

Plan Ahead to Meet Your Personal Needs

By: Atina Diffley - *Quality Of Life: Tools And Systems For A Healthy Farming Partnership*

Each of us has *Personal Needs*—beyond the basic needs of food and shelter—that must be met to be ourselves and at our best—to thrive. It is critical to meet these needs through positive activities and behaviors. When we don't meet them through positive ways, we unconsciously find a way to meet them—often through behaviors that are ineffective or conflict with living a fulfilling life and having healthy relationships.

You can think of Personal Needs as essential emotions we create through our behaviors and actions. By better understanding our Personal Needs we can plan ahead and choose positive ways to meet our needs. We can discard old patterns and integrate meeting our needs into our busy farming lives.

Personal Needs:

- Are critical for us to thrive and create healthy relationships
- Are neither good nor bad
- Can be met in positive (effective) or negative (ineffective) ways

Examples of personal needs are listed below. There may be other needs that you identify for yourself.

As you peruse the list, notice if you have positive or negative reactions to any of the words. For example, some people have negative connotations about the need for control or power or attention. Remember, needs are never negative or positive. It is the behaviors and actions we do to meet a need that can be positive or negative, effective or ineffective.

AUTONOMY	• Empathy	• Self-Worth	• Discovery
• Attention	• Inclusion	PLAY	• Efficacy
• Choice	• Intimacy	• Joy	• Effectiveness
• Control	• Love	• Humor	• Growth
• Freedom	• Mutuality	PEACE	• Hope
• Independence	• Nurturing	• Beauty	• Influence
• Space	• Respect/Self-Respect	• Communion	• Intellectual Stimulation
• Spontaneity	• Safety	• Ease	• Intensity
CONNECTION	• Security	• Equality	• Learning
• Acceptance	• Stability	• Harmony	• Power
• Affection	• Support	• Inspiration	• Purpose
• Appreciation	• To See And Be Seen	• Order	• Self-Expression
• Approval	• To Understand And Be Understood	MEANING	• Stimulation
• Belonging	• Trust	• Accomplishment	• To Matter
• Cooperation	• Warmth	• Adventure	SPIRITUAL
• Communication	INTEGRITY	• Awareness	• Beauty
• Closeness	• Authenticity	• Challenge	• Harmony
• Community	• Creativity	• Clarity	• Inspiration
• Companionship	• Integrity	• Competence	• Peace
• Compassion	• Presence	• Consciousness	• Order
• Consideration		• Contribution	
• Consistency		• Creativity	
• Simplicity			

This list is edited from *The Center For Non-Violent Communication*.

1st Step: Identify behaviors, activities, and outcomes that are presently meeting or attempting to meet your Personal Needs.

- Print a set of worksheets from pages 7 and 8 of this document for each person doing this work.

It can be challenging to understand why we do things and what personal needs behaviors are meeting. Often it requires working forward through layers of behavior to understand the driving need. For this reason we start by describing behaviors, activities and outcomes in our present life without seeking to understand the need they meet. This also helps us identify critical needs that may be masked by ineffective behaviors.

A few examples: bungee jumping, baking, financial security, over-eating, managing harvest, writing, open and honest communication, feeding people, procrastinating, over-achieving, yelling, playing video games, public speaking, pizza and darts at the bar with buddies, playing a musical instrument, selling at farmers market, fixing equipment, accounting, social media, micro-managing, going to farm auctions, playing with the kids.

You may notice the examples include behaviors that some people consider negative, or that we may want to change but they continue to happen. These are especially informative as they often continue as an attempt to meet our needs—however ineffective they may be. Raging for example, might be an old pattern we developed as a survival skill to meet the need for safety or equality. Over-achieving could be a behavior to meet the need for acceptance, or attention, or power.

1.1 In the first column of your worksheet, labeled 1.1, write present behaviors, activities, and outcomes with the questions below as guides.

- Be sure to include things that you perceive as positive and things you perceive as negative.
- Write whatever comes to mind. Suspend analysis and judgment.
- Underthink it!
- Refrain from filling out column 1.2 at this point in the process.

Set a timer for 5 minutes. Write without stopping:

- Things in your life that bring you the most enjoyment, pleasure, happiness.
- Times in your life you have felt most successful.
- Times in your life you have felt least successful.
- Things you do repeatedly that you wish would change but they don't.

2nd Step: Identify Personal Needs that the listed behaviors, activities and outcomes meet.

Now we will work with the behaviors, activities, and outcomes you've listed in column 1.1. Our goal is to identify the personal needs they may be meeting. You might find that multiple needs are being met by a single behavior, or that different activities meet a similar need. As you connect behaviors with needs, you might also find old patterns from a different stage of your life waiting to be "updated" to your current reality.

Examples of Behaviors, Activities, and Outcomes and Associated Personal Needs

Positive—Effective Ways to Meet Your Needs: In order to thrive it is important to meet your Personal Needs in positive ways that enhance your enjoyment of life and the quality of your relationships.

Behavior/Activity/Outcome

New Challenges

Personal Growth Practices

Open and Honest Communication

Equipment Maintenance

Mountain Climbing

Managing Harvest

Sales and Marketing

Playing Basketball

Possible Personal Needs

Accomplishment, Importance, Power, Connection

Self-Esteem, Connection, Discovery

Attention, Connection, Discovery

Accomplishment, Self-sufficiency, Competence

Challenge, Power, Freedom

Accomplishment, Challenge, Contribution, Independence

Intellectual Stimulation, Challenge

Connection, Independence, Competence

Negative—Ineffective Ways to Meet Your Needs: Identifying the negative or unhealthy behaviors, activities, and outcomes which you presently use to meet your needs can help you learn what your Personal Needs are, and make new plans to meet them through positive behaviors in the future.

Behavior/Activity/Outcome

Raging

Over-Achieving

Playing Video Games Excessively

Procrastination

Withdrawal

Possible Personal Needs

Power, Importance, Drama, Safety

Attention, Approval, Recognition

Privacy, Excitement, Power

Control, Freedom, Attention

Privacy, Security, Autonomy

1.2 Exploring Personal Needs: In the 2nd column, list the personal needs that the behavior, activity, or outcome may be meeting.

- Include Personal Needs that have a negative connotation for you.
- An activity may meet multiple needs.
- There are no right or wrong answers.
- You might find behaviors that are related to brain chemistry. For example, playing video games may be meeting a need for intellectual stimulation or solitude. Or it could be an addictive behavior related to dopamine release (a brain chemical that helps control the brain's reward and pleasure centers).

3rd Step: Select The Personal Needs That Are The Most Important To You

Now it's time to work forward with the information you've collected with the goal of identifying 3-4 of your most important personal needs. Understanding these needs for yourself and the important people on your farm and in your life will help you plan ahead to meet them in positive and effective ways.

1.3 Identify three to four primary needs

The next step is to work with the needs you listed in 1.2 with the end goal of identifying your most important personal needs. Below are a few suggestions to aid your process.

- Circle the needs that appear repeatedly. Do you see any patterns?
- Which of the needs bring you the deepest sense of completeness?
- Consider those that you have an aversion to. Are they needs that you are presently meeting through negative behaviors or unhealthy patterns? These may be critical Personal Needs, and the most important to plan for.
- Separate needs from wants, wishes, or things others think you should have.
- Think of times you feel bored, anxious, irritated. Is there an unmet need causing you to feel that way.
- As you work, consider if some needs are a subset of a deeper need. An example from my own work on this is, I noticed I had a pattern of rejecting others. I first thought it was meeting a need for independence. As I worked deeper, I realized that the behavior was a self-protective measure to meet a need for acceptance. I rejected others first before they had a chance to reject me.
- It's OK to move to the next step with 4 "starter" needs even if you aren't satisfied that you have figured out your most important needs. Sometimes it takes repeated processes and the power of time to peel away the layers to a deep understanding.

When you are satisfied that you have identified your 3-4 primary needs, write them in 1.3 Primary Personal Needs.

4th Step: Create A Plan

1.4 Positive Activities, Behaviors, and Outcomes To Meet Your Personal Needs

Now comes the fun part. Plan positive behaviors, actions and outcomes to meet each of your primary needs.

Far too often, unmet needs lead to farm or relationship failure. The reality is—as a farmer—it will be challenging to carve out time to meet needs away from work. For starters, plan for ways to meet personal needs through the farm and other necessary work.

Case Study: Jack loved baseball. For him it meant the high heat of summer, connection with his friends, accomplishment and competence. He was a skilled batter and outfielder. He received appreciation and respect as the top scorer on his team.

Then he became a farmer. The diamond is just down the road from his fields. On Fridays, game days, he could hear the sharp crack as the bat met the ball. He tracked the score by the intensity of the cheering. But he was stuck in the field, hoeing, harvesting. He became lonely and withdrawn. He felt incompetent as he struggled to build a successful farm. Sometimes he'd quit work and go to the game. That felt even worse. He got behind on the farm, and wasn't on the team playing.

When Jack worked on his personal needs with these worksheets he realized it wasn't actually baseball he loved. Baseball had been the conduit for meeting his primary needs for connection, accomplishment, and appreciation. Now he really wanted to focus on becoming a successful farmer. He decided he needed a more concrete way to experience what he contributes with his farm. He changed his market strategy from only wholesale to a broker, to include selling diverse crops at a farmers market. Connecting with customers helped a lot. The smile on their faces as they described meals made from his food felt like hitting a home run. This led to ideas for new crops and products, which met his need for accomplishment. Now, hearing the game down the road as he prepares for Saturday market creates positive feelings of a fully lived, vital life.

Are there aspects of Jack's story that are familiar? What were some of the hobbies or interests that you've let go of since farming? Can you think of a need they fulfilled?

Add a personal relationship or a family and the issue is compounded.

Meeting needs creates the base for a healthy relationship. Understanding our own and our partner's needs help us to shift our attention to the needs rather than on our position or blame or judgment. When we think this way, we can continue to have a dialogue as long as the subject of the dialogue is our own and each other's feelings and needs. When the needs of people are understood, new strategies almost always appear.

Case Study: Marie and Harriet loved cooking together when they were dating. It met needs of connection, appreciation, intellectual stimulation and inspiration, plus healthy, tasty food.

Then they started a farm. And then they had twins!

Now, with two 18-month olds, it's not working. Meal prep has become a struggle about who is watching the kids and cooking, versus who is doing farm work. Both adults struggle with unmet needs. They decided to take turns with cooking and watching the kids during cooking. Marie plans to use her cooking turn to meet her needs for intellectual stimulation and inspiration. She plans to listen to

podcasts while she cooks. Harriet decides she will meet her needs for structure and inspiration by cooking meals that have leftovers to freeze when it is her turn to cook. They recognize they still have a high need for connection and appreciation so they decide to start a family practice of verbalizing appreciation during meals. They also schedule a sitter once a week for alone time together.

When I saw them several months later they had worked out a house cleaning exchange to meet their needs for an orderly, peaceful home and alone time. It was impossible to clean their own home, too many distractions, and the farm wasn't profitable enough to hire someone else to clean. The unmet need was causing conflict that affected the farm as well. They partnered with another family. One of them cleans the other family's house in only four hours, and vice versa, an adult of the other family cleans their home. One of the four adults takes both families' kids to the park, and the remaining adult gets four hours of free time. They rotate through roles. Every other week both families get a clean home while the kids exercise outside and socialize. Once a month each adult has 4 hours of alone time while cleaning, and every other month each adult has four hours of completely free time!

This is working so well, they are now creating a work share system for regular connection with other farmers through farm tasks. They have organized a group of area farmers. Each farm created a list of tasks that can be served by doing them together. They were very excited as they told me about the connection and learning that happened through the two workdays they've done so far.

Are there needs in your community like those of Harriet & Marie? What challenges do you hear other farmers share? Is there a way to solve these challenges together and meet a core need?

Needs also represent our values, wants, and preferences for a happier and/or more meaningful experience as a human. Although we have different needs in differing amounts at different times, they are universal in all of us. Talking about our needs with our partners is a critical step for helping each other meet them.

1.4 Create a Plan to meet the Personal Needs of all farm and personal partners.

Use column 1.4 of your worksheet

1. Working independently, next to each personal need, brainstorm a list of activities/outcomes/behaviors that could meet your Personal Needs in a positive way;
 - Start by addressing ways to meet needs through the farm and business activities.
 - If you have a family or personal relationship, include tasks, roles, things that need to get done and ways of communicating in your home life.
 - Include things you do every day as well as seasonal, or occasional activities.
 - Include new activities.
 - Consider new roles or rotating roles.
 - Consider ways that other people might help you meet your Personal Needs. It's OK to ask.
 - Needs can also be met by designating time to meet needs away from the farm. Review the reality of getting time away from the farm and make plans that have a chance at succeeding.
2. Select which activities / behaviors you would like to incorporate into your life.
3. Work with partners towards consensus on a plan, schedule, and the support necessary to meet all partners' primary needs.
 - Use calendars to schedule and commit.
 - Check in with each other on how the plan is working on a regular basis.

1.3 Primary Personal Needs	1.4 Positive Activity / Behavior to Meet Need
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	