AFFINITY PATHFINDER

ATTACHMENT · FIELD GUIDE

Universal Attachment Needs

The Science of Connection, and How Unmet Needs Shape Behavior

A reference for the eight needs underneath most relationship friction: what each one is, how it feels when it's met or missing, and simple, concrete ways to ask for it, from yourself and from the people close to you.

Why this matters

The 8 needs, at a glance

Each need in depth: examples, scripts, self-talk, somatic tools

How unmet needs adapt and heal

Needs reflection worksheet

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Why This Matters

As a bonding species, humans are wired for connection. Across relationships, romantic, familial, friendship, professional, our nervous systems constantly scan for cues of safety, belonging, and mattering.

When these cues are present, we feel grounded and emotionally open. When they're missing or inconsistent, we shift into protection: irritability, shutdown, withdrawal, clinginess, defensiveness, perfectionism, or over-functioning.

- **Understanding these needs helps you** make sense of your own reactions
- understand others with more compassion
- reduce blame and increase repair
- build relationships that feel emotionally safer

Ashleigh Warner
Beneath every behavior, there is a feeling. And beneath each feeling is a need. When we meet that need, rather than focusing on the behavior, we begin to deal with the cause, not the symptom.

The 8 Needs, At a Glance

For each need, the fuller section ahead covers what it looks like in real relationships, simple scripts for asking for it, supportive self-talk, and somatic tools to help your body feel safe while you wait for it to be met.

Attention
Feeling that someone is truly present with you.

WHEN MET
Feeling valued, important, connected.

WHEN UNMET
Irritability, testing ("do you care?"), scrolling, shutting down.

Belonging
Feeling included, welcomed, part of an "us."

WHEN MET
Security, groundedness, teamwork.

WHEN UNMET
People-pleasing, loneliness, self-erasure.

Comfort
Emotional or physical soothing and support.

WHEN MET
Regulation, softening, calm.

WHEN UNMET
Numbing, irritability, avoidance.

Safety
Predictability, steadiness, emotional non-judgment.

WHEN MET
Intimacy, trust, openness.

WHEN UNMET
Hypervigilance, control, freeze or shutdown.

Acceptance
Being valued exactly as you are.

WHEN MET
Authenticity, decreased defensiveness.

WHEN UNMET
Masking, shame, perfectionism, withdrawal.

Feeling Valued
Recognition of your strengths and uniqueness.

WHEN MET
Confidence, hope, motivation.

WHEN UNMET
Bitterness, resentment, shutting down effort.

Feeling Important
Feeling your voice, presence, and input matter.

WHEN MET
Engagement, partnership.

WHEN UNMET
Power struggles, passivity, helplessness.

Being Seen
Emotional mirroring, being "gotten."

WHEN MET
Intimacy, clarity, deep connection.

WHEN UNMET
Numbness, insecurity, craving intensity.

Each Need, In Depth

Examples of what meeting the need actually looks like, scripts for asking someone for it directly, supportive self-talk for the moment it's missing, and a few somatic tools to help your body settle in the meantime.

Attention

- **Examples:** Someone puts down their phone to listen; They remember details you shared; They notice your mood shift

How to Call Someone In
"Can I have your full attention for a few minutes?"
"Can we put our phones away while we talk?"
"Could you check in with me later about ___?"

- **Self-talk:** "I'm here with you. You have my full attention." / "I see the part of you that feels ignored." / "Show me what you're feeling, I'm listening."
- **Somatic tools:** Hand-to-heart with a soft eye gaze; Finger-tip press or self-hand-holding; Slow orienting, letting the eyes land on objects; Micro-sway or gentle nodding

Belonging

- **Examples:** Being invited into decisions; Shared rituals or routines; Hearing "I'm glad you're here"

How to Call Someone In
"Can we make this a shared decision?"
"Rituals help me feel close, can we create one?"
"When you include me, I feel safer."

- **Self-talk:** "You belong with me." / "Every part of you has a place here." / "You don't have to earn belonging."
- **Somatic tools:** Sit or stand side by side; Hand on ribcage while breathing; Self-hug or a "gathering" gesture; Shared rhythm: walking, tapping, synchronized breathing

Comfort

- **Examples:** A calming presence; Someone sitting with you without problem-solving; Receiving a hug when overwhelmed

How to Call Someone In

"I don't need fixing, just comfort."
"Can you sit with me for a moment?"
"A hug would help my nervous system."

- **Self-talk:** "I'm right here with you." / "You're not alone." / "Let me hold this with you."
- **Somatic tools:** Butterfly hug: left-right tapping; Weighted blanket or pressure over the torso; Rocking or swaying; Warm compress over shoulders or chest

Safety

- **Examples:** Consistency and follow-through; Calm tone during conflict; Repair after rupture

How to Call Someone In

"Can we slow down our tone so this feels safe?"
"Consistency helps me, can we make a plan together?"
"Repair helps me stay connected."

- **Self-talk:** "You're safe with me." / "I won't judge you." / "You don't have to protect me, I can protect you."
- **Somatic tools:** Inhale for 4, exhale for 8; Strong-back, soft-front posture; A gentle boundary hand-gesture; Orienting to exits and supports in the room

Acceptance

- **Examples:** Listening without correction; Validating feelings; Allowing authenticity

How to Call Someone In

"Can you listen without trying to fix?"
"Validation helps me feel accepted."
"I need to know I'm not being judged."

- **Self-talk:** "Nothing about you is too much." / "You're allowed to feel exactly what you feel." / "I accept you fully."
- **Somatic tools:** Soft-belly breathing; Open-palm touch to cheek or chest; Jaw relaxation; Sighs and spontaneous yawns

Feeling Valued

- **Examples:** Compliments; Appreciation; Acknowledgment of emotional labor

How to Call Someone In

"I feel connected when you notice my strengths."
"Could you name one thing you appreciated today?"
"Acknowledgment helps me stay engaged."

- **Self-talk:** "I see your effort." / "You matter to me." / "Your strengths are real and important."
- **Somatic tools:** Chest expansion stretch; Hand over sternum; Receiving posture, palms open; Warm, gentle mirror gaze

Feeling Important

- **Examples:** Being consulted; Being thanked; Being trusted

How to Call Someone In

"Can you ask for my input before deciding?"
"Shared decisions help me feel connected."
"Can we co-create this?"

- **Self-talk:** "Your voice matters here." / "I want to hear your perspective." / "You're not a burden."
- **Somatic tools:** Weight into the feet, "standing your ground"; Hand over the solar plexus; Tall, aligned posture; A gentle forward-lean when speaking

Being Seen

- **Examples:** Someone reflecting your emotions; Remembering your stories; Celebrating milestones

How to Call Someone In

"Can you reflect what you're hearing?"
"It helps when you notice my emotional shifts."
"Can we acknowledge this moment together?"

- **Self-talk:** "I see exactly what you're feeling." / "You make sense to me." / "You don't need to hide, I'm here."
- **Somatic tools:** Softening the muscles around the eyes; Hand-over-heart with mirror gaze; Tracking sensations while speaking; Heart-opening gesture, hands outward

How Unmet Needs Adapt and Heal

Marshall Rosenberg
Every criticism, judgment, diagnosis, and expression of anger is the tragic expression of an unmet need.

These reactions are not flaws. They are adaptive protections, your system doing its best to prevent deeper emotional pain.

- Which unmet need shows up most often in your relationships?
- Which protective behaviors do you default to?
- What deeper fear might your reaction be protecting?
- What healing response helps you soften or feel safer?

Closing Reflection
When we understand the need beneath the behavior, we stop fighting the person and start tending to the wound.
Connection is built through consistent, small signals: attention, safety, warmth, curiosity, repair. Not perfection, presence.

Needs Reflection Worksheet

1. Identify Your Unmet Needs

Rate how well each need is being met, 1 (not at all) to 10 (very well). Complete both scales: Self is how well you meet this need for yourself, Relationship is how well it's met by your partner or others.

Need	Self	Relationship
Attention	____ / 10	____ / 10
Belonging	____ / 10	____ / 10
Comfort	____ / 10	____ / 10
Safety	____ / 10	____ / 10
Acceptance	____ / 10	____ / 10
Feeling Valued	____ / 10	____ / 10
Feeling Important	____ / 10	____ / 10

Being Seen	____ / 10	____ / 10

- Which needs have the biggest gap between Self and Relationship?
- Which unmet need feels most urgent right now?
- Which needs feel easier to meet internally?
- Which needs consistently trigger protectors or parts?

2. Parts Mapping

Choose one unmet need and explore:

- What part of me holds this need? (a younger part, a protector, a performer, a scared part)
- What does this part look or feel like?
- What is this part afraid will happen if the need isn't met?
- What does this part need from me (Self)?
- What does this part need from others?

3. Somatic Awareness

When this need goes unmet, my body feels:

- Tight chest Shallow breath Heat / tension Collapse / heaviness
- Numbness Jaw clenching Stomach knots Racing thoughts

Other:

_____

4. Communication Practice

Choose one script to try this week, or write your own.

- "I feel more connected when..."
- "It helps me feel safe when..."
- "Could we slow down and try again?"
- "I need support, not fixing."
- "Can you check in with me later?"

Write your own:

_____

_____

5. Repair and Integration

When I notice protective behaviors show up, my own or someone else's, I will remind myself:

- "This is a protective part."
- "There is a need underneath."
- "We can come back into connection."

Not perfection. Presence.

Connection is built through consistent, small signals: attention, safety, warmth, curiosity, and repair.

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