Noticing needs

A core part of creative and connected conversations is noticing when something is shifting in us - whether our needs and those of others are being met. By staying aware of our needs, we open up our options.

NEEDS

Psychological and Relational Needs

- Acceptance
- Acknowledgement
- Agency
- Appreciation
- Authenticity
- Autonomy
- Belonging
- Calm
- Choice
- Clarity
- Community
- Communication
- Competence
- Connection
- Consistency
- Contribution
- Control
- Creativity
- Dignity
- Empathy
- Fairness
- Freedom
- Fun / play
- Growth
- Harmony
- Hope
- Identity
- Inclusion
- Influence
- Integrity
- Joy
- Learning
- Love
- Meaning
- Novelty
- Order
- Peace
- Predictability
- Privacy
- Purpose
- Recognition
- Respect
- Safety
- Self-expression
- Stability
- Status
- Support
- Trust
- Understanding
- Validation

Physical and Sensory Needs

- Air
- Comfort
- Food
- Hydration
- Movement
- Physical safety
- Quiet
- Reduced sensory load
- Recovery time
- Rest
- Shelter
- Sleep
- Solitude
- Stimulation
- Temperature regulation
- Touch
- Warmth

NOTICE

How do we notice our needs? Emotions are one form of information. They are not the only form.

People notice changing needs in many different ways: through emotions, body sensations, sensory experiences, cognitive shifts, behaviour, energy levels, relational dynamics, routines, patterns, or changes in capacity.

Emotional Signals – Needs may be met

- Calm
- Curious
- Energised
- Connected
- Hopeful
- Inspired
- Interested
- Playful
- Relaxed
- Safe
- Settled

Emotional Signals – Needs may be less met

- Angry
- Anxious
- Ashamed
- Confused
- Disconnected
- Exhausted
- Frustrated
- Lonely
- Overwhelmed
- Resentful
- Restless
- Sad
- Stuck
- Tense

Physical / Nervous System Signals

- Breath changes
- Faster heartbeat
- Headaches
- Heavy limbs
- Hyperactivity or restlessness
- Muscle tension
- Shallow breathing
- Shutdown or freeze
- Sleepiness after interaction
- Sweating
- Tight jaw or shoulders
- Tingling or shakiness
- "Wired but tired"

Sensory Signals

- Clothing feels uncomfortable
- Craving pressure, movement, silence or darkness
- Difficulty filtering background noise
- Increased sensitivity to light, sound, smell or touch
- Lights or sounds feel harsher
- Needing headphones or quiet
- Room feels "too big" or "too small"
- Seeking texture, rhythm or movement
- Things seem brighter or different

Cognitive Signals

- Difficulty concentrating
- Difficulty switching tasks
- Forgetfulness
- Hyperfocus
- Mind going blank
- Needing reassurance or certainty
- Racing thoughts
- Rehearsing conversations repeatedly
- Slower processing speed
- Trouble making decisions

BROADENING NOTICE

Behavioural Signals

- Avoidance or procrastination
- Cancelling plans
- Increased scrolling or escapism
- Increased stimming or repetitive movement
- Leaving situations suddenly
- Masking more intensely
- People pleasing
- Repetitive checking
- Seeking control or predictability
- Seeking routines or solitude
- Snapping at people
- Withdrawing socially

Relational Signals

- Craving connection but avoiding contact
- Feeling emotionally overloaded by others
- Feeling invisible or unheard
- Feeling unsafe to disagree
- Increased conflict or irritation
- Increased sensitivity to rejection
- Needing clearer boundaries
- Wanting reassurance

Neuro-Inclusive Ways of Noticing

- Changes in energy or capacity
- Communication becoming harder
- Increased sensory overwhelm
- Need for predictability or routine
- Shutdown, freeze or overload responses
- Increased recovery time
- Masking effort
- Feeling "off" without knowing why

Helpful Questions

- What is becoming easier or harder?
- What am I avoiding or seeking?
- What environments help or hinder me?
- What happens just before overwhelm?
- What helps me regulate or recover?
- What sensory input am I reacting to?
- What support, clarity, choice or recovery might help right now?