

## Apply Basic Human Need Principles To Your Work And Home Life and Increase Your Happiness Today

By Lyndsay Swinton

Applying basic human need principles to your work and home life can increase your happiness. How? Well, I bet you don't take your car to the mechanic when the petrol warning light comes on, so why look for complicated solutions when your own warning lights come on?

Like a car, there are all sorts of early warning indicators, which alert you to take remedial action - e.g. tiredness, anxiety, tearfulness, lethargy, no concentration etc. Some you will be familiar with and know how to fix them, but some may require you to check the manual, and cause a little anxiety and dread in the process. If unfamiliar warning lights are flashing in your life, read on..

Apparently, if you chuck a frog into a pan of boiling water, it will hop straight out again. But if you put him in cold water and slowly heat it up, he will sit there until well and truly poached.

Chances are your home and work life has changed gradually over time, and problems have snuck up on you without you noticing. Being made redundant, a new baby or the death of a spouse are like being chucked into boiling water - it's obvious to you and all around you what's causing the pain. But if the cause is something less clear or quite subtle, it's easy to miss. In this case, the best first step is to do a quick check against the basic human need principles outlined in the article, and see where the problem may be coming from.

Let's look at each of the basic needs in turn;

### **1. The need to give and receive attention - "No Man Is An Island"**

We've all met them (or been one yourself!) - the person who just won't shut up

when you're trying to work. Any attention, positive or negative gets sucked up and you're left drained and resentful. This person needs a healthy, regular dose of quality attention from friends, family, work-mates and social groups.

Sometimes gaps in social skills compounds this problem, as the person doesn't get positive attention. But as with most things, with a bit of effort and risk taking, social skills can be improved, and attention needs met.

## **2. Taking heed of the mind and body connection**

It's so obvious, but so many people over-look the mind body connection. Do you really think you will be on form if you regularly skip breakfast, guzzle caffeine and stay up late with a bottle of wine? No athlete follows this routine, so why should you? Getting the right amount of sleep, food, exercise and relaxation takes care of your mind and body connection.

## **3. The need for purpose, goals and meaning - "The devil will make work for idle hands to do"**

To be human is to be a problem solver. When we don't have real problems to solve, we'll make up fantasy ones, just to meet this need. If your teenager's response to your problem is a dismissive "get a life", then maybe it's time to find bigger and better problems to solve.

If you need help setting goals, take a look at my [Goal Setting Guide](#)

## **4. A sense of community and making a contribution**

Tying in with the need for meaning, is the need to be part of something bigger than oneself. This need is often met through religion, a club, charity or community work. This gives a person a reason for being, over and above their own personal needs.

Company community involvement is a motivator if done properly. The Body Shop company policy is to allow staff time off work to get involved in local projects.

## **5. The need for challenge and creativity**

Getting the grey matter working hard does wonders for your mental health. Learning something new, expanding your horizons or improving existing skills gives a sense of progress and achievement. That's why it's important to have a [Personal Development Plan](#). Or as Steven Covey puts it - you need to "sharpen the saw".

## **6. The need for intimacy**

Tying in with the need for attention, is the need to share your personal hopes, dreams and ambitions with someone who is "on your level". A good manager will create an environment of trust such that a person can express their future desires and support them in moving in that direction.

## **7. The need to feel a sense of control**

Being bound in a straightjacket may seem like the epitome of loss of control. But even then, you can still control your reaction and action in this situation. To meet the need for a sense of control, you need at least one area of your work or home life that's yours and yours alone. A little responsibility, no matter age or situation is healthy.

## **8. The need for a sense of status**

Recognition and status go hand in hand. If you are valued and recognised as a manager, a parent, an expert or whatever, you will meet your need for a sense of status.

Outward displays of status, such as a flashy car or the latest gadget, are an attempt to meet this need - the need to be recognised for earning a big salary or being cutting edge. If this need is over-powering, (there's always one boring bragger in your life), you can bet at least one other need is not being met. Helping them meet that missing need will diminish the need to tell all and sundry about their latest acquisition or achievement.

## **9. The need for a sense of safety and security**

We need to feel our environment is basically secure and reasonably predictable. Financial security, physical safety and health plus fulfilment of all the other needs contribute to the completion of this need. Threats of redundancy or down-sizing, overly competitive colleagues and an unpleasant working environment all make this need harder to meet.

If progress through life has gone a bit awry, for you or a friend, check if the basic human need principles are being met. Remember it's usually lack of petrol that stops the engine from going forward and not something more complicated or sinister.

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