

## Meeting Your Relationship Requirements?



As the saying goes, “opposites attract”. More often than not, this is true for couples in ways that we least expect... particularly in the ways each that person wants their partner to demonstrate caring. Many couples battle over the complaint “You don’t show me you love me” or “You don’t ever tell me you love me anymore.” These complaints speak to the core differences between people’s needs; we refer to them as differences in “minimum requirements for love.”



Let’s use plants to demonstrate. African violets need special care; they are fairly “high maintenance”. They require steady warmth and don’t tolerate sudden changes in temperature. In winter, they do not tolerate temperatures below 60 degrees. They also don’t do well in direct sunlight. For them, good light comes from an eastern or southern exposure. As for watering, they prefer tepid water and do not like water on their leaves.



The formula for proper care of cactus, creating its ideal environment to thrive, is considerably different from the African violet. The more dormant cacti can tolerate 90 to 100 degree temperatures. Excessive watering is to be avoided because too much water can be harmful. Cacti’s need for moisture is considered sufficient if it gets it every few weeks. In other words, cacti can tolerate extremes that would destroy the African Violet. Neither plant is better than the other, neither one is “right” about what it needs. They are simply different in their needs and what it takes for each to thrive.



In relationships, it is common for one person to be more like an African violet. They may need frequent and specific atten-



tion, similar to the this delicate plant. Inevitably however, the African violet person attracts (or marries) a Cactus. It isn’t that the cactus doesn’t need water, sunlight, attention... the amount or frequency for it is different.

The question is, can the African Violet and the cactus co-exist in a way that allows each to thrive? Our basic need to be loved and to feel loved by our partner can not be compromised. So then, what happens when two people have conflicting needs? Shouldn’t my partner know what I need, when I need it and how to give it to me? ( a common expectation) How do balance your needs with your partner needs?

### **Guidelines for Consideration:**

#### ***Have Permission to Know and to Meet Your Own Needs...***

You won’t fulfill your needs, or allow your partner to fulfill them, if you don’t know what they are. For some, the mere mention of the word “need” can stir uncomfortable feelings. “Need” has become synonymous with being selfish and unattractive. Self-sufficiency is the new badge of honor. But to deny what we need from others is to trap ourselves in a desperate paradox: if you don’t allow yourself to have needs and take action to meet those needs, you end up becoming more needful. By claiming ownership of your needs, you also accept responsibility for meeting those needs. You can educate your partner about your needs and how you prefer



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they be met, but it is still your responsibility, not your partner's, to meet your needs.

***Know the difference between “want” and “need”...***

Our culture encourages us to go after what we want and to always want more. The continuous message of “get more of what you want” often drowns out the sound of our inner voice that tells us what we truly need. Couples get stuck when they confuse the two; they begin to believe their wants and desires are the same as their core needs. We may want a new house, faster car, lavish vacation, and sexy or seductive companion. Yet our core needs are for bonding and attachment. We get into relationships to meet these fundamental human needs and to experience the pleasure of having those needs met.

The most important thing you can do to keep your relationship alive is to listen to your partner in order to learn about their needs. Listening does not mean you have to agree with their needs or even like them. Listening can eventually lead to learning and learning can eventually lead to giving more and loving more.

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