

Peer Review Article

# The Map to Compassion:

A Systems-Based Model of Human Needs

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## Abstract

This article introduces the Human Needs Map—a sense-making tool that helps orient our minds to human needs that drive and trigger us, disrupting relationships and creating conflict. Initially inspired from fieldwork of the Israeli-Palestinian peace process, the Human Needs Map has developed into a systems model that reveals the interior landscape of our Protective body/mind with needs and emotions in dynamic flux. The model provides a language to speak about the interconnectivity of needs through their synergies and tensions. Naming this emerging and coherent inter-dependency between needs and emotions offers a way to understand emotions as reasonable and provides more vectors to heal, dislodge or re-write narratives and beliefs, which perpetuate conflict. The implication lies not only at the individual level but also at the level of systems change to support the design of social and cultural structures more capable of taking needs and emotions into account. The present article traces the iterative process conceptualizing the model and discovering its internal patterns, followed by a discussion about the Needs system's adaptive qualities and its role in creating and perpetuating Conflict, concluding with insights for Israeli-Palestinian peacebuilding.

## Keywords

human needs map, conflict, adaptive, embodiment, self-awareness, trauma, sensitivities, needs matrix

There is much to be gained . . . by opening up the black box and asking, for example, whether imperative needs are expressions of a libidinal drive, as Freud (1930/1989) thought, whether they emerge in the course of human development, as Erikson (1963) and others believed . . . it is likely to provide fuller and more accurate answers to the major question posed by John Burton and his colleagues: How can the basic needs that, unsatisfied, generate destructive social conflict be identified, described, and satisfied?

—Richard E. Rubenstein, “Basic Human Needs: The Next Steps in Theory Development”

In 1998, during a joint meeting of Israeli and Palestinian security forces near the Palestinian town of Tulkarem,<sup>1</sup> the Israeli commanders justified setting up spontaneous security checkpoints along the road leading to Palestinian villages even if it meant stopping and checking a village leader. They argued that checkpoints were a legitimate and agreed upon security measure consistent with the rules and protocols of the Oslo Accords.<sup>2</sup> The Palestinian commander complained that at one recent checkpoint, a village leader was stopped and made to stand near the street while his villagers drove by, humiliating him. I was there as a Ph.D. student when Nabil, the Palestinian commander, came up to me after the meeting, shaking his head: I just don’t understand Israelis. Israelis think without feeling. What did Nabil perceive about the consequences that his Israeli counterparts were missing?

As I finished writing this article, it was only weeks since October 7, when Hamas, the Palestinian organization elected to govern Gaza, had declared war on Israel by invading, massacring, raping, burning, and kidnapping Israelis and foreigners. The scale of the tragedy rekindled Israel’s and the Jewish people’s

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<sup>1</sup> Tulkarem is located along the “Green Line” where a District Coordinating Office (DCO) had been established by the Oslo Agreements to manage security cooperation between Israeli and Palestinian security forces. The relationship was one of “non-mediated peacekeeping,” where the enemy fighters were their own peacekeeping force without third-party mediation.

<sup>2</sup> The Israeli-Palestinian Joint Patrols were created by the Oslo Accords to “ensure free, unimpeded, and secure movement along the roads and in other areas.” (Oslo II – Israeli-Palestinian Interim Agreement on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Washington, D.C., September 28, 1995. p. 38).

traumatic memory of the Holocaust. Tragically, Israel's predictable reaction has led to the massive suffering and killing of thousands of our Palestinian cousins in Gaza. How is it possible to "think with feeling" in matters of life or death? How might we gain the required perspective to facilitate long-term thought integrated with emotional intelligence?

The impulse to create the Human Needs Map that I describe in this article came from my peacebuilding research to help transform conflicts of any size by more deeply understanding our own reactions and those of "the other." I sought to design a model that explains how human needs could support political and military strategic thinking as well as a wide range of personal and social challenges through a profound awareness of human needs and emotions. The result is a sensemaking tool developed through an iterative process over 28 years during my work as a mediator, university lecturer, facilitator, coach, and student of conflict and needs theories. My training and certification in Somatic Experiencing also contributed to formulating the conceptual model.<sup>3</sup>

## The Scope and Structure of this Article

The debate over whether human beings are motivated by self-interest and/or higher motives is not engaged here. What I posit in this article is that conflict results from one's self-interest in getting one's own unmet needs met and that both self-interest and our beliefs about our own needs serve one goal: to ensure our survival. I refer to this part of our psyche as the *protective body-mind*, defined as an innate human system that keeps the organism safe by integrating its thoughts, images, emotions, body sensations, and movement in self-defense.

As I describe in more detail later, our survival mechanisms are dependent on a close interaction between body and mind. This system triggers our defense response when danger is perceived. The model provides a map to make conscious the often-unconscious drivers and beliefs that fuel this needs system. My aim here is twofold: to present the Human Needs Map as a systems model that integrates human needs and emotions in a matrix; second, to describe the internal dynamics through which this system adapts to its environment.

In part 1, I recount my journey in developing this model, which led to the development of the Human Needs Map. Part 2 offers a concise overview of the model's components. In part 3 focuses on the internal logic of the Human Needs Map, exploring the interconnectedness of its elements and its deep ties to fundamental human emotions. Part 4 draws attention to the unique role of the survival needs—physical aliveness and safety—within the *protective body-mind* system. Part 5 examines the ways in which the *protective body-mind* system adapts to its surroundings, particularly during childhood, and the potential

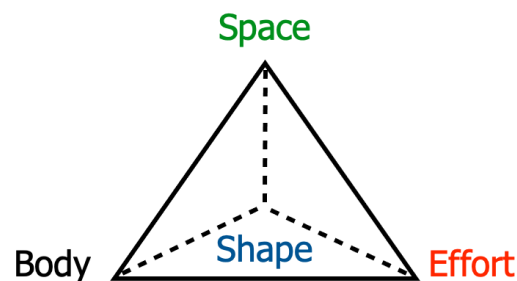
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<sup>3</sup> Somatic Experiencing is a trauma healing modality developed by Peter Levine (1997).

challenges this adaptation can pose later in life. Part 6 provides an in-depth analysis of the need for identity, including the influence of narratives, values, and beliefs on the emergence and perpetuation of conflict dynamics. Part 7 summarizes the insights and findings presented.

## Part 1. Brief Review of Human Needs Models: An Epistemological Journey

The Human Needs Map emerged from my doctoral research in the social anthropology of Israeli-Palestinian security cooperation, which culminated in the the Oslo Accords of 1995–2000. The model was strongly influenced by my movement background in dance ethnology and more specifically by the experiential and mental framework of Laban Movement Analysis (LMA), a method and language for interpreting human movement. Movement philosopher and choreographer Rudolf von Laban (1879–1958), together with Warren Lamb and others, conceptualized body, effort, shape, and space as a system of the human body moving in and interacting with space, whereby any one part impacts the whole. The tetrahedron formed through the ongoing dynamic interaction between body-effort-shape-space represents the human being’s expressive movement as an adaptive response to the environment. This framework underlies how I perceive and witness human needs interacting and adapting as an interdependent dynamic system in response to the environment.



*Figure 1. Laban Movement Analysis Represents Four Aspects of Human Movement (Laban/BartiniEFF Institute of Movement Studies [LIMS], 1978).*

With an awareness of nonverbal behavior in general and skilled training in LMA, I entered the West Bank and Gaza Strip/Palestine in 1996 to research the negotiation of relations on the Israeli-Palestinian Joint Patrols. I witnessed a fluid system reflecting the embodiment of change (Heifetz-Yahav, 2005) where military men, members of the PLO, and Israeli security forces, who had been enemy fighters, became their own nonmediated peacekeeping force, which required them to change their expressive behavior and communication to make peacebuilding possible.

My prior training in nonviolent communication (NVC) with Marshall Rosenberg brought another dimension to my fieldwork and subsequent activities

in teaching and mediating. NVC makes explicit the relationship between emotions and human needs: namely that conflict involves emotions as a currency. One of my key findings was the crucial importance that emotions play in the negotiation of relationships, the building of trust, and the transition from fighters to peacekeepers (Heifetz-Yahav, 2002).

The next epistemological benchmark occurred in the years 2002–2005 when I was involved in Track II negotiations,<sup>4</sup> teaching graduate students, and serving as an advisory member of the Israeli security forces' Crisis Management Team. Experimenting with the language of “needs” vs. “interests,” I noted that explicitly using the term “needs” elicited a wide range of unexpected emotions and a deeper sense of understanding. Inquiring about needs rather than interests resulted in the other party feeling more heard and understood, thus bringing more “peace into the room” (Bowling & Hoffman, 2000). In contrast, discussions that used the term “interests” lacked the emotion-rich expression (including anger) that communicates “I understand you, what is important to you, and why”-sentiments more conducive to building trust.

By 2009 the model began to take concrete form. My graduate students in the International Conflict Resolution and Mediation Program at Tel Aviv University were assigned fieldwork to map the conflict in a mixed Muslim, Jewish, and Christian neighborhood in Haifa. Their research results and later my own workshops in expressive movement and leadership development gave me more insight into ways of mapping human needs that could provide a coherent structure for understanding and helping to resolve human conflict interpersonally and at the societal level. To help my students make sense of the needs dynamics in the field, Abraham Maslow's hierarchy provided an entry point.

American psychologist Abraham Maslow (1908–1970), perhaps the best-known theorist of human needs, created a pyramid to graphically describe the movement of individual motivation toward self-actualization and well-being. Maslow's two-dimensional hierarchy represents needs that sequence upward toward the next level after the need at any given level is satisfied. The problem with Maslow's theory, in the context of conflict, is that we do not satisfy one need and proceed to the next because there are situations where we may give up our “lower” needs for our “higher” needs. For example, Maslow's pyramid-shaped hierarchy does not explain why people sacrifice their own life or the lives of their children (survival = lower need) for a cause (self-actualization = higher need), or why busy executives sacrifice family life (love = lower need) for success (esteem =

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<sup>4</sup> Track II negotiation or diplomacy refers to mediation between nongovernmental, unofficial, and informal stakeholders, such as university professors, lawyers, and private citizens and groups.

higher need). Maslow's model is designed for human potential, not for explaining the dynamics of conflict.

An ample literature on conflict and conflict resolution recognizes many factors beyond scarcity of physical resources as motivation for conflict. Identity-based conflict is well established in the literature on war and peace (Rothman, 1997; Sen, 2007; Smyth, 2002). Others note identity and emotions (Shapiro, 2010), pride (De Figueiredo & Elkins, 2003), and humiliation (Lindner, 2006). It was the sociologists who created Human Needs Theory (Avruch, 2013; Burton, 1990, 1998; ; Lederer et al., 1980; Sites, 1973). They brought the focus to human needs and the deprivation of those needs as the cause of conflict. These theorists identified various needs that, when unmet, are the source of conflict. The prominent sociologist and diplomat John Burton created a list consistent with and inspired by others, such as Paul Sites, a contemporary of Burton's. Another influencer in the field of human needs is the "father of peace studies," Johan Galtung (1969), who proposed four groups of basic human needs: well-being, survival, identity, and freedom.

Chilean-born economist Manfred Max-Neef (1991) created a unique systems perspective of human needs. He designed a two-dimensional Human Needs Matrix as a "taxonomy of human needs" that identifies nine fundamental needs and their relationship to four existential categories: being, having, doing, and interacting. Years later, Harvard negotiators and peace scholars Roger Fisher and Daniel Shapiro (2005) developed their Core Concerns Framework, which is based on five key human motivations: appreciation, affiliation, autonomy, status, and role.

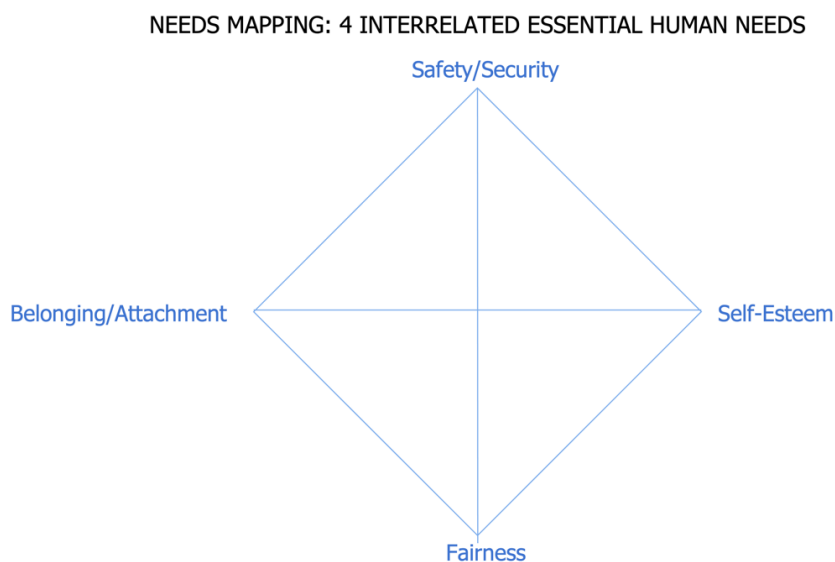
HUMAN NEEDS THEORISTS					
<u>MASLOW</u> 1908-1970 1908-1970	<u>GALTUNG</u> 1930	<u>MAX-NEEF</u> 1932-2019 1932-2019	<u>SITES</u> 20th C.	<u>BURTON</u> 1915-2010 1915-2010	<u>ROSENBERG</u> 1934-2015 1934 - 2015
Self Actualisation		Understanding	Meaning	Personal Fulfillment	Spiritual Communion
Esteem		Creation	Recognition	Recognition	Creation
Love/Belonging	Well Being Needs	Affection	Emotional Stimulation	Belonging	Love/Integrity
Safety/Security		Protection	Control	Safety/Security	Interdependence
Physiological	Survival Needs	Subsistence	Justice	Distributive Justice	Physical Nurturance
	Identity Needs	Identity	Rational Stimulation	Identity/Culture	Autonomy
		Participation	Participation	Self-Esteem	Play
	Freedom Needs	Freedom			Freedom
		Idleness/Leisure			

Table 1. A Summary of the Needs Identified by Human Needs Theorists (Deborah Heifetz, 2018).

## First Iteration of a Needs Map

To build my own model, I initially used specific needs identified by Maslow and Burton, according to what seemed most salient from preliminary fieldwork I had conducted. My first Human Needs Map included four interrelated human needs: three from Maslow and Burton (belonging/attachment, safety/security, and self-esteem), the fourth (fairness/justice) from Burton. I excluded Maslow's self-actualization because I discerned that conflicts which people kill and die for do not involve that need. And I mistakenly assumed at the time that Maslow's "physiological needs" would drive conflict only when there is an unfair distribution of scarce resources. Thus my initial Human Needs Map consisted of the following four needs:

1. Safety/Security: the need for predictability, control, stability, and freedom from fear and anxiety.
2. Belongingness/Attachment: the need for inclusion in relationships, to be accepted by others, and to have strong personal ties with one's family, friends, and identity groups.
3. Self-esteem: the need to be recognized by oneself and others as strong, competent, and capable; the need to know that one can impact one's environment.
4. Fairness/Justice: the need for the fair allocation of resources among all of one's community members.



Aviv University 2009

*Figure 2. First Iteration of the Human Needs Map (Deborah Heifetz, 2009).*

Field research soon revealed that this model was insufficient. I revised the diagram to include six points, adding identity and culture, which are contended issues in Israel. The need for Identity reflects the struggle for culture, cultural

values, and historical narratives—for meaning-making. That is why, in the revised model, I bundled the need for identity with Galtung’s and Sites’s needs for meaning. And as my students’ fieldwork in Haifa also surfaced the struggle over equal voice and resources as a core theme, I added Max-Neef’s need for freedom as a sixth need.

#### NEEDS MAPPING: 6 INTERRELATED ESSENTIAL HUMAN NEEDS

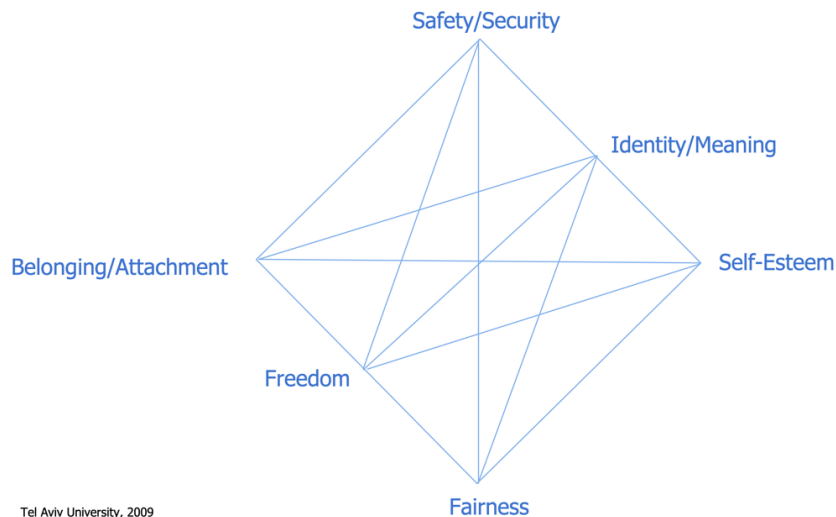


Figure 3. Second Iteration of the Human Needs Map (Deborah Heifetz, 2012).

### Physical Aliveness, Repositioning the Needs, and Creating the Hungers

The next set of insights arose in 2014–2018 while I was developing and leading a series of Embodied Leadership Training (ELT) workshops with movement expert Judy Gantz. The workshops drew on the body as a resource; from this, I created a mental framework to include physical aliveness as a human need, a need I had sensed earlier when co-teaching a course on gender and terrorism in 2005 at the Institute for Counter-Terrorism in Herzliya, Israel. At that time, I had been struck that the role of sexual desire in suicide terrorism—the embodied pleasurable experience awaiting “martyrs” in paradise (Berko, 2009)—was in principle no different from its role in the common practice of raping women since the beginning of warfare (Alison, 2007). Our embodiment as sensual and sexual beings driven by pleasure and avoidance of pain is a motivation that should be included in any discussion about human needs and conflict. Thus I included physical aliveness as a central driving force among all human needs and initially placed it in the middle of the Human Needs Map.

Simultaneously, influenced by nonacademic models such as the Jungian-inspired shadow work, I grouped needs into energetic archetypal qualities that I named “hungers.” In the process, I integrated a central concept from macro-theories of conflict—i.e., the use and exercise of power in its many forms, including group competition, control, and access to resources (Robbins &

Leibowitz, 2021). Thus power is included as a hunger within the model that includes the need for fairness.

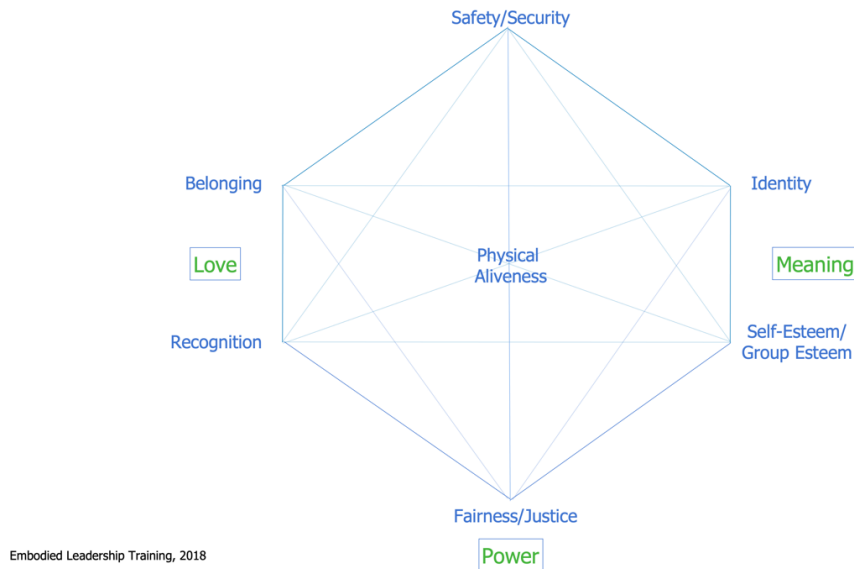


Figure 4. Third Iteration of the Human Needs Map (Deborah Heifetz, 2017).

### Fairness, Autonomy, and the Four Hungers

Exposing the model to numerous people of varied backgrounds elicited consistent responses regarding the position of safety/security in the model. Aligning the map visually with Maslow's hierarchy helped people better understand the model. Further, I chose to focus on fairness over justice because the terms tend to elicit different reactions. For example, when "fairness" was used during a Track II negotiation, the conversation opened for subjective perspectives and feelings such as: "I feel angry and unfairly treated." Communicating with ideas of fairness in mind can lead to constructive, revealing, and "feelingful" inquiries that are conducive to naming the repair to the harm done, a core topic for mediation and restorative justice (Zehr, 2015) in contrast to legal punishment and retribution.

I then combined fairness with autonomy to form a needs pair for hunger *power*, integrating the common strains between autonomy and belonging on which peace scholar and negotiator Dan Shapiro (2017) had elaborated. Drawing from training in trauma healing, I recognized that physical aliveness and safety create a needs pair for *survival*, and thus the model took its present form—a circular matrix consisting of four hungers and eight needs grouped into four needs pairs (see Figure 5) and positioned around the circle in a very specific way:

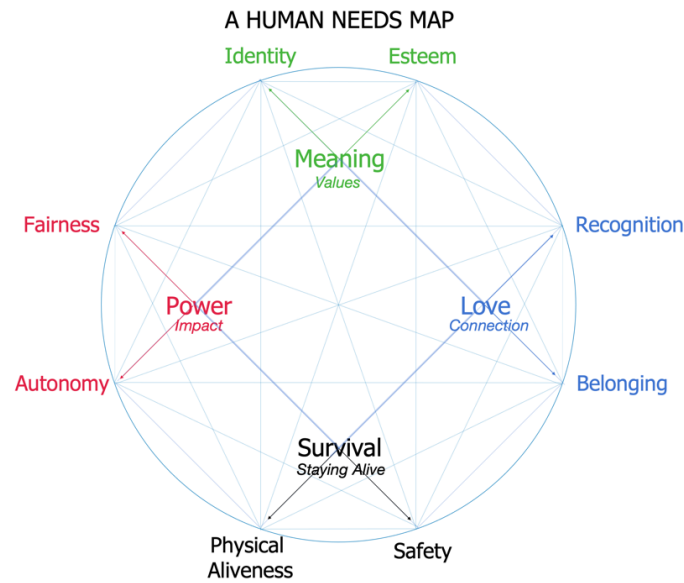


Figure 5. Fourth Iteration of the Human Needs Map (Deborah Heifetz, 2019).

## Part 2. The Hungers and Their Associated Needs Pairs

This section briefly describes the four hungers and their associated needs pairs using the following working definitions of needs and hungers:

1. Needs: Needs are human requirements that call for a response. I draw from Masini’s definition of needs where “Needs can be understood abstractly to refer to those human requirements calling for a response that makes human survival and development possible in a given society” (Masini, 1980, p. 227, as cited in Sites, 1990, p. 10).
2. Hungers: A hunger is “an inner drive to attain a certain quality, a certain state”<sup>5</sup> of being with sensate qualities that the human being strives to feel and experience and where one finds unique variations of pleasurable sensations.

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<sup>5</sup> Jerome Kagan, personal communication. Professor Kagan helped formulate the definition of the *hungers* during a discussion of the Human Needs Map in 2019.

## The Hunger for SURVIVAL: Staying Alive

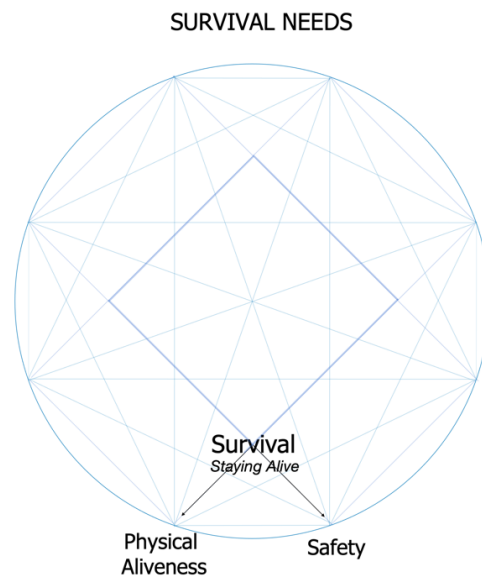


Figure 6. *The Hunger for Survival with the Needs Pair* (Deborah Heifetz, 2019).

The *hunger for survival* is the drive to stay alive as an individual and as a tribe (i.e., one's group or community) by seeking pleasure and avoiding harm. Survival involves actions and reactions such as searching for opportunities or guarding against or retreating from dangers in the environment. The survival needs are *physical aliveness* and *safety*. Humans expand, release, and open toward sensual, emotional, and intellectual delight, and contract, tighten, and close when facing or even anticipating pain. These foundations of our internal and external tracking response, which we are made aware of by focusing on the "felt sense" (Gendlin, 1998) for enjoyable and uncomfortable feelings, are grounded in the hedonic tones of pleasure and pain (Fogel, 2009, p. 39). The two needs permeate all other needs through the ongoing expansive drive for growth and gratification restrained by the protective responses from perceived harm and unbearable pain.

## The Hunger for LOVE: Feeling Cared For and Cared About

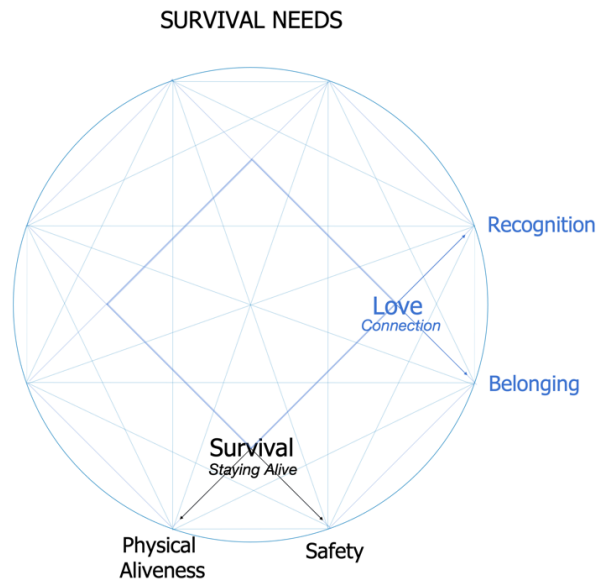


Figure 7. Including the Hunger for Love with Its Needs Pair (Deborah Heifetz, 2019).

*The hunger for love* is the drive for the warm feeling, tender touch, secure embrace, and vulnerable trust—an experience captured in German term *Geborgenheit*—achieved through caring relationships and personal connection. For human beings, safety is inseparable from social engagement. Over the past decades, neuroscience has confirmed that we are wired to find security through human connection (Porgas, 2001; Siegel, 1999). The love needs are *belonging* and *recognition*. *Belonging* mobilizes us to find care and stability through relationships and group inclusion. *Recognition* provides the calming ease and reassurance we feel when we are seen and understood by others, when we sense that our needs and feelings matter. “Active listening” or telling one’s story during conferencing sessions for restorative justice (Zehr, 2015) can generate feelings that one’s “story” matters, and that being understood is a valuable use of time spent, healing the wounded need of the victim.

## The Hunger for POWER: My Ability to Exert Impact

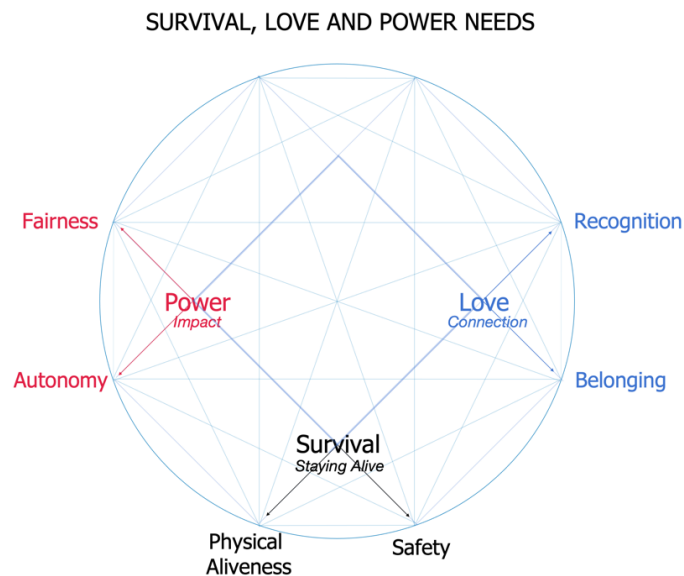


Figure 8. Including the Hunger for Power with Its Needs Pair (Deborah Heifetz, 2019).

*The hunger for power* is the mobilizing force to impact other people and direct our own lives. *Power* is an expressive energetic potency to exercise agency. It channels our determination to both express our will and ensure access to resources. Our drive for *power* mobilizes our needs for *autonomy* and *fairness* and gives us the inner capacity to set boundaries and stand up for ourselves when we perceive unfair treatment. There can be immense hedonic pleasure in exerting our will; the shadow side is the seductive pleasure of overpowering others (Heifetz & Linsky, 2017) or even killing others if the urge is not held in check.

## The Hunger for MEANING: My Values and Value

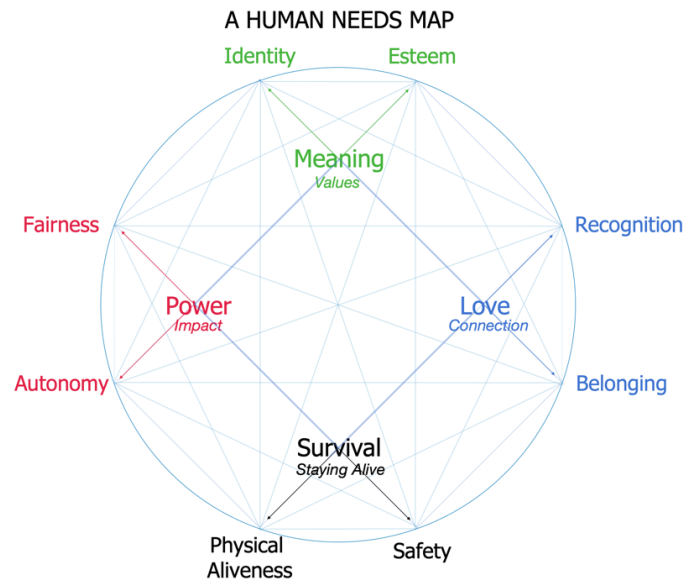


Figure 9. Including the Hunger for Meaning with Its Needs Pair (Deborah Heifetz, 2019).

*The hunger for meaning* directs our passion to make sense of ourselves and the world. It mobilizes us to find direction in our lives, to know what we stand for, and clarify how to live in integrity with our values through the innate capacity for identification—i.e., internalizing our group’s value system (see, e.g., Brown, 2000, on Social Identity Theory). . The needs for *esteem* and *identity* satisfy our *hunger for meaning*. Our *identity* orients our path toward *the “true way.”* Our beliefs, ideals, and morals define who we are and who we are not. The *esteem* need is the motivating force to build and preserve our personal self-worth and value, gaining both self-respect and the respect of others. Our esteem need often aligns with our social position within a community and family, thus making us vulnerable to insult and risk, with practical and potentially destructive consequences.

## Part 3. The Iterative Journey Continues to Uncover the Map's Internal Logic

To explain the Human Needs Map as a structured system of human needs and emotions, I found

an invaluable resource in my spouse, Frieder Krups.<sup>6</sup> Our synergy unearthed a compelling internal logic for how and why these needs interact with each other, and how specific needs and emotions are connected.

### The Axes: Tensions Between the Hungers

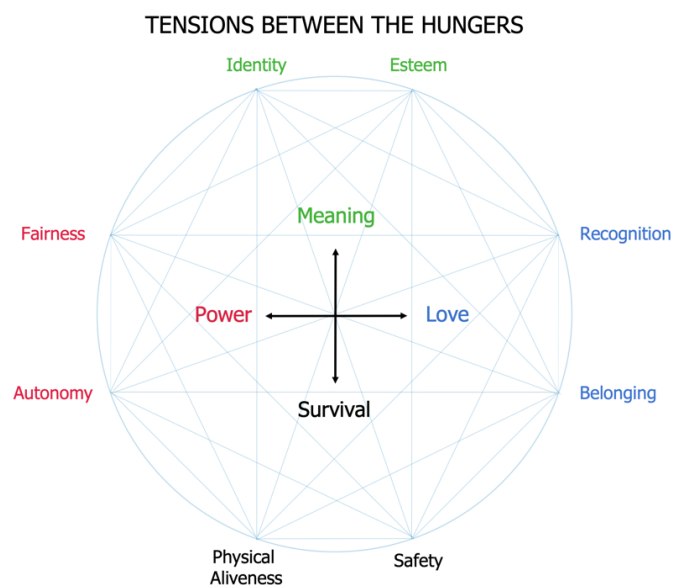


Figure 10. Tension Patterns and the Four Hungers (Deborah Heifetz, 2020).

The model intentionally positions the hunger categories—*love & power* and *survival & meaning*—along horizontal and vertical axes, respectively, to represent the common stresses found in everyday life. One often sees the struggle between *love* and *power* in troubled relationships when couples negotiate between standing up for themselves and their desire for intimacy and connection. On a societal level, countries that aspire to membership in a regional group such as the European Union (EU) must find ways to compromise when

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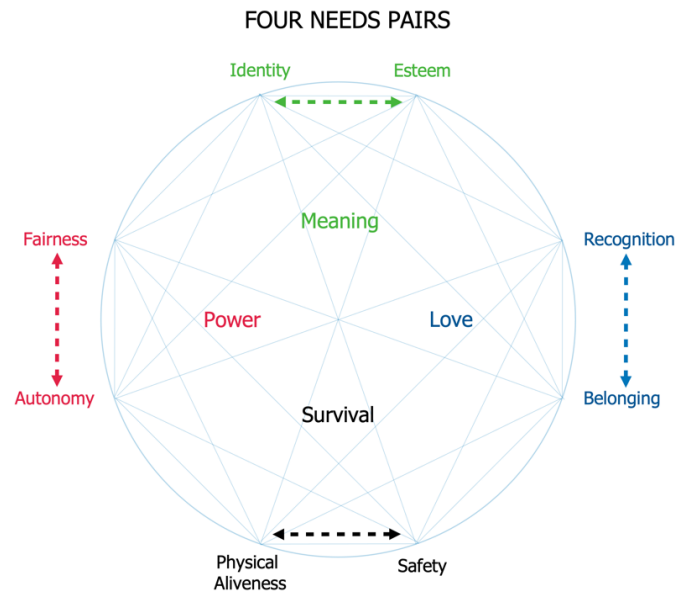
<sup>6</sup> Frieder Krups has been my creative thinking partner in developing tools relevant for coaching that deepen self-awareness. He holds an engineering degree from MIT and an MBA from Stanford. He is a former business leader, has been active in leadership coaching and group facilitation for more than 20 years, and is extensively trained in a broad range of inner work methodologies.

their own needs and the needs of their potential EU partners do not perfectly align.

Similar strains also become apparent on the vertical axis between *survival* and *meaning*. Abandoning one's values in order to survive or to save a business is consistent with Maslow's hierarchy; however, sacrificing one's own life or the lives of loved ones for an idea or belief subverts the priority to *survive*. On a societal level, governments have gone to war to reclaim their lost honor. Having been humiliated by the Allies after the First World War, Hitler mobilized Germany to regain Germany's national honor (*esteem*).

### Tribal and Individual Needs

Another layer of discernment is the distinction between needs that strengthen the group—i.e., one's "tribe"—and needs that reinforce the individual in the tribe. Borrowing from Shapiro (2010), I use "tribe" to refer to a "socially and psychologically constructed [group] . . . whose members see themselves as (a) like-kindred, (b) kinlike in their relational connection, and (c) emotionally invested in their group's enhancement" (p. 638). Being part of a strong tribe is crucial to human survival; thus there are needs that bolster the coherence of the tribe, ensure reciprocity between tribe members, and strengthen the tribe's identity. In contrast, other needs strengthen an individual's personal sense of vitality and empowerment, their feelings of connection, and their position or status as a tribe member. The natural tensions between "tribal" needs and "individual" needs creates a dynamic system in flux that is striving and adapting to ensure the survival of both the individual and the tribe.



## The Tensions Between Needs Pairs

### *Belonging (Tribal Need) and Recognition (Individual Need)*

Our need for *belonging* ensures that we seek relationships and membership through connection and inclusion. At the same time, our individual well-being is safeguarded when our personal yearnings and demands are acknowledged and others consider our needs through the underlying quality of connection and care (*recognition*). We feel that we belong when our individual needs, emotions, viewpoints, and concerns are respected by the tribe, and that we are seen and appreciated for who we are as individuals.

### *Autonomy (Individual Need) and Fairness (Tribal Need)*

The need for *autonomy* compels us to express our will, our voice, and point of view to others, to stand up alone and direct our own lives. The need for *fairness* generates the energy to react when someone attempts to take advantage of us. Rules of *fairness* provide moderating pressure on self-interest while structured agreements formalize reciprocity (Fehr & Gächter, 2000).

### *Esteem (Individual Need) and Identity (Tribal Need)*

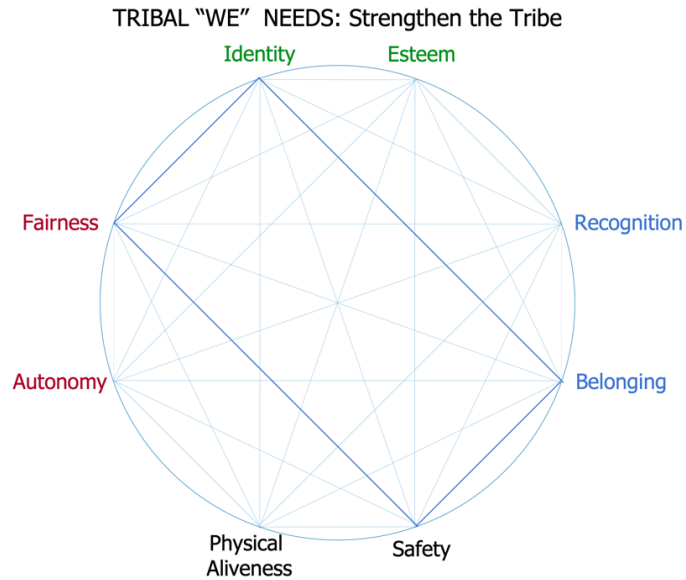
Our need for *esteem* drives us to feel and be valued and to attain a position of stature within our group. What constitutes value, though, and what values we need to adhere to, is defined by our *identity*. It is our need for *identity* that compels us to adhere to the values and rules of our group. Were we to violate the group's values, we would lose status and respect.

### *Physical Aliveness (Individual Need) and Safety (Tribal Need)*

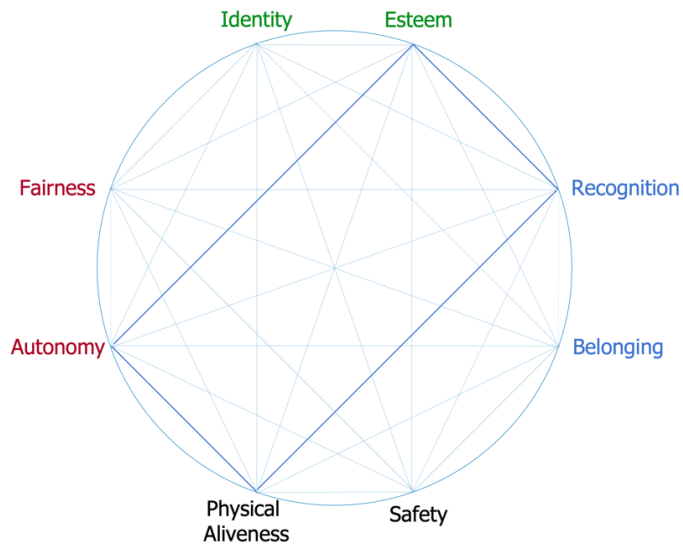
The need for physical *aliveness* is an internal expansive force that pushes us toward pleasure and away from unpleasantness in all areas of life. The need is attenuated by the restraining need for *safety*, the need to be alert and ready to react to external signs of danger that might threaten our lives or create unbearable pain or harm.

## The Diagonals: Representing Synergies Within Individual and Tribal Needs

An elegant internal geometry emerges when the individual needs and the tribal needs are combined. In lieu of tensions, their interactions create synergies.



INDIVIDUAL "I" NEEDS: Strengthen the Individual in the Tribe



*Figures 12 and 13. The Diagonals Group the Tribal and Individual Needs into Patterns of Synergy (Deborah Heifetz, 2020).*

### *Tribal Needs*

Tribal needs strengthen the coherence and robustness of the group. A group's sociocultural identity is based on beliefs, values, rules, rituals, and practices that set the parameters for a shared inclusive experience of belonging. A strong sense of belonging bolsters the cohesion of the group, and as more people join, safety increases in an inclusive, cohesive group. Furthermore, a group's values dictate the rules of fairness that clarify agreements to secure reciprocity; those agreements contribute to the tribe's legitimacy and its members' trust in it. Rules of fairness create an atmosphere of security, which in turn creates a desire to be part of the group.

### *Individual Needs*

Individual needs strengthen the individual in the tribe. Physical aliveness is the source of vitality, mobilizing our inner will to assert our autonomy, to stand up for ourselves, and to exercise personal agency. When we can direct these internal energies with the force of determination, we become more capable of responding to inner and external resistance, which empowers us to excel and increase our worth and stature in areas we value and that are valued by our tribe. We gain both self-esteem and respect from those in our tribe. And when we feel self-respect and earn social respect, our voice is more likely to be heard; when that happens, we feel seen, appreciated, and considered (recognition).

### Hungers and Emotions: Foundational Emergence of the Self

The claim that core emotions are aligned with human needs is consistent with arguments made by Marshall Rosenberg as well as many scholars of Human Needs Theory. As noted by Sites: "Because needs cannot be directly observed, all we can do is to conceptualize a need as existing when certain emotions are observed or reported since, as indicated, needs are tied to emotions" (1990, p. 10). While there is a robust literature on emotions and conflict (Halperin & Schwartz, 2010) and emotions in groups, whereby emotions are felt by the collective (Barbalet, 1998; De Rivera et al., 2007), no framework specifically and explicitly integrates the relationship between emotions and needs as a total system. Drawing a direct connection between hungers and core emotions may help fill this gap. Studying very young children offers a window of opportunity for insights before acculturation has socialized their expression of emotions (Lutz & White, 1986).

Emotions are recognized as universally human expressive experiences (Darwin, 2009; Ekman et al., 1969). Children communicate *fear*, *sadness*, *anger*, and *shame* in their raw uncivilized or untrained expression—four primary human emotions that are observable cross-culturally and in people who are blind (Barkow et al., 1973; Eibl-Eibesfeldt, 1973). Over the first four years of life these

emotions become visible; they are exhibited in the face and also expressed in body movements (Melzer et al., 2019).

I define emotions as human energy—“energies in motion”—that mobilizes the body into action and communicates both to ourselves and to others when something is right and when something is wrong (one’s needs are unmet). Emotions create an expressive energy that affects the people around us and compels others to react. Emotions can be described by their internally felt “energy” intensity and, like *physical aliveness*, their hedonic tone of pleasure and pain (Brackett, 2019). Yet, if emotions express the status of our needs and communicate information to the people around us, is there a direct connection between specific emotions and specific needs?

My initial inspiration to investigate whether a direct connection exists came from shadow work, a personal development model based on principles of Jungian psychology.<sup>7</sup> The shadow work method works with four Jungian archetypes, each of which can be accessed through a specific emotion: magician (fear); lover (sadness); warrior (anger); and sovereign (shame/joy). Because these archetypes seem to be consistent with the four *hungers* from the Human Needs Map, it sparked the idea that if the archetypes are aligned to emotions, perhaps the *hungers* are as well. Might these four core emotions serve both to create an awareness that a specific *hunger* is at risk and provide the appropriate response (McLaren, 2010) as “energies in motion” to help achieve that *hunger’s* unique qualitative state.

- Fear mobilizes an alert awareness, making the body ready to meet impending dangers to a person’s *survival*.
- Sadness softens personal boundaries, attracting and drawing other people’s attention to care. It is a call for *love*.
- Anger fuels inner- and outward-directed energy, connecting us to our forceful determination and *power*, enabling us to stand up for ourselves and set clear boundaries.
- Shame is an inward-directed energy that invites humbling self-reflection about whether our actions conform to our values—whether our actions have *meaning*.

Although the arguments for such direct connections seem compelling, emotions are not static. They are highly dependent on culture, disposition, and learning. I found the link with early childhood development to be persuasive, which could more solidly ground these claims.

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<sup>7</sup> See also <https://shadowwork.com/>.

### *Hungers and Child Development*

Theories of psychosocial development describe different stages of child development (see the work of Erik Erikson, John Bowlby, Jerome Kagan, Lev Vygotsky, Jean Piaget, and Robert Kegan). As a child grows from full dependency on its caregiver to successively greater levels of independence over the first four years of life, different sets of needs seem to emerge sequentially. These stages correspond with the capacity for the child to verbally and nonverbally express core emotions.

These theoretical arguments were consistent with my own experience as an actively engaged mother and avid student of child development raising three sons. When I consulted with the renowned child development scholar Jerome Kagan and walked him through my conceptual model, he confirmed that, indeed, the emergence of the *hungers* is consistent with the developmental stages of early childhood development presented by Freud (1905/1953) and Erikson (1963).

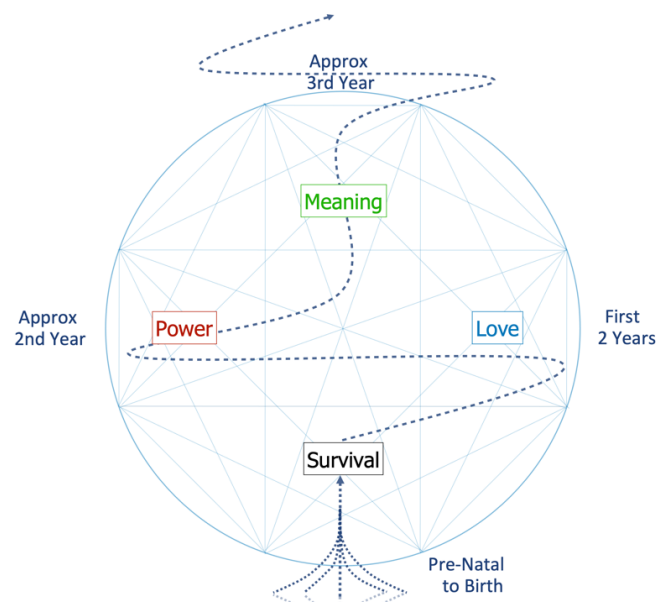


Figure 14. *The Hungers Emerge in a Developmental Sequence Through the Life Force* (Deborah Heifetz, 2020).

### *Aligning Emotions and Hungers*

The four hungers and their related emotions seem to emerge as milestones in early childhood because emotions express important building blocks in awareness and individuation (Izard, 2009). They help guide our perceptions and motivate us to learn and discern what and whom to trust, where to place our

attention, and what conclusions to reach about life, other people, and ourselves. The development of each emotion also goes through stages of maturation.<sup>8</sup>

The hypothesis stated here is that a synergistic connection exists between specific hungers and emotions and that the maturation of conscious awareness and individuation is consistent with specific hungers “coming online” in child development and with the ability for children to clearly express the corresponding core emotion verbally and nonverbally.

### *Fear and the Hunger for Survival*

Fear is an emotion already present at birth and observable in the Moro reflex, which induces heightened visual and auditory scanning to notice sensory cues of potential harm. Fear is part of the defense response—i.e., the physical reaction to perceived danger that mobilizes the body to fight, flight, freeze, or collapse as it seeks safety through attack or protection. Fear triggers alertness in the eyes and ears to seek out external danger, and readiness in our extremities to defend against or run away from danger. Our body prepares physically to engage our autonomic nervous system once the threat is located. During early development, fear mobilizes the infant to locate and reach out for arms that will hold and protect it.

### *Sadness and the Hunger for Love*

A newborn infant is fully dependent on a caretaker for survival. When a baby’s physical discomfort or pain is not assuaged, the baby cries. During the first year of life, the infant begins to shed tears, consistent with its growing awareness of separation. Crying is a call for love, a call to be attuned to with a rhythmicity of connection and understanding. The emotion of sadness softly invites other people to notice and care. Sadness softens boundaries, making the sad person vulnerable and receptive.

### *Anger and the Hunger for Power*

By the age of approximately two and a half, the child enters the “terrible twos”—the developmental stage that captivates our blossoming urges to experience power. The two-to-three-year-old is aware of being separate and capable of exerting their own will. Awareness of separateness fuels the child’s energy to

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<sup>8</sup> The infant’s cry can have numerous meanings, including immature expressions of sadness, anger, frustration, and pain. Even emotions that express moral conscience can be seen in babies as young as 17 months old (Barrett, 2005). However, the argument being made is that core emotions identify, and support four early stages as presented here.

experiment. The child watches and tests how people respond to their behavior, discovering their own capacity to create cause and effect. We strengthen ourselves by doing things alone, discovering the boundaries of our will and its impact on relationships. When deprived of power, we get mad. During this developmental phase, we begin to master the word “no” and test whether our “no” risks losing significant connections.

### *Shame and the Hunger for Meaning*

By roughly age three and a half, the child can clearly express shame and guilt. Decades of research have revealed that preschoolers reliably express self-conscious emotions (Thompson & Newton, 2010); even toddlers already show a range of “guilt-like” and “shame-like” behaviors (Barrett, 2005; Lagattuta & Thompson, 2007). Feeling shame ensures that the family’s and community’s values are kept safe, and that we behave within the bounds of these norms. Shame dares us to self-reflect in humility, to ask ourselves what we value and what we do not (Brown, 2012).

### *Happiness, Ease, and Emotions of Well-Being*

Happiness is the core pleasurable emotion that arises when we feel secure (survival), loved (love), empowered (power), and valued (meaning).

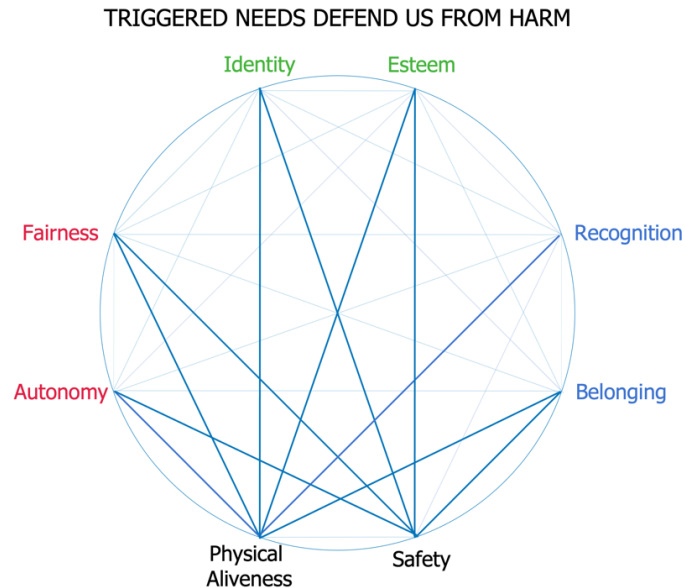
In summary, the detour into human emotions reveals that:

1. The relationship between emotions and needs supports human survival because emotions can support the satisfaction of human needs.
2. Hungers arise developmentally with core human emotions that serve the specific developmental stage.
3. There exists a fundamental relationship between human emotions and needs before culture and memory create high variability in the expression, perception, and alignment of needs and emotions.

## Part 4. The Special Role of the Survival Needs: Safety and Physical Aliveness

The survival needs of *physical aliveness* and *safety* play a special role in the *protective body-mind* because they permeate all other needs. In the case of our need for *safety*, when our senses signal a perceived threat to any of our needs, such as feeling criticized (*identity*), demeaned (*esteem*), misunderstood (*recognition*), unfairly treated (*fairness*), forced (*autonomy*), excluded (*belonging*), or unsafe (*safety*), we can be triggered to act in self-defense. In those moments, our physical aliveness is activated to constrict, collapse, freeze, or explode in an exertion of force to protect ourselves as if our survival is at stake. Human

resources researchers Patterson and colleagues (2011), studied thousands of organizations and found that when people are triggered, they tend to exhibit what they call “violence or silence.”



*Figure 15. Defending all Needs Through Triggered Physical Aliveness and Safety (Deborah Heifetz, 2020).*

The challenge in reactive situations is to regulate the initial defense response to anger (fight) or fear (flight/freeze). When the mind is overtaken by emotions and physical reactions, our ability to think clearly or with curiosity is compromised. For example, when feeling criticized, “people may have fears that self-esteem will be damaged . . . or people may become angry when self-esteem is threatened” (Sites, 1990, p. 22) rather than curious about the cause or legitimacy of the criticism.

Self-regulation restores the capacity to “think with feeling” by engaging embodied self-awareness (Fogel, 2013), to notice and name the triggered moment as such, to pause and to follow that with “breathing in and out” (Hanh, 1987). It restores a state of *presence*, which mediators can also bring into the room (Bowling & Hoffman, 2000). Neuroscience confirms that modulating the bodily symptoms of the overwhelm can regulate the hijacked brain (Siegel, 1999; van der Kolk, 2014) and restore our minds and bodies to relaxed alertness (Eddy, 2016). With access to our conscious mind we are better able to evaluate a situation, find the needs at risk, and allow the effective emotional energies to emerge.

Like the need for safety, the need for physical aliveness permeates all other needs. We feel pleasurable sensations whenever any of our needs are especially satisfied. Different qualities of “feeling good” arise when we win a match (power/esteem) or feel fully understood (recognition). In contrast, varying

unpleasant sensations stir when our projects do not move (esteem) or when intimacy is missing (belonging).

Regularly witnessing our body's internal landscapes builds our capacity to recognize variations of pleasure and discomfort, enabling greater access to our curiosity and integrated mind. Without self-regulation and self-reflection, our emotional reactions can easily be destructive. Getting angry at our spouse for arriving home late will not bring us the intimacy we seek; expressing our sadness, our loneliness, and our wish for closeness might.

## Part 5. Adapting to Our Environment Through Beliefs

Infants and small children depend on their protective needs system until their conscious minds mature. According to the principle of adaptation, as we grow and encounter resistance, disconnection, or inadequate responses to our requests (despite our emotional appeals, nonverbal cues, or verbal communication), the protective body-mind "concludes" that our survival is at stake. Through the adaptive process, the child integrates its experiences and forms beliefs in reaction to the direct and indirect messages from its environment. These beliefs cause the threatened needs to feel especially important. For example: "If I don't succeed, then they won't love me" is a belief that would mobilize me to strive harder to ensure that I am loved. We then react sensitively to situations where that need might feel at risk, such as by becoming anxious before an exam: "If I fail, I will lose their love." If we make several failed attempts and the pain gets too uncomfortable, another mechanism may take over: the protective body-mind, which adapts by creating beliefs that numb the need and make us insensitive to whether the need is fulfilled. The fear of failure might adapt and become: "No matter how hard I try, I won't succeed, so I won't even try to succeed. I don't need their love."

We may skew the way we take in and respond to reality because our protective body-mind remembers and either translates a situation as overly threatening or does not sufficiently recognize the real danger of a situation. As a result, we may either overreact or neglect to react.

A person with a need sensitivity tends to be more easily triggered by a sign that a need is at risk. For example, a person with a sensitive esteem need may be inclined to react defensively when their opinion is challenged or criticized, especially in public. Likewise, a person with a numbed need for safety who believes "there's nothing to be afraid of" might underestimate the danger of a situation and act recklessly.

Individuals who have numbed their need for safety may have difficulty appreciating the fear of someone who has experienced a personal trauma or who is sensitive around risk and physical danger. This raises another challenge of having over- or undersensitive needs: the tendency to judge those who are especially sensitive to a need that we have numbed in ourselves.

In summary, the values, beliefs, and automatic reaction patterns of our protective body-mind create sensitivities around certain needs and numb others. They provide us with important skills for tackling the challenges of childhood and youth, skills that may be the key to success as adults. At the same time, the resulting imbalances in sensitivities often become the reason for our challenges.

## Part 6. The Need for Identity and Its Role in Creating and Perpetuating Conflict

The goal of this section is twofold: to show the important role that the need for identity plays in our defensive reactions and the function it serves in shaping the emotions and narratives that perpetuate conflict from generation to generation.

Identity is one of eight needs in a dynamic needs system and is recognized here not as a “thing” or a static entity but as a socially constructed experience of the self that comprises values, beliefs, practices, language, rituals, and all products of culture (Handelman & Lindquist, 2004; Mead, 2001; Turner, 1966). Our Identity gives meaning to our lives. It clarifies where we belong, how we should behave, and what roles we should play. These may be openly defined or subtly embedded in religious beliefs, rituals, or cultural norms that classify certain things, thoughts, and acts as clean or dirty (Douglas, 2002), from the food we eat to the clothes we wear, the sexual behavior we enjoy, and the ways we celebrate life and commemorate death. In this way, our values not only affect the *identity* need but also influence the relative importance we give to all of our needs and the acceptable ways of satisfying them. Beliefs such as “you have to work hard,” “education is everything,” and “you should never show weakness” are part of our identity, moral standards, and culture. They are often passed down from one generation to the next.

Changing such values or beliefs can be extremely difficult. From the perspective of our *protective body-mind*, letting go of beliefs that once ensured our survival feels dangerous. They are the basis of our identity and determine how we make sense of the world and our place in it. When we shift our belief system, we lose the orientation that makes our beliefs resistant to change. Thus we tend to pass down our values and identities from generation to generation, including our sensitivities, traumatic memories, and stories that perpetuate conflict.

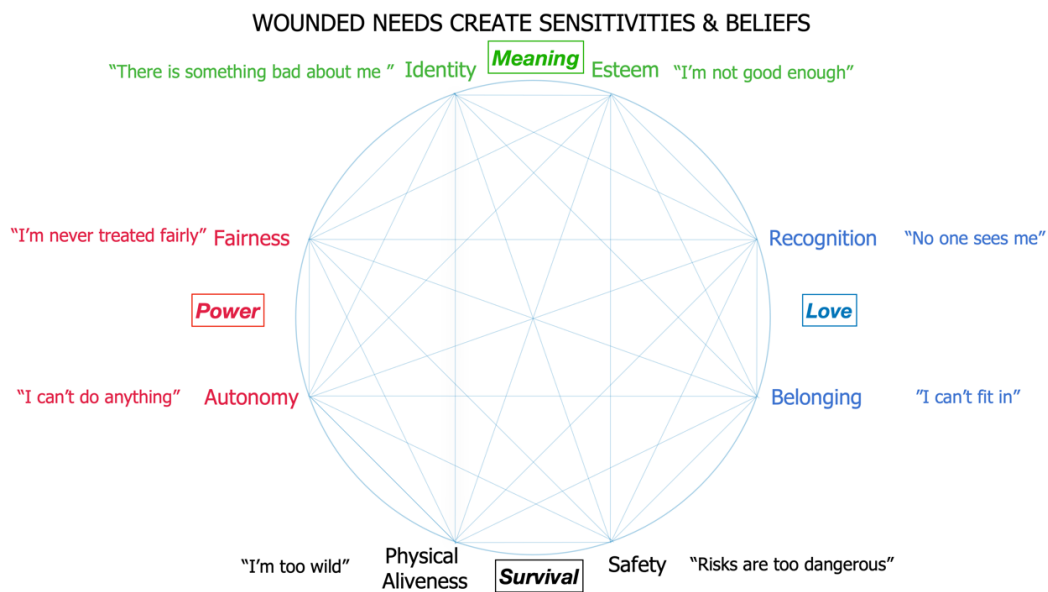


Figure 16. *Beliefs That Arise from the Pain of Unmet Needs* (Deborah Heifetz, 2023).

Recall the example I presented at the beginning of this article, of the Palestinian commander's perception that "Israelis think without feeling" during their peacebuilding encounter. What light can the Human Needs Map framework shed on that comment? How might insights into sensitivities and numbing needs provide a mental framework to describe the dynamics of the Israeli-Palestinian relationship during the Oslo period and be helpful for designing future peacebuilding?

I resist tackling this question in the midst of the present Hamas-Israeli war in Gaza because there is so much more complexity to the conflict than can be discussed here. It is possible, however, to examine the relative priority both sides assign to different needs based on their traumatic histories—histories in which they encountered inescapable danger to their needs and created narratives that made sense of their realities, which then became embedded in their respective identities. To illustrate this point, I draw from my experience in peace work.

The Jewish people have known slavery, diaspora, Inquisition, pogroms, Holocaust, expulsions, and racism spanning 2,000 years, compounded by the experience of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.<sup>9</sup> Beliefs such as "they are out to kill us" and "if I lower my guard, I will be attacked" existed among many Israeli soldiers I encountered during my research. As an army, their needs and role to ensure safety took priority; they aimed to control the situation through

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<sup>9</sup>These include the 1929 Hebron massacre; wars in 1947, 1956, 1967, 1973, 1982; Intifada 1; the Oslo Accords; Intifada 2, suicide terrorism; general terrorism fueled by the narrative that Israel has no right to exist as a foreign non-native colonial project, and more.

checkpoints, house raids, and various security-based measures, which continued during the Oslo period. Military control (*autonomy*) mobilized in service of survival compounded a sensitized need for safety. At the same time—stemming from an Israeli cultural rebellion by the early pioneers against European aristocracy—Israeli culture places a low value on formality that is perceived as a “false” etiquette (numbed *esteem*) (Griefat & Katriel, 1989). Politeness and saving face hold little value when measured against saving life. How could Israelis dare to be flexible with their security procedures if Palestinians are unpredictable, dangerous, and ultimately unwilling to accept Israel as a legitimate “native” state (Qleibo, 1992)?

Let us return to Nabil, the Palestinian officer, to whom the situation looked different. Peacebuilding involved shifting power dynamics to create a semblance of equivalence between Israeli and Palestinian security forces. Great value had been placed on equality (fairness), respect (*esteem*) and affirmation of Palestinian identity (Griefat & Katriel, 1989) among the peacekeeping soldiers. Nabil was puzzled by Israelis’ fear for their security (safety), given their superior military and economic power. To him, it made no sense to make a Palestinian elder stand by the fence waiting for an Israeli soldier to finish checking a car for hidden weapons or explosives. Treating an elder without concern for the humiliation it might cause was an unwise action because it ignored the social fabric and structures that reaffirm Palestinian identity, protect Palestinian dignity, and reinforce community stability for a village to transition into stability and independence (*autonomy*). If it is true, as historian Amit Varshizky (2023) writes of Palestinians in Gaza, that “ Hamas is in the heart,” then how would “thinking with feeling” suggest a third way?

Nabil seems to believe that it is in Israeli’s own security interest for Palestinian villages to have a strong leadership structure so that people can be held accountable, village elders can mediate their own conflicts, and the community leader can represent hope by remaining dignified in the eyes of their constituents. These are needs that constitute the hungers of power, survival, and meaning. He might argue that when Palestinians feel respected and live in dignity with autonomy over daily life, being mobilized to regain lost honor would be less likely.

Nabil saw the elder’s personal humiliation as rekindling collective humiliation, which for the Palestinians extends back to the Crusades, the defeat of the Moors, European colonialism, the Nakba, multiple defeats by Israel of Arab countries at war, and persistent suffering under post-1967 occupation. The history of a postcolonial wound—of being a conquered and disrespected “other”—is a trigger point (Bhabha, 1994; Fanon, 1963; Said, 1978). The felt humiliation from Jewish or Christian sovereignty over land deemed “Muslim” is a common refrain (Euben, 2015). Hamas leader Khaled Meshal counters the feeling with the intent to humiliate Israel in return, written on signs during the October—

November 2023 Free Palestine demonstrations: “Before Israel dies, it must be humiliated and degraded.”<sup>10</sup>

Taking Meshal’s comment further through the Human Needs Map may provide insight. Might it be that Meshal is calling for an equivalence of pain—revenge by equalizing the unfairness through humiliation and degradation? Feeling humiliated and publicly shamed sequences within the matrix of needs, igniting memories of the unfair use of power. In other words, destroying Israel and gaining autonomy would not be sufficient. By reclaiming the Palestinian land and humiliating and debasing Israelis in the process, they would achieve balance. The Palestinian experience of humiliation and of feeling unfairly treated has created rage. The question is, what are the available options to address Meshal’s anger and frustration and the support by others for his words?

In communities, mediation and restorative justice practices reveal the restorative impact of being seen (recognition) when accountability for harm done is acknowledged. One aspect represented in the Human Needs Map is to rebuild relationships through the *fairness-recognition* dynamic. When harm is inflicted (*fairness*), the victim’s pain must be seen (*recognition*), whether through legal justice or community-based practices, to bring about resolution. In the process the victimizer either is deemed legally accountable or claims accountability. Herein lies the difficult question and the opportunity to transition into a co-creative future. Namely, in the Israeli-Palestinian dyad, both sides feel themselves victims of the other. In this case, resolving their respective recognition needs through mutual accountability is a barrier.

“Thinking with feeling” requires taking in the other side’s pain. It involves acknowledging harm inflicted by each side on the other—reconstructing narratives in order to name the unnameable and build upon common values. It involves making the ‘Other’ more like ‘us’ to avoid the common conclusion that those who are not ‘us’, are not like ‘us’ and therefore endanger us (Ahmed, 2014).

Identifying the shared values and core sensitivities at play, and thereby gaining a deeper understanding of what motivates people to react, may help support this process.

It is neither obvious nor easy. Having compassion for the other side’s sensitivity demands taking risks. Engaging directly with the sensitivity requires making peace with the past by becoming accountable, by facing oneself as both victim and victimizer. It requires slowly and stepwise taking more risks to

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<sup>10</sup> This excerpt is from an address given in Damascus and aired on Al-Jazeera TV on February 3, 2006 (<https://www.memri.org/tv/hamas-leader-khaled-mashal-damascus-mosque-nation-islam-will-sit-throne-world-and-west-will-be>).

counter one's sensitivity and false perceptions of safety and truth—the truths of our beliefs, beliefs upon which our identities are built. We may locate inspiration from the Parents Circle—Families Forum (PCFF) where bereaved Israeli and Palestinian families gather to share their grief, and find relief, determination, and a common narrative experience for peace.<sup>11</sup> Healing—peacebuilding from the inside out to restore and rebuild relationships—involves both courage and compassion to break out of the loop of the cycle of violence. Unless we challenge our beliefs, we risk losing our values in order to survive, and we risk staying alive with values not worth living for.

## Summary

The conceptual framework presented here is designed to assist people in navigating conflicts with the help of a map to guide a “feelingful” understanding of human motivation. The logic of the model builds on the premise that, to ensure survival, humans have a protective body-mind that is equipped with a dynamic needs system. Because as humans we are dependent on our relationships to survive, the system is designed in such a way that “Individual” and “tribal” needs are ingeniously resilient and balanced. Emotions play a crucial role in maintaining this balance through their energetic and expressive qualities, mobilizing us into action and eliciting responses from others. Human needs are emotional, and our emotions respond to our needs.

To adapt to the specific environment we are born into, the protective body-mind adjusts the expression of emotions and the relative importance of needs. This adjustment helps us survive and build our strengths but often becomes the cause of challenges and conflict in adult life. The Human Needs Map is a tool for unraveling this pattern. It supports bringing awareness and compassion for the wounds and beliefs both to ourselves and others, opening the possibility for both healing and reconstructing our stories and the defensive habits that fuel cycles of violence. It provides a language for understanding the triggers that tell us something is wrong—triggers that may not only wake us up but also risk hijacking our minds, preventing us from fully thinking about or feeling complexity.

The model has implications for a variety of lines of work, from individual coaching to conflict resolution and peacemaking. It can be used to design organizational cultures and businesses where people feel included, safe, empowered, and purposeful, and to bring attention to cultural narratives that perpetuate conflict and suffering. It can also support systems for human security in service of relationships and well-being. That is the model's benefit and what makes it an apt awareness-based tool for systemic change.

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<sup>11</sup> <https://www.theparentscircle.org/en/pcff-home-page-en/>.

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