

7 Primal Human Emotional Needs

by J. Michael Hogarth.

What evolution tells us we need to achieve a naturally centered, calm, productive, and happy life.

When you think about yourself, do you feel like a fully functioning integrated person, or do you see yourself as captain of the ship *you*? In my practice as a counsellor and psychotherapist, I often hear people talk about their experience of daily life as though they are living mostly in their heads, or that their mind is playing tricks on them, or they have such a busy head that they lose a sense of control over who they are. They often explain that they are troubled by repetitive thoughts of the past, or by worries of imagined futures. All these scenarios are very common, and my job is to help my clients get back in touch with their feelings, to overcome troublesome emotions, and to help them escape from their unconscious mental patterns so that they may live in a more fulfilling, thoughtful, and balanced present.

But what is really going on? Why are people so seemingly lost in the maze of their own minds? Why do we spend so much time in our heads following daydream fantasies or troubling thoughts and images? Why do we believe repetitive voices that chastise or judge us? Why do we feel an inner sense of dread about losing our friends if we express our needs, or fear rejection if we say no to other's demands? Are our thoughts our reality, or is there something more at play here? If say, we imagined helping ourselves to another person's belongings, or cheating on a spouse, or manipulating a situation for our own benefit, why do we feel such guilt and shame when absolutely no action was taken? Most of the time, all these thought processes (and more) are silently running in the background of our minds, directing our lives, and we are completely unaware.

One common theme I have noticed when talking to people is that our identity (our mental image of ourselves) has become so detached from our true nature that we now live in a constant state of anxiety, like a mouse on a bed of nails. When we're scrolling through our social feeds, sitting in traffic, making business deals, or deciding what to watch on Netflix, we tend to forget or appreciate the fact that we are literally animals (mammals) - highly intelligent and sophisticated animals, but animals

all the same. It's something that we all know, yet never really *think* about. For hundreds of thousands of years our basic physiology and natural instincts have not changed that much at all, yet this information is something we have simply learned to gloss over as we distance ourselves from nature and go about our busy individualistic daily lives.

In the context of mental wellbeing, I'm sure by now that you will have heard of mindfulness, groundings, breathing techniques, and meditation. Therapists and mental health professionals all around the world help their clients become more aware of their real-world surroundings and inner process by offering a safe place for clients to explore their feelings, thoughts, and beliefs. Some advocate taking walks in nature, jumping in ice baths or cold showers, trying mindful meditation, or even reflective writing. It's been my experience that most of these suggestions generally do help ease a busy mind and provide at least some sense of clarity and peace, but why? Is it possibly because the above techniques all help us to escape our *thought-world* and remind us that we are a living, breathing, eating, sleeping, belly-scratching animal?

We human beings are fascinating animals. We do everything other animals do, only we manage to do them in such a fantastically complex and complicated way that has left us estranged from our very nature. For instance, we don't simply go to the toilet where we please like a fish, or a bear, no, instead we have complicated toilet and sewer systems that require a flush, paper, pipes, water-treatment factories, and perhaps a newspaper. We don't simply tear into a chicken like a wolf would, instead we have the sophisticated systems of farming, slaughterhouses, distribution, shops, financial systems, knives, forks etc. We are such intelligent creatures that have overcomplicated our entire existence with gadgets, devices, rituals, societal norms, beliefs, and identities, that we often miss what our *nature* requires.

It is for this very reason that I have put together a list of 7 Primal Human Emotional Needs (PHENs) that our more simplistic inner animal yearns to have met.

These PHENs are essential for our mental health and emotional wellbeing. If we ignore these basic needs for long periods of time, we can end up suffering from a whole range of issues including anxiety, depression, mood disorders, and many more, leaving us feeling overwhelmed, stressed, and confused about why we feel the

way we do. If, however, we begin to understand and integrate these needs into our lives we can begin to feel more deeply connected and balanced with the true nature of our being.

1. The Primal Human Emotional Need to Give and Receive Attention.

Attention means we belong and have value within our pack. No attention means no value, leading to loneliness, isolation from the pack, and eventually death.

We human beings are naturally social creatures, and there's nothing more we enjoy than a good pat-on-the-back, a heartfelt "well done", or even a huge round of applause for our efforts. In fact, our need for attention plays a vital role in our mental health. You could imagine our need for attention on a sliding scale. On one end is 'Loneliness' (no friends, no family, no visitors, no meaningful connections), and on the other side of the scale is a 'Desperation for Attention' (a felt deficit if you will), whereby every thought, action, intention, behaviour is designed to create the maximum attention which we feel we lack. But why is our need for attention so important?

Well, in the middle of our attention scale is the sweet spot. When we give and receive attention, we feel a sense of belonging and social support, in fact, receiving attention from others actually validates our existence. We feel seen, we feel heard, we feel understood. Receiving attention boosts our self-esteem and reinforces our implicit feelings of self-worth, purpose, and meaning in life. Likewise, when we give our attention to others, we promote empathy, compassion, and meaningful relationships, this then creates a positive feedback loop of social connectedness.

On the other hand, a lack of attention, or being on the Loneliness end of the scale, can have a profoundly negative impact on our mental health. According to numerous studies, prolonged periods of social isolation and loneliness can significantly increase the risk of developing mental health disorders such as depression, anxiety, and even cognitive decline. Research conducted by Cacioppo and Patrick (2008)¹ revealed that chronic loneliness is associated with higher levels of stress, disrupted sleep patterns, and impaired immune function. Moreover, individuals who experience chronic loneliness are more likely to engage in unhealthy coping mechanisms such as substance abuse or overeating. A meta-analysis conducted by Holt-Lunstad et al.

(2015)². found that individuals experiencing social isolation or loneliness have a 50% increased risk of premature death compared to those with strong social connections. Another study published in the journal PLOS ONE (2020)³. revealed that lonely individuals have a 64% increased risk of developing clinical dementia. These figures emphasise the urgent need to address loneliness as a critical public health concern, highlighting its potential long-term consequences on mental health and overall well-being.

To promote the Primal Human Emotional Need to Give and Receive Attention try:

...Meeting up with friends regularly. Engage in random acts of kindness. Join local groups or clubs. Visit your local library or church and see what you can get involved in. Actively listen to those who are talking to you, they want to be heard and listened to just like you, and if you do, they will reciprocate allowing you to receive the attention you deserve.

2. The Primal Human Emotional Need to Heed the Mind/Body Connection.

Most of us feel, at some point, as though we are the operators or controllers of a ship called *Ourselves*. When asked, the majority of people who have suffered with some type of stress or trauma, believe that they are passengers inside their own heads, usually situated two inches behind the eyes and right between the ears. However, this is far from the case. Within our minds, we think and imagine an awful lot of things, yet our ideas, imaginings, and thoughts, are simply a product of just one organ, the brain. Becoming more aware that we are a complex human being connected in mind and body we begin to feel more integrated and whole.

When we begin to have a greater appreciation for the fact that we are an entire organism, a community of trillions of cells all working together to stay alive and survive, we begin to see that we are more incredibly miraculous than we can ever think. Your heart beats all by itself, your white and red blood cells regenerate without a second thought, everything heals and grows itself, and you – ‘the captain of the ship’ – have very little to do with it. Most of the time, we’re too busy thinking about what to eat next, who’s going to see us at an event, where we dream of living, or what we or our perfect partner should look like etc, to even notice what our bodies are doing for us.

Your body is a masterpiece of nature. From the Big Bang to you reading this, your conscious awareness is evolution's finest creation. You are literally the matter of the universe coming together in a spectacular way to become alive, and then becoming aware of itself.

Why is it then that most of us neglect our bodies? We miss meals when we know we're hungry, we eat junk food knowing that it's bad for us, we sleep too little even though we're tired, consume energy drinks or alcohol - ignoring the warning labels, but even more importantly, we neglect to listen or pay attention to our emotions when they arise.

One fundamentally important message to take away from this article is to pay attention to your emotions. Your emotions are your body's way of talking to you. Emotions are trying to convey a message that if you ignore can have dire consequences.

I see examples of this in my counselling practice when I talk with victims of domestic abuse. They often explain that they knew there were 'red flags' in the beginning of their relationships, but they overlooked or simply ignored them. An example of this could be that they were subject to an incident near the beginning of the relationship where they were put down or demeaned in a way which left them feeling hurt or disrespected. They have even explained that while the incident was taking place, they felt nauseous, anxious, scared, shocked, or angry – but at the time they didn't feel like they could do anything about it. The emotions they were feeling in that moment was their body trying to communicate a threat, or that there was danger. Our emotions are always trying to protect us. Most of the people who experience this and do or say nothing are usually non-confrontational. They ignore their emotions because they do not want to fight, and often live in hope that these feelings will go away, or that their partner will change. Only they don't. If the organism is in danger, the emotional message keeps being replayed until the lesson is learned.

By acknowledging the Primal Human Emotional Need to Heed a Good Mind/Body Connection, we begin to recognise that our well-being depends upon these two systems working in perfect harmony as one.

To promote the Primal Human Emotional Need to Heed the Mind/Body Connection try:

...Sleeping when you are tired. Eat when you feel hungry. If you feel sad, anxious, or like crying, honour and feel the emotion and then try to understand what your body is trying to tell you. Maybe your inner child needs to be heard, calmed, soothed, or protected. Maybe you need rest, so take a break. If you are unhappy in an area of your life, look at how you can change your situation. If you are overwhelmed by your emotions and have tried everything, look for a local counsellor. Ignoring our emotions and shutting them up (or coping with them) leads to repeated suffering down the road.

3. The Primal Human Emotional Need for Goals, Purpose, and Meaning.

No goals, no positive emotion.

"If there's one thing the history of evolution has taught us is that life will not be contained, life breaks free, expands into new territories, it crashes through barriers painfully, maybe even dangerously, but no! There it is. Life...finds a way."

Jeff Goldblum, Jurassic Park, 1993.

Delivered in his intriguingly eclectic manner, Jeff Goldblum's classic line from Jurassic Park holds a truth that has deep roots for us because we are, and live, that very same process. The whole purpose of nature's 'life force', if you will, is to push against being dead, motionless, inert matter. It's the same repelling force you feel when pushing two positive sided magnets together. Imagine a flower's roots and stem automatically pushing against the dead earth, growing upwards, reaching towards the Sun.

From the very first moment this life force (or energy) emerged and began interacting with its rich elemental surroundings, it has found extremely complicated mechanisms for survival. It began replicating itself and making subtle changes by assimilating other molecules from its environment to feed on or use in some way. The goal is always to perpetuate the force. Life has sprouted all over this planet with the same force cloaked in ever changing layers of complexity, yet all with the same determination to keep going, growing, and changing...and this process is still alive within all of us.

Our fundamental molecular structure is infused with this diverse biological coded information, and even though we have evolved into complex structures ourselves, we still feel this primal need to grow within us. It is because of this fundamental blueprint that we have a primal need to reach for more. This is why goals, purpose, and meaning, are fundamental to our well-being. As a Human Being, these aspects of our existence provide us with; a sense of direction, motivation, a reason to strive for something greater, and a reason to live.

Purpose serves as the guiding principle that gives our lives a sense of direction and meaning. It provides a sense of clarity about what we value, what we aim to achieve, and the impact we want to make in the world. It helps us navigate life's challenges, make choices that are in line with our goals, and helps find a deep sense of fulfilment.

In our evolved society, goals are the steppingstones which propel us forward, giving us a sense of progress and achievement. They provide us with focus, structure, and a sense of purposeful action. We can also break down our goals and aspirations into smaller, manageable steps, creating a sense of momentum and accomplishment. We even have a Dopamine System located in our brains that rewards us with chemicals making us feel good when we take a step closer to our chosen goal, no matter how small.

When we actively pursue and achieve our goals, we experience, a boost in self-esteem, confidence, a sense of personal growth. Our relationships and experiences feel better, and we feel a deeper connection with life which makes us feel like we matter, and that we belong. This enables an attitude of hope, rather than avoidance or fear. And, as we literally are life itself, doesn't that just make perfect sense?

To nurture the Primal Human Emotional Need for Goals, Purpose, and Meaning, try:

... Taking a step back and thinking about the sort of things you truly want to achieve. Work out what gets you excited and literally energises you. When you decide what to do, strive towards it with whatever sized steps you feel is necessary.

4. The Primal Human Emotional Need for Community and Making a Contribution.

Which communities are you a part of? It's an interesting question. Just the idea of community can mean different things to different people. For some, community means everything as they engage with their local churches, local groups, or the people in their neighbourhoods. In our modern world however, communities often manifest themselves as what you are interested in as an individual. We join groups of people online who share a similar interest. We become members of professional organisations who share similar ethical beliefs, or professional goals. There are film, music, art, political parties, or culinary groups, yet do we really feel connected to anyone in these groups? Is this a real community? Sure, we read what other people may say in the comment section, however, the people who are involved in these groups are all anonymous and separate, scattered around the globe, and unless they are in our *real* physical lives, do we really know any of them at all?

Personally, online groups certainly don't make me feel as though I'm connected with anyone else. To me, it all seems hollow and inauthentic somehow. It feels like I'm fooling or distracting myself, and deep down I know it.

In a recent study by Bonsaksen, T. et al. (2023) ⁴, it seems that the more we engage with social media, the more isolated and alone we feel. This sadly seems to indicate that we forsake the complexity of the community in our direct environment for a more ego-stroking, personal-belief-affirming individualism. Social media giants have developed clever yet insidious algorithms that have been designed to feed back to us endless pages of tailor-made content of our own beliefs and interests...in order to sell us things.

Neurologically, we get a shot of Dopamine (the feel-good chemical) every time we are made to feel like our way of being in the world is the correct one, an inbuilt chemical pat-on-the-back if you will. This may trick us into thinking that we're happy, but this only leaves us in our own personal 'interest bubble', leaving us in a sad, but very real, isolated community of one.

Therefore, what we need for our primal emotional wellbeing is to feel part of a real community. Real communities are made up of; the individuals that we live with, our families, our neighbours, our workmates, our classmates, and our social groups. These are the people that we can have a real connection with, in real time, in real life. In neurological terms, this means that our brains can make sense of where these

people are and what they mean to us, whereas online, we cannot derive this information so it loses its relevance to us and our inbuilt need for a real felt sense of community.

As animals, our survival instincts need to map out our lived area in our minds, and the people in it, to tell us; where we are, if we're safe, if we feel accepted, do we feel wanted, or are in danger etc. We do this by monitoring those within close proximity. For example, in my own lived community there is the woman who I say hello to in the bakery, the regulars I see sitting outside the local café, the familiar faces of people who work in the local supermarket, shops, bars, busses, and garages whom I see on a daily basis. There are doctors, real friends, friends of friends, local pets, local smells, local sounds, local landmarks etc, these are all the building blocks of my community. Actively being part of a community provides a real sense of comfort and structure about where we are in the world, in real space and time.

It's a similar thing with our primal emotional need to make a contribution. Contributing within our communities allows us to find purpose and meaning. It provides us with a sense of direction, a reason to strive, and a feeling that our existence has significance. Contributing also helps strengthen our relationships, build better communities, and helps create a shared sense of purpose as we come together to work towards a common goal. Making a contribution creates a deep sense of fulfilment and happiness, this can often be felt immediately, but also may help in the long-term as it can extend beyond your own lifetime bringing even greater significance. Moreover, when we give back to our communities we receive support, appreciation, and a sense of interconnectedness. It nurtures a sense of collective identity, making us feel that we are a part of something larger than ourselves, cultivating a culture of empathy, kindness, and social progress.

To encourage the Primal Human Emotional Need for Community and Making a Contribution, try:

...Thinking about where you live, and the people that surround you. Ask yourself, how can I be helpful and make a difference? Try going to your local volunteer centre and looking for things you can get involved with. Find something that you think is wrong in your local community and start talking to people about how you could fix it.

5. The Primal Human Emotional Need for Creativity.

Be creative and release your emotions.

Whether you like creative writing, painting portraits, flower arranging, pottery, building things with your hands and tools, planning your next holiday, birthday, wedding etc, you are using the creative part of your brain to bring forth an idea. Once an idea gets a firm grip on you, you use your creative process to figure out ways to bring your idea into the real world. But why is being creative so profoundly important for human beings?

Since the emergence of our species, our ancestors have created stories about the stars, created new ways of hunting, living, traveling, competing. They instinctively felt a creative need to draw, dance, chant, build, and imagine monsters. All of this came about because of their creative endeavours to protect themselves from the elements and to hunt and source food and resources. Neurologically, through our evolution and brain development, our right hemisphere comes online before our left hemisphere. This is important to understand because the right hemisphere is our emotional, imaginative, and creative centre. This is why during childhood we can imagine goblins, fairies, superheroes, magic spells, and truly believe (and feel) that it's all real.

By the time we reach puberty, our emotional responses have been informed and heavily influenced by our childhood environment. In fact, the influence is so strong upon our emotions that unless we become aware of all of our emotional processes (emotionally intelligence), we can stay emotionally reactive for life. Being emotionally reactive is the reason why it is commonplace to hear adults past the age of fifty using childish phrases like, "it's not fair," or "she started it," or "why do I always have to do everything?"

By understanding that our emotional responses light up in the same hemisphere as our creativity and imagination, we begin to see that the expression of emotion through creativity is, in fact, an extremely powerful cathartic process. Why else would it be that when you hear a song, see a movie scene, or a piece of art, it can resonate with you, bringing up emotionally charged thoughts and feelings? The reason is that the creative types who produced the art in the first place were channeling and expressing their own feelings and inner emotions. We then see their art and feel something we relate to emotionally.

An example of this from my private practice is where I asked a woman to recall a movie scene that made her cry. Straight away she told me of a scene from a film called *Instant Family*, starring Mark Wahlberg. The film itself is about a couple who decide to adopt three children, two girls and one boy. My client explained that during the movie there is an emotionally charged scene where the eldest child wants to run away because she feels rejected by her drug addicted birth mother. When her adopted parents find her, following a long and frantic search, there is a speech about how much they love her and how much they will be there for her no matter what. It was this particular scene that made my client experience an extremely strong emotional reaction, making her cry, even though she recalled smiling at the time.

As I listened to her story, my client started waving her hand in front of her face, because just the recollection of watching the scene was enough to bring about an emotional response once more. She laughed and said she didn't know why she was crying and smiling at the same time. I asked her, what was in the scene that she was feeling? She explained that being a child of divorce, she never felt cared for by her parents because they were too busy fighting and coping, and then to see the on-screen parents outwardly declaring their love and care for their child created the happy facial expression (recognising that it was a positive thing), and also the sad teary response (emotionally recognising that she had missed out on that experience and felt a sense of loss). This was her inner child's way of expressing herself.

The power of our own creativity allows us to express repressed emotions and cuts through our logical and analytical thought process. Being creative subconsciously allows us to access and express our inner emotions which is essential for our mental health. Creativity also allows us to; express our true inner selves, think and discover new possibilities, generate original ideas, and make meaningful contributions to the world around us. Allowing ourselves to fully engage in our creative skills and talents leads to a state of optimal performance, a heightened sense of fulfilment, and helps reduce stress.

To promote the Primal Human Emotional Need for Creativity, try:

...Drawing, painting, creating writing, journaling. Think about the sort of things you used to enjoy before you got too busy to bother. Revisit your old passions or hobbies. Keep an eye out for what physically and mentally excites you. Try new things. Take a class in something you've never done before, it may feel

uncomfortable to start with, but as you persevere your felt sense of accomplishment will fill you with satisfaction and positivity.

6. The Primal Human Emotional Need for Intimacy.

There is an old saying that goes, “We come into this world alone, and we die alone,” which, as cheery as it is;) is not the truth. From the moment we’re born we are surrounded by others, and we feel their presence. In the delivery room there are midwives, doctors, our parents etc. We hear their voices, feel their touch, smell their smells, see their faces, and all throughout our formative years we are cared for by, and interact with, others. Our Primal Emotional Need for Intimacy makes us feel safe, loved, cared for, wanted, needed, and it fills us with a sense of belonging in the world.

Now, imagine someone who has no intimate relationships, no friends, no family, no one visiting, or no one to visit. In a world this stark and void of intimate relationships, it’s not hard to see how quickly their wellbeing could deteriorate.

Social isolation and loneliness are a serious health risk to many, especially the elderly. In the U.S, a report by the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine (NASEM), (2020).⁵ found that more than one-third of adults aged over 45 feel lonely, and that 25% of adults over 65 are socially isolated. Other studies have found that social isolation, or loneliness (lack of intimate relationships);

- Increases the risk of premature death, rivalling smoking, or obesity.
- Increases the risk of dementia by 50%.
- Increases the risk of heart disease by (29%), and stroke by (32%).
- Increases the risk of depression, anxiety, and suicide.

We are social animals, and we have an innate need to connect with others and have intimate relationships. Without them, we could literally die. We intuitively know and sense this in our bodies. For instance, we fear judgement by others, we hate being embarrassed, and we fear rejection or humiliation. This is because the social animal within us understands that if we are pushed out of the pack, we will be left to fend for ourselves without the safety of the group, leaving us more vulnerable to attack, or starvation. No matter how good our welfare state is at providing money and

medical interventions, we psychologically and physiologically sense the end, and it eats at us from within.

As we continue on our journey, the world can feel like a very scary, confusing, and often lonely place, therefore we all need at least one person with whom we can share our ideas, positive thoughts, beliefs, hopes, and dreams. As well as our worries, fears, troublesome thoughts, failures, and feelings of loneliness, or hopelessness. Some people can fulfil this need by talking to a loved pet, or an online friend, but most of us need a small circle of 'real-world' loving and supportive friends and/or family. This is because the relationships we form with others fosters a sense of trust, allows us to feel accepted, validates our feelings and vulnerabilities, and enhances a sense of mutual sharing and understanding. Sharing our joys, sorrows, embarrassments, successes etc, without the fear of judgment or rejection, validates our inner animal's very existence.

Intimacy also encompasses physical closeness and affectionate touch. Physical intimacy, such as hugging, sex, holding hands, or cuddling, releases oxytocin, a hormone associated with bonding and feelings of closeness and love. Physical touch promotes feelings of comfort, security, and emotional well-being, strengthening our emotional connection with others.

The primal need for intimacy is intricately linked to our overall well-being. Research has shown that individuals who have satisfying and intimate relationships experience better mental health, higher levels of life satisfaction, and a greater resilience in the face of stress and adversity.

To encourage the Primal Human Emotional Need for Intimacy, try:

...Making a weekly date with your significant other or friends, where conversation topics such as work, money, or the kids, are off-limits. Instead, discuss your hopes, feelings, and dreams. Listen more to people. When we listen, other people feel validated, and in-turn want to listen and validate us. Talk on the phone or video call with family and friends if they are far away. Try speaking more from the heart and be true to who you really are, and how you feel.

7. The Primal Human Need for Emotional Control.

We humans are complex creatures. In evolutionary terms, when we are in control of ourselves and our environment, we have a higher chance of survival. This need for control helps us mentally map the area we live in so we can notice what is consistent and what changes. For hundreds of thousands of years this need for control has informed us of where we may find safety, comfort, or danger. This inbuilt evolutionary pattern provides us with a kind of psychological buffer against uncertainty, helping reduce feelings of helplessness and vulnerability. So, what happens if we feel like we're not in control, especially of our emotions?

When we talk about our *Need for Emotional Control*, we are talking about becoming aware of our emotions and learning how to control them, rather than them controlling us.

Thousands of years ago this powerful unconscious emotional process was known to the Greeks who began to personify their emotions as Gods because they believed, and observed, that we humans became possessed by our emotions and seemingly had no control of them. For example, Eros was the Greek god of carnal love who would possess his victims and make them fall in love with, or lust after, their desired target, overwhelming his unsuspecting victims with such passion that it was often impossible to break his spell. The Greeks and Romans also noted that emotions would possess people so much that they would act and speak differently, play the fool, become jealous, vengeful, ecstatic, or even go to war and fight to the death. This is why we humans were the playthings of the Gods.

Looking at our emotions from a modern psychological stance, we now understand that we have a whole range of emotions that are a natural part of our human experience. We feel everything from love, joy, pain, hate, sadness, grief, frustration, excitement, happiness, disgust, and fear, to name but a few. Our emotions are there to inform us of how we feel towards events, people, relationships, situations etc, they guide us in our decision making and behaviour. What you may not know, is that if we have experienced a difficult childhood, say neglectful, abusive, or traumatic, our emotional responses become dysregulated and this can cause angry outbursts, anxiety, depression, worry, guilt, racing and unhelpful thought patterns, and coping strategies etc. All of which are symptoms of the environment we experienced early in life.

Let's look at a typical example. Imagine Sarah, 35, she struggles with a felt sense of guilt if ever she takes time out for herself. She constantly feels as though she should be doing more and has never achieved enough. Sarah can't fully relax, even when she's on holiday, because she is constantly looking for new ways to improve and prove her worth. This felt sense is an emotion that dwells inside her, a message informed by her experiences in childhood. Her mother often told her that "I thought you could have done better" or "I expected more from you." Sarah never felt as though her father was interested in her life as he worked away a lot, and their infrequent conversation was only ever about her university prospects. In this particular and over-simplified case, repeated messages like this would make a child feel sad, guilty, rejected, worthless, and unworthy of love, all because the focus was on perfection and achievement rather than her as a person. Flash forward to Sarah's adult life, where she now lives with a felt sense of guilt if she ever wants to enjoy some down-time, combined with an unrelenting repetitive and endless determination to achieve more to prove herself to her parents. These overwhelming inner senses confuse her often, causing mental distress, fatigue, anxiety, and depression. She told me she felt like a marionette, having her strings pulled by echoes from the past which were directing her emotions, informing her decisions and behaviour, and eroding her self-esteem and self-worth.

For people with poor mental health, these same unconscious emotional patterns influence the way they are in the world, and most of the time they are completely unaware of it. This is exactly the reason why we have a *Need for Emotional Control*. Becoming *Emotionally Intelligent* helps us gain awareness and control of our emotions, and understanding our own process means recognising what emotions flow through us and what they are trying to say.

To gain more awareness over our Primal Human Need for Emotional Control, try:

...Noticing the emotional sensations within your body as they arise. How do they make you feel? What made you feel them? Was it a scene from a movie, an argument, a trigger of some sort? When did they start? What what are they trying to tell or teach you? Ask yourself if you've felt this way before and try to discover where these feelings originated. Watch closely for exactly how these emotions make you see the world. Are you seeing situations or events through the eyes of these emotions? If so, how does this influence the way you behave, or what mood do the

emotions put you in? Try looking at your situation from a different perspective – what advice would you offer a friend in a similar situation? If you feel as though you are losing emotional control, talk to a registered counsellor or psychotherapist.

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Note to reader. I understand that this paper is called the “7” Primal Human Emotional Needs, however, this was more of a sales pitch than an actual amount. Seven rolls off the tongue and it’s more digestible than “9”. For example, there are Seven Deadly Sins, Seven Days in a Week, Seven Continents of the World, Seven Seas, Seven Wonders of the World, Seven colours of the rainbow, Seven Dwarfs et cetera. That being said, if you have enjoyed reading so far, I hope you enjoy the final two emotional needs. J.M.H

8. The Primal Human Emotional Need for Status.

Imagine a successful business as a pyramid. The owner at the top, followed by the board members underneath, then the senior managers, then the middle managers, followed by the supervisors, and finally all the employees doing the physical work at the bottom. I’m sure you’ve imagined this scenario before. In this example it’s straightforward to see where you could reside on these levels.

Now, imagine that there are a million slightly different pyramids that each have an influence on how we see ourselves in the world. There’s the *Education Pyramid* which goes from nursery to Doctorate. The *Physicality Pyramid* that scales your ability physically, for example, are you a fast runner, are you physically fit, are you disabled, are you overweight, do you have any illnesses etc.? What is interesting to note here is that there are many complex pyramid games being played, all with their own levels and meanings. Now, depending upon your personal interests, these pyramids (hierarchies) can be broken up into categories such as wealth, relationships, achievements, love, creativity, family, fame, class, credit, music, technology, pop culture, competence etc. As we move through life and the ups and downs of our chosen pyramids, our brain keeps a detailed score of where we are on each of these hierarchies. This informs our sense of individual status, and our self-esteem.

We also need to appreciate that our feelings of status and self-esteem also inform how we act and behave in the world which can alter our very place on our pyramids, it's a two-way street. For example, if I feel and believe that I have a low status level and that I am limited in my abilities, I may only go for job opportunities, potential partners, or education levels that reflect my beliefs. In comparison, if I think very highly of myself, I may aim for the best education, careers, cars I could wish for.

Our *Primal Emotional Need for Status* is an evolutionary phenomenon and is deeply rooted in our need to feel safe, our need to eat, and our need to procreate. We are social creatures, and our status provides us with a sense of belonging, identity, and a framework for understanding our place in society. Simply put, if we have something to contribute to our pack we feel purpose and meaning, we feel recognised, valued, and safe from being ostracised and abandoned, left for dead with no chance of reproducing.

Don't get me wrong, status acts as more than just an indicator for social approval. It acts as a marker of where we could start from if we were to choose to climb to a different point in a hierarchy. By monitoring how others act, talk, and behave at different levels we can actually develop a list of comparison, helping us to design a strategy to move forward. This fills us with a sense of ambition, motivation, achievement, fulfilment, and most importantly, self-worth. Also, knowing our status level also informs us of where we do not want to be.

However, when dealing with status in this modern world, I think it's also necessary to adopt a cautious attitude. Becoming aware that an excessive or obsessive focus on our status can lead to a range of negative consequences. For example, it may make you overly competitive, envious, or constantly make you compare yourself to others. If we become obsessed with our status, we are in danger of neglecting other important aspects of our lives such as relationships or our own well-being.

It's important to understand that most hierarchies (other than survival) are constructs to which we attribute meaning. You may have already noticed from the list above that you may not be interested in pop culture, fitness, or wealth etc. and you may see these things as unimportant, things you'll get around to, or change. Whatever the reason you have decided to play your chosen hierarchical games, it's

important to consider why you have chosen them, and how you may be affected if your status level changes, or if a game is lost or taken away. What happens then?

Say for example, a topflight manager loses their position on their chosen employment hierarchy. Their feeling of status is directly tied in with their feelings of self-worth and their self-esteem. A lot of their time and effort has been spent developing a career and climbing up the ladder to the higher echelons of management. Then, suddenly, through either life events, or restructuring within the business, they have now lost their position. This can have a devastating effect upon someone's perceived value of themselves. This is because the career hierarchy has become a fundamental part of *who they are*. If this has unexpectedly been taken away, it may leave an individual with a vast feeling of emptiness because it feels as though a part of them has been taken away. The same could be said with divorce. Couples who have been together for a long-time struggle to adjust once that part of their identity has been taken away. How we see ourselves in life is inextricably interwoven with the hierarchies we invest our time in. However, if life throws us a curveball it may be time to focus on the most important hierarchy of them all...you.

Imagine what would happen if you were to invest your time and effort in you. What if you developed your own personal hierarchy of self care and appreciation? After all, taking care of yourself is essential for your own spiritual well-being and is necessary for good mental health. A 'personal hierarchy' could involve eating the correct things, exercising, treating yourself with respect, knowing your boundaries, honouring your own beliefs, ethics, and morals and so on. The levels of this personal hierarchy would climb all the way up to your own 'Self-Actualisation' 6., where you reach your full potential.

To get to grips with the Primal Human Emotional Need for Status, try:

...Learning to appreciate yourself for the person you *are* and not just what you *do*. Don't put all of your eggs in one basket. Learn to understand who you are, what you believe in, what your likes and dislikes are, and why you have chosen certain hierarchies to engage in. Try not to become lost in thoughts of how others will view you, believe me, most people are too busy monitoring their own status levels to care about yours.

9. The Primal Need for Safety and Security.

Our emotions can be up and down at the best times depending upon what issues we're facing, so feeling safe and secure when your world feels like it's in turmoil is an essential emotional need. We need to feel safe so we can correctly process our emotions and focus our attention on all the good stuff in life, our personal growth, our friends, our pursuit of goals etc. If we don't feel safe and secure, this will lead to a whole host of potential problems.

Our physical safety is obviously so fundamental that it's built right into the primal operating system of the brain, processing information faster than we can consciously think. This is because of an evolutionary need to take immediate action when we're in danger. For example, have you ever had a ball thrown at your face? Instantly, you blink, you flinch, you duck, your heart races, and you're flooded with stress chemicals including Cortisol, and all before *you* have cognitively processed what the object or danger was.

The above example is of an obvious physical danger, but in our modern world, our brain is also constantly scanning for potential threats to our survival, only on many more subtle scales. It keeps a track of danger to the things that we associate as part of ourselves too. Our finances, our environment, our relationships, and our status levels are all being evaluated for danger by our brains, as well as the more obvious examples of danger like dangerous drivers, loud bangs, disagreements at work, or even reading about war, death, or climate change on our devices.

We all have an emotional need to feel safe and secure, and if we do not manage to meet this emotional need, we may find ourselves living with a sense of ominous fear or experiencing symptoms of anxiety making the world outside feel like a very dangerous and scary place. If we are unable to find a safe space to process our emotions, we are more susceptible to indulging in coping strategies including alcohol, drug abuse, sexual promiscuity, gambling, or other incautious risk-taking activities.

Feeling safe and secure allows us the time to reflect, learn from, and process our emotions. This safety allows us time to listen to what our bodies are trying to communicate with us so that we can feel less stressed, make better decisions,

improve our relationships, make better financial choices, and remove harmful cortisol levels from our blood stream.

To develop the Primal Human Emotional Need for Safety and Security, try:

...Taking 20 minutes out of each day to reflect upon why you feel insecure. Was it the words from an ex-partner, was there a traumatic event in your life that disrupted the way you think and feel? Are you struggling financially? Listen to your feelings of insecurity, is there a genuine threat now, or are they outdated messages from the past? If you have reflected enough, and you still don't know where your insecurities or fears originate from, then seek professional help. The reason I say this is because talking about your issues and reconfiguring the way you see the world will help you feel safer and more secure as you reach towards a better future.

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