



## Understanding Human Needs from the work of Tony Robbins and Cloe Madanes

All of us have basic needs, not merely desires but profound needs that underlie and motivate every choice we make. There are six basic needs that everyone seeks to fulfill:

1. **CERTAINTY:** The first need is for certainty. We want to feel safe, avoid pain and feel comfortable in our environment. Every individual needs to have some sense of certainty and security – a roof over one's head, knowing where the next meal will come from, knowing how to obtain care when one is sick, knowing that a neighbor won't attack us. These are just a few examples of what constitutes a basic sense of certainty.

The helpless infant needs certainty as well as the child, the adult and the elderly person. The degree to which certainty is needed or desired, however, varies from person to person. Some people feel secure living in one room and collecting an unemployment check. Others can feel certainty only if they make a million dollars each year. Even though some certainty is necessary to all of us, what constitutes certainty varies from individual to individual.

Code words for certainty are: comfort, security, safety, stability, feeling grounded, predictability and protection.

2. **UNCERTAINTY/VARIETY:** The second need is for uncertainty – for variety and challenges that will exercise our emotional and physical range. Everyone needs some variety in life. Our bodies, our minds, our emotional well-being all require uncertainty, exercise, suspense, surprise.

The person caught in the same routine day after day will seek change and look for uncertainty. Just as a sense of security is reassuring, so the excitement that comes from variety is necessary to feel alive. For some variety might be satisfied by watching the news on television. Others may seek extreme high-risk activities such as extreme sports or compulsive sexuality to satisfy their need for uncertainty. For many, a major source of variety is to experience problems.

Code words for uncertainty/variety are: fear, instability, change, chaos, entertainment, suspense, exertion, surprise, conflict and crisis.

3. **SIGNIFICANCE:** The third need is for significance. Every person needs to feel important, needed, wanted. As babies, we all needed to feel that we were number one. Children in a family compete with each other and find a way to be special, to feel unique. Significance comes from comparing ourselves to others – in our quest for significance we become involved in hierarchical pecking orders and questions of superiority or inferiority. We can feel significant because we have achieved something, built something, succeeded at something, or we can seek significance by tearing down something or somebody.

In its positive aspect, significance leads us to raise our standards. But if we are overly focused on significance, we will have trouble truly connecting with others – comparisons focus on differences rather than commonalities. For some, significance comes from providing for the family; for others, from doing meaningful work, some need to make a major contribution to humanity; some require immense wealth. Some people achieve a sense of significance from failure, by being the worst at something or from having low self-esteem. Whatever the measure of significance, a sense of being important is necessary to all human beings.

Code words for significance are: pride, importance, standards, achievement, performance, perfection, evaluation, discipline, competition and rejection.

4. **LOVE/CONNECTION:** The fourth need is for the experience of love and connection. Everybody needs connection with other human beings, and everyone strives for and hopes for love. An infant needs to be loved and cared for during a long period of time if it's to develop normally. Infants who are not held and touched will die. This need for love continues throughout our lives. It is epitomized by the concept of romantic love, the one person who will devote their life to us and make us feel complete. In some cultures romantic loves doesn't exist, it's replaced by the love of relatives, friends and tribe. Some people rarely experience love, but they have many ways of feeling connection with others – in the community or in the workplace. The need to be loved is characteristic of all human beings.

Code words for love/connection are: togetherness, passion, unity, warmth, tenderness and desire.

5. **GROWTH:** The fifth need is for growth. When we stop growing we die. We need to constantly develop intellectually, emotionally and spiritually. We grow and change physically as we develop from infancy to adulthood and old age. We grow and change emotionally with every experience, and we grow intellectually as we respond to events and to the world around us. Anything that you want to remain in your life – your money, your health, your relationship, your happiness, love – must be cultivated, developed and expanded. Otherwise, it will degenerate. Some people satisfy the need to grow by working out physically or by reading books. Others need to study and learn constantly in order to feel that they are truly growing.
  
6. **CONTRIBUTION:** The sixth need is for contribution – to go beyond our own needs and to give to others. A life is incomplete without the sense that one is making a contribution to others or to a cause. It is in the nature of human beings to want to give back, to leave a mark on the world. Giving to others may mean giving time to community service, making a charitable donation, planting trees, writing a book, or giving to one's children. Not only can everyone contribute in some way but contribution is essential to a sense of fulfillment and to happiness.

The first four needs – certainty, uncertainty, significance and love – are essential for human survival. They are the fundamental needs of the personality – everyone must feel that they have met them on some level, even if they have to lie to themselves to do so. The last two needs, growth and contribution, are essential for human fulfillment. They are the needs of the spirit, and not everyone finds a way to satisfy them although they are necessary for lasting fulfillment.