



Understanding Core Human Needs

Anderson, D. and Ackerman Anderson, L. (2010: 140–141) present helpful guidance in understanding core human needs. They refer to six primary care needs, all of which can be triggered by events in transformational change. They suggest that we all have six needs to some degree, but one or two are always dominant and drive the majority of our behaviour – these one or two are where we live internally most often. They represent as these authors outline our ‘hot buttons’, our most sensitive issues as human beings. When our core needs are threatened, we react to protect ourselves. When we are emotionally hurt or upset – or resistant – it is usually because one or more of these core needs have been triggered by events around us.

Core human needs

- ▶ Security
- ▶ Inclusion and connection
- ▶ Power
- ▶ Order and control
- ▶ Competence
- ▶ Justice and fairness

Definition of core needs

- ▶ **Security** – needing to feel secure and physically and emotionally safe, cared about.
‘I need to know things will be okay. I need to feel physically and emotionally safe, without threat.’
- ▶ **Inclusion and connection** – needing to be invited to join the group, be part of what is happening and in relationship with others.
‘Will I be on the team that is doing this work or overlooked as a result of this change? Will I keep my relationships intact? Will I be selected?’

- ▶ **Power** – needing to have direct influence over the outcome and process of the change, needing things to go as I want, needing to maintain power or influence as a result of the change.
‘Will I lose power through this change, or will I gain it? Will I be able to influence things to go the way I want?’
- ▶ **Order and control** – needing to know what is going on at all times and have things be predictable, structured and planned; needing logic and order in the change, with minimal surprises.
‘I need a clear plan so we know what is happening and can minimise disruptions and chaos.’
- ▶ **Competence** – needing to feel capable, effective, skilled and right.
‘Will I be able to perform and succeed in the new organisation and be seen as competent and ‘in the know’? Will I get adequate training before I am held accountable to produce?’
- ▶ **Justice and fairness** – needing things to be fair and equitable.
‘Will the decisions of this change and their implications for me be just and equitable? Will politics or nepotism rule over fairness and equality?’

These six core needs (First Tier) are ego needs – the ego’s way of feeling okay and that all is good. In transformation, when our ego perceives that these core needs will be met, then it judges the change as good. When our ego perceives they are at risk, then we believe that we have a problem.

Please refer to the authors noted below for further helpful guidance on this topic.

*Adapted from: Anderson, D. and Ackerman Anderson, L. (2010: 140–141)
People’s Needs Defining Change – Health Services Change Guide*