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THE 6 NEEDS OF EVERY CHILD

**EMPOWERING PARENTS AND KIDS THROUGH THE
SCIENCE OF CONNECTION**

A PDF COMPANION TO THE AUDIOBOOK

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THE SCIENCE OF CONNECTION

The Compass of Needs

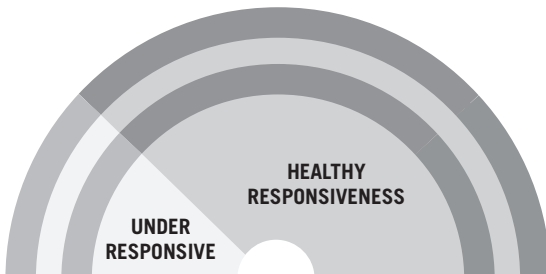


4

DELIGHT: I SEE YOU!

Delight

NEED TYPE: MIRRORING

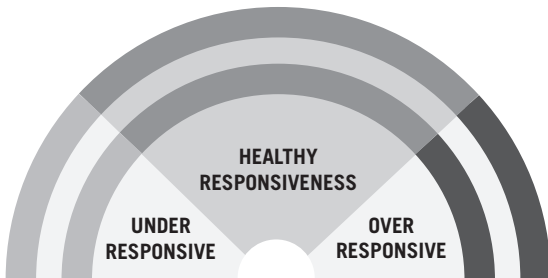


5

SUPPORT: HOW CAN I HELP?

Support

NEED TYPE: GUIDANCE

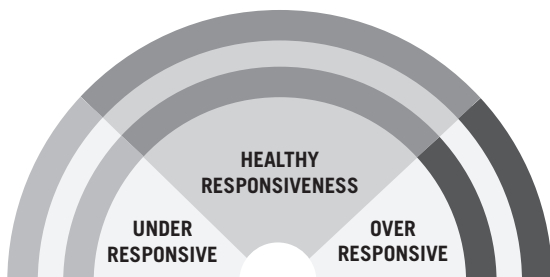


6

BOUNDARIES: HOW FAR IS TOO FAR?

Boundaries

NEED TYPE: TAKING CHARGE

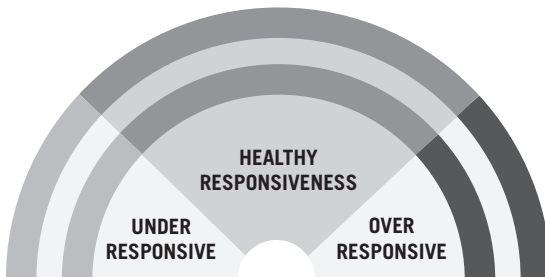


7

PROTECTION: ARE YOU SAFE?

Protection

NEED TYPE: TAKING CHARGE

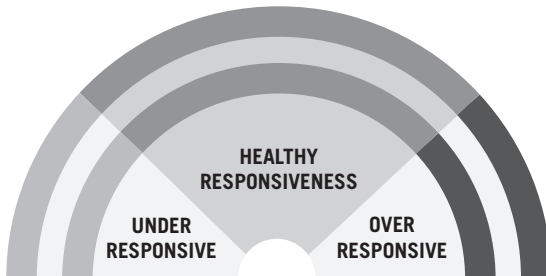


8

COMFORT: I SEE
YOUR SUFFERING

Comfort

NEED TYPE: MIRRORING



EQUIPPING: WHERE TO FROM HERE?

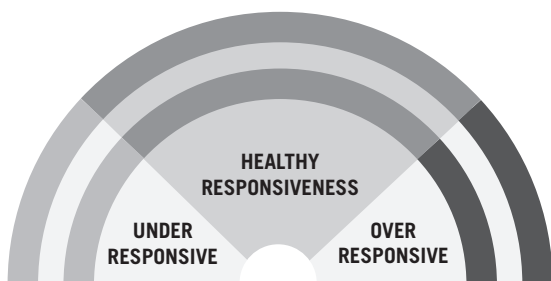
Emotions Pie Chart



Physical feelings that drive emotions include: *Tired, Hungry, Sick, In Pain, Overstimulated*

Equipping

NEED TYPE: GUIDANCE



THE 6 NEEDS ASSESSMENT TOOLS

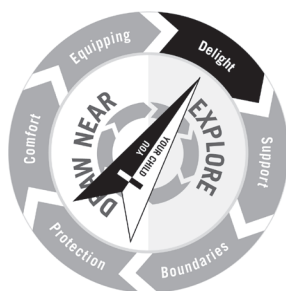
As you consider our needs assessment tools, you'll probably find you are highly responsive to some needs and less responsive to others. To get a general idea of how sensitive you are to each one, look over the diagrams and consider whether you tend to lean toward one side or the other. Consider asking your parenting partner, a friend, and/or your child to assess you as well. Differences in ratings are opportunities for insight and learning.

Delight

Need Type: Mirroring

Here are some statements that may feel true if you tend to underrespond to the need for delight:

- I don't seem to really notice my child unless he is doing something wrong or bothersome.
- It's hard to think of times recently when I truly enjoyed my child.
- I generally feel agitated and annoyed at my child when I'm in her presence.



Here are some statements that may feel true if you are highly responsive to the need for delight:

- I enjoy spending time with my child, playing and discovering with them.
- I enjoy finding out how my child sees and experiences the world, even when it's different from my view or experience.
- I enjoy seeing what interests or motivates my child even when those interests are different from my own.

Support

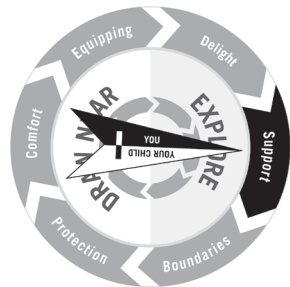
Need Type: Guidance

Here are some statements that may feel true if you tend to underrespond to the need for support:

- I prefer to let my child figure things out on his own.
- I am often too busy with my own work and activities to give much time to helping my child with theirs.
- When I try to help my child with something, I often end up feeling frustrated and walking away.

Here are some statements that may feel true if you tend to overrespond to the need for support:

- I am quick to jump in and show my child how things are done.
- I often take over a task for my child if I feel like he's not doing it right.
- I get really uncomfortable with the idea of my child failing or not reaching his full potential.



Boundaries

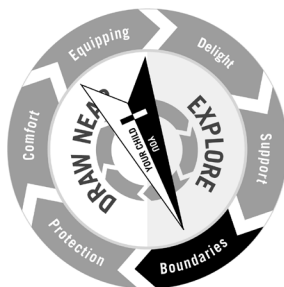
Need Type: Taking Charge

Here are some statements that may feel true if you tend to underrespond to the need for boundaries:

- I generally let my child have his own way.
- I tell my child what he can or can't do, but he does what he wants anyway.
- I go through periods of laying down the law but seem to have trouble following through.

Here are some statements that may feel true if you tend to overrespond to the need for boundaries:

- I have strong expectations and rules for how my child should act, and I enforce them.
- It is very important to me that my child learns to obey.
- I am willing to resort to severe punishment if my child is disobedient.



Protection

Need Type: Taking Charge

Here are some statements that may feel true if you tend to underrespond to the need for protection:

- I don't feel the need to pay too close attention to where my child is or whom she is with. She knows how to take care of herself.



- If my child wants to do something, I have a hard time saying no, even if the activity or situation makes me uncomfortable.
- If another adult puts my child in his place, he probably had it coming.

Here are some statements that may feel true if you tend to overrespond to the need for protection:

- I never leave my child alone with another adult unless I know that adult really well or have clear assurance of their safety.
- I feel very uncomfortable letting my child engage in physical activities or exploration if I think there is any chance he could get hurt.
- I'm not comfortable with letting my child spend too much time away from me with friends, even if I know and like the friends' families.

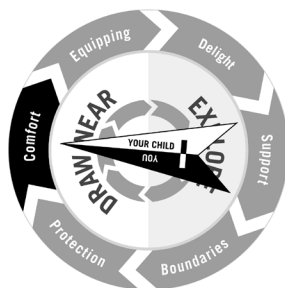
Comfort

Need Type: Mirroring

Here are some statements that may feel true if you tend to underrespond to the need for comfort:

- My first instinct is to assure my child that he is all right unless he's clearly hurt badly.
- I find it uncomfortable to linger in a hug with my child, to hold hands, or to otherwise engage in extended acts of affection.
- I tend to distract myself when I am upset about something, and I do the same for my child if they are upset.

Here are some statements that may feel true if you tend to over-



respond to the need for comfort:

- I feel the need to touch, hold, and soothe my child at the first signs of distress or discomfort, whether or not he asks for it.
- I have trouble letting my child move away from me if I am unsure whether the hurt she is carrying is truly gone.
- I always try to make my child talk to me about what is going on inside her if she looks upset or doesn't seem like her normal self.

Equipping

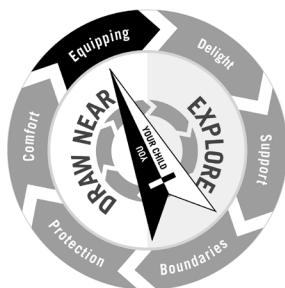
Need Type: Guidance

Here are some statements that may feel true if you tend to underrespond to the need for equipping:

- I don't have much to say about my child's worries or the conflicts she gets into. She'll need to figure out how to do the right thing on her own.
- If my child gets into trouble, I usually take over and fix the problem for him.
- I find myself lecturing my child about what she should do in the future if she's gotten herself in trouble or into conflict with someone.

Here are some statements that may feel true if you tend to over-respond to the need for equipping:

- When something has gone wrong for my child, I insist that we talk it out until I know exactly what happened and why and I'm confident she has learned from the experience



and knows what to do next time to prevent it from ever happening again.

- I feel it is important to develop a specific action plan with my child about how he intends to follow up and make things right if he has trouble with someone.
- I am uncomfortable with letting my child decide what actions to take after an upset when it's clear what action I think she should take.

Once you've assessed how you tend to respond to the needs, engage in the below questions and exercises:

Question 1: Were there major differences in how you see yourself and how your partner or child sees you?

Exercise 1: If some major differences exist, do they seem to be due to confusion about what the dimensions mean, or do they seem to be due to genuine differences between how you view yourself and how others see you as a parent? Are you able to talk about these differences productively, or do you feel threatened and defensive about any differences of opinion?

Question 2: Which needs did you rate yourself as being prone to underrespond or overrespond to? Leaning toward overresponsiveness means you see and highly value that need in your child. Leaning toward underresponsiveness means you may have difficulty recognizing or seeing the true value of that need in your child.

Exercise 2a: Look at the needs you are prone to overrespond to and be grateful. Your attention to those needs is a gift to your child. But also reflect on how overemphasizing and overresponding to those needs may sometimes be “too much of a good thing.” (Unless it's delight. Don't hold back there!) Consider how your attention to the needs you're good at attending to may hinder your child in areas where other needs may be present. Consider asking your child whether he feels like you

overdo it with certain things. For support you might ask, “Do you think I help too much with things, things you think you can handle yourself?” With boundaries, “Do you think our rules are too strict or too hard to keep?” With protection, “Are there things you’d like to do that you don’t think I would allow but that you feel like you could handle?” With comfort, “Do you think I overdo it with asking how you’re feeling or trying to make you feel better?” With equipping, “Do you think I overdo helping you figure out how to handle conflicts and setbacks?”

If the idea of backing off a little in a need that you highly attend to feels uncomfortable, consider why that may be. Consider your personal history and also what fears you might have about what would happen to your child if you were to pull back from that need just a little. Where might those fears be coming from, whether from your personal history or from the world around you?

Exercise 2b: Look at the needs you are prone to underrespond to, and become curious about why you might have difficulty noticing or valuing those needs in your child. In particular, consider how those needs were met, or not met, for you as a child. Many people assume that how they respond to their child is an inborn personality trait (e.g., “I’m just not a touchy-feely person”), but you may find that it simply wasn’t modeled for you in your relationships growing up, so meeting the need feels unfamiliar or uncomfortable for you.

Need Dimensions

Mirroring: Delight and Comfort

Guidance: Support and Equipping

Taking Charge: Boundaries and Protection

Food for Thought

Remember that more attention toward a need is not always better. To show you how both over- and underattending to certain needs can create problems, we've put together a list of some common parenting styles and how they engage certain needs specifically. You've probably heard of most of the types on the list and may even identify with one or two. If so, consider how you could bring your relationship into more balance by focusing on some of the needs you're not attentive to or by de-emphasizing some of the needs you overattend to. Can you think of other well-known parenting styles and how they might interact with the needs?

Playmate Parent: High Delight, Low Boundaries

Permissive Parent: Low Boundaries, Low Protection

Authoritarian Parent: Low Delight, High Boundaries, Low Comfort

Helicopter Parent: High Support, High Protection, High Equipping

Free-Range Parent: Low Support, Low Equipping

Achievement-Pusher Parent: Low Delight, High Boundaries, High Support, Low Comfort

STEPS TO TAKE IF YOUR CHILD IS STRUGGLING

1. Start with Protection

Ask yourself, “Is it possible my child feels unsafe physically or emotionally?” If she is feeling unsafe or has been hurt, immediately comfort her, then take whatever action is necessary to protect her from further harm.

Things to Consider:

- If the source of harm is coming from another family member, get help from a trusted family member, medical or mental health professional, or the police.
- If the knowledge that your child has been feeling unsafe or has been hurt feels paralyzing or overwhelming to you, get help yourself from a mental health professional.
- If your child is still struggling after you have moved to protect and comfort her, consider seeking out a mental health professional to rule out specific depressive or anxiety disorders.

2. If Your Child Is Feeling Safe, Focus Next on Delight

If your child is safe but struggling, make it a priority to create time and space to simply enjoy and play with him. Look him in the eye, and tell him how much you love and enjoy him. Be specific about the things you appreciate about him as a person. Take the time to write a letter to him or a postcard with the top ten things you

love about him that he can pin up on his wall or carry with him in his backpack. Be careful not to slip into pride or approval about his accomplishments or abilities. “I love watching you climb the monkey bars” sends a different message than “I love that you are a good climber.” The latter implies that your love depends on him being “a good climber.”

If delight is hard for you, press into prayer and even therapy to explore why this might be the case. Look at your hopes, dreams, and expectations. Work through grief and fears you may have. Give yourself permission to accept that your child has a difficult personality for you and that this doesn’t make you a bad parent.

Temperament, irritability, rigidity, and extreme moodiness are major challenges to delighting in a person. Enlist the help of a psychologist if you suspect that your child’s challenges may be due to developmental concerns such as Autistic Spectrum Disorder, Obsessive Compulsive Disorder, ADHD or ADD, or sensory processing disorders, especially if there is any family history of similar concerns.

3. If Protection and Delight Are Settled, Focus Next on Boundaries

Explore the basis for your demands and expectations for your child. Are there too many? Are they unclear or inconsistent, or are they nonexistent?

Children struggle when they have too many or too few boundaries, and boundaries should be developmentally appropriate. You may think your child is capable of handling something and he’s not, or you may think he’s not yet capable of something and he is. Either will create problems.

Boundaries are often linked to expectations. Ask yourself: How much help does my child need to *regularly* meet my expectations? You may think that because your child has handled something once, he should be good to go. That’s not always the case. It can

help to ask other parents of children the same age to get a sense of what is reasonably possible and appropriate.

If you still have trouble figuring out developmentally appropriate boundaries for your child, work with your child using a collaborative problem-solving approach. This involves identifying together what your child feels he needs in the situation, naming what you need in the situation, and jointly finding a solution that addresses *both* sets of needs. Taking such an approach can feel very uncomfortable for parents who value their role as authority figures. If this is the case for you, know that taking such an approach is a profound form of leadership. Your child needs your help finding his own voice, understanding that his actions or inactions have consequences, and developing realistic solutions to conflicts. If you don't help him develop these skills, how will he learn them? We highly recommend the book *Raising Human Beings* by Ross Greene for a more detailed exploration of what this process looks like.

Enlist the help of a family therapist if needed.

If you are having trouble adjusting your expectations to your child's current capacities and maturity, it may be useful to get professional feedback. Feeling like you can't afford to adjust your expectations may be a sign of perfectionism, Obsessive Compulsive Disorder, Autism Spectrum Disorder, or some other anxiety disorder.

4. Lastly, Consider Whether Your Child Needs More Active Support and Equipping

Your last general-purpose strategy is to consider whether the reason your child is floundering is because she needs more guidance and practical hands-on help with tasks and life challenges.

Ask yourself: Are her school or peer interactions overwhelming? What are your child's mental habits and beliefs about herself? How does she talk to herself? What are her structures of organization and help-seeking? Does she seem to give up on things too

easily or burn herself out without much to show for it? Does she seem overwhelmed?

She may need your support and equipping. Take time out in a nonthreatening context to talk about your observations that she seems like she's struggling, or that everything seems like a battle. Use a collaborative problem-solving approach to better understand how your child sees things and to clarify her and your priorities. First solicit your child's ideas for what would help her, rather than imposing solutions unilaterally. Ask her how she thinks you can help her. Offer ideas of how you think you might be able to help her. Agree to try out new strategies, and review in a week and adjust accordingly. Be open to outside sources of help if your child struggles to "let you" help her.

Enlist the help of a family therapist if needed.

STEPS TO TAKE IF YOU ARE STRUGGLING

Recognizing that you need help is hard. Seeking out that help is even harder. If you are struggling, please believe that simply reading these words and considering your options is a brave first step.

If you would like to find a counselor or psychologist to speak to, you can use this tool to discover licensed therapists in your area:

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/therapists/>

If you would feel more comfortable talking with a counselor over the phone or by video, **talkspace.com** and **breakthrough.com** are two websites that connect you with licensed therapists online.

Please be patient with yourself as you reach out for help, and know that it might take a few tries to find the right person or people to talk to.

If you need someone to talk to today, here is a list of reputable 24-hour hotlines:

- **National Suicide Prevention Lifeline:** 1-800-273-8255
- **The Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network (RAINN):** 1-800-656-HOPE (1-800-656-4673)
- **Childhelp,** a nonprofit dedicated to the prevention of child abuse: 1-800-4-A-CHILD (1-800-422-4453)
- **National Domestic Violence Hotline:** 1-800-799-SAFE (1-800-799-7233)

If you would like to find and join a group of people who are dealing with similar issues, here are a few places to start:

- **Alcoholics Anonymous:** <http://www.aa.org/>
- **Al-Anon** provides help and hope for families and friends of alcoholics: <https://al-anon.org>
- **Families Anonymous** provides support and recovery from the effects of a loved one's addictions: <http://www.familiesanonymous.org>
- **Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance:** <https://dbsalliance.org>

For an online, up-to-date list of these resources, as well as recommended books and voices, visit our website at <https://growingconnected.com>.