

DO Therapy

Figure Out What You Need

Sometimes recognizing the emotion is only the first step.

You may know you're **frustrated, disappointed, overwhelmed, lonely, worried, or hurt** and still not know what would actually help.

Emotions can tell us that **something matters**. Getting curious about the need underneath the emotion can give us better information about what to do next.

The goal isn't to make someone else responsible for meeting every need.

It's to understand yourself well enough to make a more intentional choice.

NOTICE

Think about a recent moment when you had a strong reaction or felt disconnected, frustrated, upset, or stuck.

Start with: **“What am I feeling?”**

Then ask: **“What might I be needing right now?”**

Maybe:

- **Connection** — I want to feel closer.
- **Understanding** — I want someone to understand what this has been like for me.
- **Reassurance** — I need some clarity about where I stand.
- **Appreciation** — I want my effort or contribution to be recognized.
- **Support** — I could use some help carrying this.
- **Space** — I need time to think, regulate, or reset.
- **Autonomy** — I need room to make my own choice or do something independently.
- **Clarity** — I need more information before I know what I think.
- **Respect** — Something about this interaction doesn't feel okay to me.
- **Affection / Intimacy** — I want emotional or physical closeness.
- **Problem-Solving** — I actually want help figuring out what to do.

You may have more than one need.

Start by identifying **one**.

REVIEW THE GAME TAPE

Sometimes we communicate the reaction before we understand the need.

- **“Leave me alone.”** = Maybe the need is **space**.
- **“You don't care.”** = Maybe the need is **connection or reassurance**.

- **“I have to do everything around here.”** = Maybe the need is **support or appreciation**.
- **“Why are you always on your phone?”** = Maybe the need is **attention or connection**.
- **“Stop telling me what to do.”** = Maybe the need is **autonomy or respect**.

Ask: **“If my reaction is trying to accomplish something for me, what might it be trying to get?”**

Then go one step further: **“Is that actually what I need or just the first solution that came to mind?”**

For example:

“I need you to stop going out with your friends.”

That may actually be: **“I've been feeling disconnected from you and I need more time together.”**

Or: **“I need you to tell me I'm doing a good job.”** might become: **“I've been doubting myself lately and I'm wanting some reassurance and appreciation.”**

Understanding the need gives you **more options** than reacting from it.

PRACTICE

Try moving through three questions:

1. WHAT AM I FEELING? - “I'm feeling _____.”

2. WHAT MIGHT I NEED? - “I think I could use more _____.”

3. WHAT CAN I DO WITH THAT INFORMATION?

Maybe I can:

- Ask for something
- Communicate what's happening
- Take care of part of the need myself
- Set a boundary
- Ask for help
- Take some space
- Create connection
- Get more information

Accept that this need may not be met right now

Then try: **“I'm noticing I feel _____. I think what I'm needing right now is _____.”**

You don't have to immediately make a request. First practice knowing **what you need**.

BUILD REPS

Notice what happens when you identify the need before reacting.

Ask:

- Which needs are easiest for me to recognize?
- Which needs are harder for me to admit?
- Do I tend to expect my partner to figure out what I need?
- Do I communicate the need—or communicate frustration that it isn't being met?
- Am I confusing a need with one specific way it must be met?
- Is this something I can provide for myself?
- Is this something I want to ask my partner for?
- Is this something we need to negotiate together?

Remember: **Having a need doesn't automatically create an obligation for someone else.**

But understanding your needs makes it much easier to communicate, make requests, set boundaries, care for yourself, and work with your partner.

The movement becomes: **“Something's wrong.”**

to: **“I know what I'm feeling.”**

to: **“I have a better idea of what I need.”**

to: **“Now I can choose what to do with that information.”**

FEELING → NEED → OPTIONS → CHOICE

DO Therapy

NOTICE → REVIEW THE GAME TAPE → PRACTICE → BUILD REPS → TEST & LEARN

Notice what's happening. **Review the game tape** with curiosity rather than judgment. Choose something to **practice**. **Build reps** by trying it more than once and noticing what happens. Then **test & learn**—keep what helps, adjust what doesn't, and try again.

The goal isn't to get it right. The goal is to learn from what happens.