

# WHAT DO WE NEED?

**Behaviors, Feelings & Needs:** The following examples contain typical parenting challenges, suggestions of possible needs and feelings that could be driving the behaviors, and ideas for conscious communication. Remember, every situation will be unique. It is essential to look at your unique family dynamics and your child's developmental stage to explore the root causes of negative behavior and consider appropriate expectations.

## BEHAVIORS I SEE

My children are fighting and physically hurting each other.

## MY CHILD'S FEELINGS

ANGRY  
LONELY  
FEAR  
FRUSTRATED  
HURT

## MY CHILD'S NEEDS

TO BE HEARD  
CONSIDERATION  
PRIVACY  
ACCEPTANCE  
COMPANIONSHIP  
TO BE INCLUDED

I'm concerned someone will get hurt. You're both feeling frustrated. I want to help you stay safe.

I can tell that you both have something important to say. Let's take a moment to breathe and calm ourselves. So, tell me if this sounds right, (to Child #1) You wanted privacy, and (to Child #2) you were hoping you could play together. Does that sound right?

Crying, hitting, or arguing when things don't go the way my child wants.

MISUNDERSTOOD  
CURIOUS  
WORRIED  
AGITATED  
OVERWHELMED

AUTONOMY  
SATISFACTION  
UNDERSTANDING  
CONNECTION  
CONSISTENCY

You wanted to do it by yourself, and I interrupted. I'm sorry, that's frustrating. You were expecting to use your favorite cup. You're feeling worried that you won't be able to use it again. You wanted to finish playing with that before you shared it. You're feeling angry that it is time to leave. I hear that you'd like to spend more time connecting with your friends on the weekends. It's important to me that I understand your point of view.

My child is disrespectful.

INSECURE  
UNLOVED  
HELPLESS  
JEALOUS  
UNCOMFORTABLE

APPRECIATION  
BELONGING  
RESPECT  
FREEDOM  
INDIVIDUALITY

I can tell that you'd like to feel respected as well. I'm wondering if you were upset or uncomfortable and didn't know what else to say. Sometimes the wrong words come out. Let's talk more when we're feeling calm. I'd like it if you could stop saying those words. It sounds like you need some freedom to say what's on your mind. I'm curious if you'd be willing to restate that differently.



# WHAT DOES MY CHILD NEED?

**My Child's Feelings & Needs:** Replacing habits such as criticizing, evaluating, and judging behavior is an inside job. Approach conflict by inquiring about your child's inner experience. When you connect with compassion, children learn to reflect and reconsider their actions without the weight of guilt and shame.

Using the examples above as a model, write down the behaviors you see, and then investigate what feelings and needs could be motivating your child. Repeat this exercise for each challenging situation, paying special attention to those behaviors that seem confusing or unwarranted.

BEHAVIORS I SEE	MY CHILD'S FEELINGS	MY CHILD'S NEEDS

# WHAT DO I NEED?

**What Do I Need?** What gets in your way of staying compassionate during conflict? Do you ever demand that your children change so that you can feel better or get things done? Do you find yourself saying things like: "Stop fighting! You're making me so angry. I can't take it anymore! Stop whining. I need you to listen." You are NOT alone.

Sometimes, we unconsciously allow our unmet needs and unrecognized feelings to direct our discipline choices. We ask our children to change and be flexible (which are executive-level brain skills) as we yell or demand that they do things (using our lower-level survival skills) but cooperation is about working together to achieve a mutually beneficial goal. We can't get rid of conflict, but we can change how we respond to it.

Here are some examples of typical parent desires, suggestions for possible needs underlying those preferences, and ideas for reframing requests to acknowledge the situation without blame, shame, judgment, or guilt.

BEHAVIORS I WANT TO SEE	MY REAL NEEDS	MY REQUEST REFRAME
I want my children to be kind and stop fighting with each other.	PEACE HARMONY UNITY RESPECT CONNECTION	I hear that you two are having a disagreement. I'd like you to show more respect for one another. How can we work on this together?
I want my child to accept my limits without whining or complaining.	UNDERSTANDING TO BE HEARD RECOGNITION COMMUNICATION CALM	You're upset because you think it's unfair. I want to understand. Show me/tell me more about how this makes you feel.
I want my child to stop being lazy.	RESPECT COOPERATION TRUST SUPPORT ORDER	I'd like your help. Would you be willing to empty the dishwasher? I'd like your cooperation. Do you need my help or can you clean up on your own?



# WHAT DO I NEED?

**Identifying My Needs:** In this exercise, practice identifying your real needs by separating them from the behaviors that you want your children to show. First, name the behavior you want to see. Next, dig deep to uncover what is motivating this desire. After you recognize your needs, rewrite your request to take responsibility for your actions, invite cooperation, and model respectful communication.

BEHAVIORS I WANT TO SEE	MY REAL NEEDS	MY REQUEST REFRAME