



Boundaries with Care: How to care for our needs without dropping others

With Aya Caspi

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Needs Consciousness

The assumption of innocence:

Assuming trust that everything human beings are doing or saying is an attempt to meet one or more of their universal human needs (example: connection, choice, support, understanding)

NVC assumes that needs are never in conflict, but strategies can be (the different ways in which we are each attempt to meet our needs).

SOME FEELINGS WHEN NEEDS ARE MET

SOME FEELINGS WHEN NEEDS ARE NOT MET

Affectionate

- Loving
- Friendly, warm
- Tender

Confident

- Empowered
- Safe, secure

Fascinated

- Engaged
- Involved
- Amazed

Inspired

- Awe
- Wonder

Fascinated

- Engaged
- Involved
- Amazed

Stimulated

- Animated
- Excited, eager
- Aroused

Hopeful

- Anticipating
- Optimistic

Content

- Satisfied
- Fulfilled
- Blissful

Energetic

- Lively
- Passionate
- Exhilarated

Elated

- Ecstatic
- Exuberant
- Thrilled

Curious

- Alert, Absorbed
- Interested

Refreshed

- Rejuvenated
- Restored

Centered

- Trusting
- Clear
- Open

Joy

- Happy, glad
- Jubilant
- Pleased

Gratitude

- Appreciative
- Moved, touched

Amused

- Ticked
- Delighted

Peace

- Calm
- Relaxed

Love

- Affection
- Compassion
- Consideration
- Intimacy
- Love
- Nurturing
- Warmth
- Companionship
- Touch

Connection

- Empathy
- Closeness
- Communication
- Presence

Peace

- Beauty
- Communion
- Ease
- Equality
- Harmony
- Inspiration
- Order

Community

- Acceptance
- Appreciation
- Belonging
- Inclusion
- Cooperation
- Support
- Participation

Play

- Joy
- Humour
- Laughter

To Matter

- Purpose
- Contribution
- Creativity
- Celebration of life

**I FLOURISH WHEN I NOURISH
THE NEEDS BENEATH MY FEELINGS**

Based on the work of
Marshall Rosenberg
(CNVC.org)

Embarrassed

- Flustered
- Self-conscious

Agitated

- Distressed
- Disturbed
- Uncomfortable

Disconnected

- Bored
- Detached
- Apathetic

Shame

Shocked

- Unnerved
- Unsettled
- Startled

Confused

- Lost
- Mystified
- Torn

Afraid

- Panicky
- Cautious
- Freaked out

Anger

Fatigue

- Burnt out
- Tired
- Exhausted

Vulnerable

- Insecure
- Shaky
- Helpless

Averse

- Disgusted
- Hate/dislike
- Repulsed

Guilt

- Regret
- Remorse

Annoyed

- Frustrated
- Exasperated
- Cheesed off

Tense

- Stressed
- Overwhelmed
- Frazzled

Depression

Sad

- Discouraged
- Hopeless
- Disheartened

Pain

- Grief
- Misery
- Hurt

Longing

- Jealousy
- Resentment
- Pining

Autonomy

- Choice
- Freedom
- Self-expression
- Independence
- Space
- Spontaneity
- Respect/self-respect

Physical Well-being

- Air, breath
- Food and water
- Movement
- Rest and sleep
- Sexual expression
- Safety
- Comfort, shelter

Shared Reality

- To know and be known
- To see and be seen
- To understand
- Be understood
- Stability
- Consistency

Meaning

- Challenge
- Competence
- Clarity
- Efficacy
- Effectiveness
- Understanding
- Stimulation

Trust

- Security
- Safety

Growth

- Awareness
- Consciousness
- Discovery
- Learning

Honesty

- Authenticity
- Integrity



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What is a boundary?

An attempt to care for ourselves as we have our own needs coming up in us when interacting with others.

May show up as saying 'no' or clearly communicating what we are willing or not willing to do.

Why is it difficult to care for our needs?

We have been taught to be ashamed of what we need.

- Because of power-over structures and denial of choice ('shoulds' and 'have tos') many of us disconnect from our needs which means we don't know what they are.
- Having needs is seen as a weakness because it is pointing to our vulnerability.
- Not having needs - seen as strength, self-sufficiency.
- Fear of being judged as 'needy', burdening others...
- Social conditioning - be "nice" (don't hurt other people's feelings), care equals putting the needs of others first.
- Especially difficult when there are power differences.

Liberation from shame

Distinction between:

- Selfishness - prioritizing my needs over others
- Selflessness - prioritizing other people's needs over my own.
- Selffulness - caring for the whole, self included.

Needs as a fundamental unit of life

Needs don't ever go away. When not attended to they tend to grow louder and bigger inside, which leads to loss of choice and reactivity.

Cost: depression, isolation, despair, resentment, anger.

“If you truly loved yourself, you could never hurt another” ~ Buddha

- If I'm dropping my own needs it compromises my capacity to be in empathy with and care for others. I'm likely to start judging others for doing me wrong (“you made me come to the party”)
- If I know how to hold my needs with respect and care then my capacity to contribute to others and empathize with them increases...

“The most compassionate people are also the most boundaried. Generosity can not exist without boundary” ~ Brene Brown

From emotional slavery to emotional liberation

3 stages of development:

1. Emotional Slavery - we believe ourselves responsible for the feelings of others. Care taking, pleasing - leads to resentment, not sustainable = **no boundaries**
2. Obnoxious stage - we become angry and rebellious - "Your feelings are your problem !" = **external boundaries (separation)**
3. Emotional liberation - We accept full responsibility for our own needs and actions, and learn to respond in a way that is responsible to other people, without taking responsibility for their feelings and needs = **internal boundaries**

Our needs are our internal boundaries

We don't have to reach a point where boundaries become "thick walls" and create separation (demands, threats, unilateral decisions, punishment, disconnection, etc)

Asking for what we need is an expression of care for the whole and for our capacity to continue to stay generous to others.

We can learn hold our needs alongside those of others.

Increase Your Need / By Rumi

The mouse-soul is nothing but a nibbler. To the mouse is given a mind proportionate to its need, for without need, the All-Powerful doesn't give anything to anyone.

Need, then, is the net for all things that exist: A person has tools in proportion to his need. **So quickly, increase your need, needy one, that the sea of abundance may surge up in loving-kindness.**

~ Rumi

Asking for what we need

Internally:

1. **Needs awareness** - take on the practice of noticing and attending to our needs as soon as they arise. - when we know how to care for our needs we are less likely to resort to 'external boundaries' for protection.

This includes the inner work of reclaiming our needs:

- Owning our needs and not denying or repressing them.
- Not judging ourselves for having needs - transforming shame.
- Grounding in the innocence and beauty of our needs. They are an expression of life within us.
- Recognizing that our needs are a gift - they provide an opportunity for others to contribute to us and to life.

2. **Recovering our internal sense of mattering.** The more we matter to ourselves the more we will care for our own needs and not depend on others to care take of us.

Externally:

- A. **Making requests** - the earliest we put our requests on the table the more likely that our needs will be cared for, and won't run us unconsciously from the inside (showing up in the form of reactivity, demands, threats, etc)
- Positive language
 - Doable
 - Present moment
 - Non attachment to an outcome
- B. **Learning to operate within our capacity** - Only do what we can do within capacity when we are not in touch with our capacity and end up overstretching we find ourselves depleted and resentful and resort to protecting ourselves.
- C. **Learning to operate within our willingness** - Only do what we can do within our willingness The more we are in touch with our choice and only agree to do what we are truly willing to do, the less likely that we will feel resentful and protective of our choice. We can learn to say a clear, relaxed, openhearted 'No'.



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Practice: saying 'no' with care

Think of a request someone is making of you to which you want to say “no”.

Self connection:

- What needs are you trying to say yes to ?
- What do you imagine are the needs behind the other person's request?

Expression:

1. Check with the other person your understanding of their needs behind their request.
2. Once they confirm, explicitly express your interest in having them meet their needs (they matter)
3. Share the needs you are saying 'yes' to with your 'no'.
4. Connection request: check for impact (specifically if their sense of mattering is being impacted)
5. Action request: propose an alternate strategy that cares for everyone's needs
6. If there is no strategy found: acknowledge and mourn the impact (without guilt or self-judgement)



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