

Meeting Needs Across Different Life Domains

Happiness

 Exercise

 20 min

 Client

 No

Need fulfillment

Several theories, such as Multiple Discrepancy Theory (Michalos, 1985), Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Theory (Maslow, 1970), and the Self-Concordance Model (Sheldon & Elliot, 1999), have proposed that a person's satisfaction with life can be regarded as 'need satisfaction.' These theories state that people have various developmental needs (biological, safety, social, esteem, self-actualization, knowledge, and beauty-related needs) they seek to fulfill, and the more successful they are in satisfying these needs, the more they are satisfied with their lives.

Life domains can also be perceived from a need perspective. After all, most life domains are organized and structured around several needs. For instance, the leisure domain typically involves activities dealing with one's need for social connectedness, aesthetics, and creativity. The health domain may involve activities related to biological and safety needs. Overall, a domain contributes to the individual's global well-being through need satisfaction. Therefore, because the satisfaction derived from a single domain can be limited, people have to invest their resources in multiple life domains to satisfy the full spectrum of survival and growth needs.

Need satisfaction limits

According to Sirgy and Wu (2009), the way life balance contributes to subjective well-being is directly related to the principle of need satisfaction limits. They argued that satisfying one life domain contributes to subjective well-being only with a limited amount of positive affect. Subjective well-being is not simply the result of positive minus negative affect. If this were true, it could be hypothetically possible to invest all the time and energy into one single life domain, ignore all the other domains, and still experience a high level of well-being. In practice, life domains differ in the specific needs they fulfill. The need for knowledge may be covered by the life domain 'work' but not, or only to a limited extent, by the life domain 'family.' Thus, when focusing only on one life domain, it is likely that only a handful of selected needs are being satisfied. Another way to think about this relates to the notion of 'putting all your eggs in one basket.' That is, one should not become overly invested in one area of life to the detriment of fulfillment in other areas of life. To achieve ongoing well-being, it is necessary to satisfy the full range of human developmental needs. One cannot substitute one need with another.

Support for the idea of need satisfaction limits comes from research showing that that materialism is negatively related to life satisfaction (see Wright & Larsen 1993, for a meta-analysis of the research findings). Materialism can be regarded as an imbalance between life domains with an excessive focus on the life domain 'money.' The number of needs



that are satisfied by success in this life domain is limited. An excessive amount of time and energy devoted to this life domain means, per definition, that other life domains, such as friends, family, and spiritual life, receive less attention. Consequently, the needs that would normally be fulfilled by these other domains are thwarted, negatively impacting overall well-being.



Author

This tool was created by Hugo Alberts (Ph.D.) and Lucinda Poole (PsyD).



Goal

The goal of this tool is to help people identify personal needs and explore ways in which these needs can be met in different areas of life. The last step invites users to identify behaviors that can be acted upon to move towards needs satisfaction.



Advice

- If the client is struggling to come up with activities for need fulfillment in different life domains, the therapist should provide guidance and practical suggestions.



References

- Maslow, A. H. (1970). *Motivation and personality* (2nd ed.). Harper.
- Michalos, A. C. (1985). Multiple discrepancies theory (MDT). *Social indicators research*, 16(4), 347-413.
- Sheldon, K. M., & Elliot, A. J. (1999). Goal striving, need satisfaction, and longitudinal well-being: The Self-Concordance Model. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 76, 546-557.
- Sirgy, M. J., & Wu, J. (2009). The pleasant life, the engaged life, and the meaningful life: What about the balanced life? *Journal of Happiness Studies*, 10(2), 183-196.
- Wright, N. D., & Larsen, V. (1993). Materialism and life satisfaction: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Consumer Satisfaction, Dissatisfaction, and Complaining Behavior*, 6(1), 158-165.



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Instructions

This tool is designed to help you identify what you need most in your life now. We all have needs, and needs vary between individuals and across different stages of life.

Step 1: Identify current personal needs

Consider what personal needs you have right now in your life and the extent to which each of these needs is currently being fulfilled. Make a list of your most unfulfilled needs. The list of needs in the Universal Needs Inventory tool may be helpful here.

My most unfulfilled needs at this moment:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Step 2: Identify your most unsatisfied need

For this exercise, identify which need is currently most unsatisfied. In the space below, provide a brief description of this need.

My most unfulfilled need at this moment (*brief description*):



Step 3: Identify important life domains

Now that you have identified your most unfulfilled need, we can begin to explore ways to move towards satisfying this need. Considering that the need satisfaction across different areas of life leads to greater quality of life and well-being, we will examine how several life domains may play a role in fulfilling this need rather than focusing on only one.

From the list of life domains provided, select your most significant life domains. By 'significant,' we mean the areas of your life that are most important to you personally.

Life domains:

- Health & Fitness
- Fun & Leisure
- Community & Environment
- Family
- Friends & Social Life
- Partner & Love
- Growth & Learning
- Career & Work
- Spirituality
- Other(s)



Step 4: Identify opportunities for need satisfaction

Now, label each of the Life Domain boxes below based on Step 3. Then, within each life domain, list what possible actions you could take to move towards fulfilling your identified need. Ask yourself, “in this area of my life, what activities or behaviors could I start (or restart) to help me meet this need?” Come up with as many activities as you can within each life domain. (Note that not all life domains may offer opportunities for the fulfillment of your specific need.)

<i>Life Domain:</i>				
<i>Need fulfillment actions:</i>				
<i>Life Domain:</i>				
<i>Need fulfillment actions:</i>				



Step 5: Initiate need fulfilment action

Review all the actions you listed and focus on the ones that seem most feasible or attractive to you at this moment. Select up to three actions to initiate in the coming week. Write down the specifics of how you will go about initiating this action below (i.e., who, what, where, when, and how).

Action #1:

Action #2:

Action #3: