accept being told what to do, welcome rules and do not have a great need to be independent. Determine where you believe you are on a scale of 1-5, and record your number on the "Needs Strength Profile" provided.

The final need is fun. Similar to the power need, there are three ways to have fun. The first is the typical definition and that would be time spent enjoying oneself, generally laughing and having fun, such as going to parties, dancing and physical activity with others. Then, there are those of us who like the quiet kind of fun. This might be swinging on the hammock in the back yard, fishing or just sitting around talking with people you like.

The final type of fun, Glasser calls learning. He says fun is the genetic reward for learning. (Trust me, he's not talking about the type of learning that goes on in Algebra class.) What he is saying is that useful learning is supposed to be fun--when we are engaged in learning something that we want to learn that has quick applicability to our own lives, such as the time I learned to downhill ski.

Consequently, a person who has a high need for fun may look like a joker, someone who is always laughing; a person who likes to engage in lots of quiet leisure activity; or a person who doesn't seem to be having a lot of fun on the outside but is learning a great deal. On the other hand, a person who is low in the fun need does not appear to require a lot of time engaging in any of these activities. Think of where you are on the scale of 1-5, with one being low fun and five being high fun and record this final number on the "Needs Strength Profile" provided.

Take some time to look at your scores. Please be aware that the needs do not have to be rank ordered. You may feel two or three of them are "5"s. This is acceptable and quite normal. My own personal need strength profile looks like this:

2	5	4	4	3
Survival	Love & Belonging	Power	Freedom	Fun

This week is just designed to get you to look at yourself and how your need strengths may currently be affecting your relationship with food, your mindset around exercise or your current thoughts about your body image. For example, using my need strengths I'll share my lifestyle.

Since love & belonging is my highest need, the way that affects my relationship with food is that if someone asks me to spend time with them and it centers around a meal, I will rarely decline the invitation because I like to have that connection time. Also, I wouldn't go and not eat because I wouldn't want my friend to feel bad or uncomfortable.

Freedom is also high for me and this affects my mindset about exercise and eating chocolate specifically. While I know exercise is good for me, I need to have the freedom to do what I want when I want--and wanting to exercise is not a concept I can get my mind around. Also, eating chocolate is a way I have of satisfying my need for freedom. I know it's not good for me but it sure tastes good and I can eat it if I want to. You can't stop me! Chocolate also meets my need for fun.

See if you can decipher some of your patterns as they relate to your need strengths. Bringing things to the conscious level at least allows us to make conscious decisions about what we do.

Until we uncover our nonconscious behavior patterns, we are destined to keep repeating them without an awareness that there could be another way.