



## Human Needs and Social Relationships

### Introduction

Welcome to the Human Needs and Social Relationships session of the *Living in Balance* program. This session will look at the range of things that people need in order to survive and thrive. It will also consider how addiction, by affecting people's priorities, causes people to go without things they really need. The session will also focus particular attention on people's social needs, including the needs they have as parents.

### *What is in this session?*

This session has three major parts: (1) Human Needs, (2) Social Relationships, and (3) Introduction to Parenting.

- ✓ After participating in part 1, you will be able to
  - Understand different levels of needs and why they are important to people
  - Understand what is needed to develop healthy social relationships that can fulfill your needs
  - Understand how needs must be met before you can reach your full potential as a person
  - Recognize the qualities that will help you grow as a person



### **SESSION 21 HAS THREE MAJOR PARTS:**

1. Human Needs
2. Social Relationships
3. Introduction to Parenting



#### LEARNER OBJECTIVES FOR PART 1:

You will

- Understand different levels of needs and why they are important to people
- Understand what is needed to develop healthy social relationships that can fulfill your needs
- Understand how needs must be met before you can reach your full potential as a person
- Recognize the qualities that will help you grow as a person

- ✓ After participating in part 2, you will be able to
  - Understand the importance of social relationships in your life
  - Understand why you need to be able to take risks and reveal your feelings to others
  - Understand the importance of having people in your life and how other people (from friends to brothers and sisters) can shape your life
- ✓ After participating in part 3, you will be able to
  - Understand what is involved in being a parent and practicing good parenting
  - Understand the special needs that parents and children have

#### *What will be asked of you?*

You will be asked to look at how alcohol and other drugs disrupted your life and messed up your priorities. In particular, you will look at how they affected your relationships with others and what you can do to repair that damage by understanding your relationships. You will also be asked to have the courage to change those relationships for the better. If you are a parent, you will be asked to examine your relationships with your children to ensure that you're meeting your children's needs today.



### **Part 1: Human Needs**

Everyone has the same basic needs, such as the need for food, for shelter, and for companionship. These needs must be met in order for each person to live a healthy and happy life.

Many experts have tried to determine what are the most basic needs that each person shares. They developed the idea of "Levels of Needs," including the needs for survival, safety, belonging, and esteem, which enable people to fulfill their potential. The theory of Levels of Needs also shows how people are motivated to meet their needs.

People in active addiction typically can't focus properly on their own basic needs. This happens because alcohol and other drug use becomes a greater need than anything else. As a result, addicted people often cannot grow emotionally or socially.

During recovery, people have a new chance to return to addressing their basic needs and begin to grow and fulfill their potential.



**EXERCISE 1**

*Please answer the following question:*

What basic needs were you willing to ignore when you were using?

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**Biological Needs**

The most basic human needs are our biological needs, such as the need for food and water. We need these to survive. When these needs are not met, people temporarily set aside their emotional and psychological needs in order to fulfill their biological needs. While people are trying to meet their biological needs, everything else is put aside. For example, if you are hungry, your drive to eat is stronger than your drive for companionship. Another example is with children. When they are hungry for food, they are not able to concentrate on learning in school or getting along with others.

**The most basic human needs are our biological needs.**

In much the same way, during active addiction, the drive for alcohol and other drug use is stronger than most other needs. Obtaining and using substances become more important than most basic needs. In this way, drugs become an intense need and drive.

However, the need for drugs can never be satisfied completely. During addiction, people put aside their needs and usually can't concentrate on emotional or social growth.



**EXERCISE 2**

*Please answer the following questions:*

1. Addicted people often talk about their need for alcohol or other drugs as a "thirst," "hunger," or "drive." Did your addiction feel like a basic need, such as your need for food and water?

Yes     No    *(If yes, please explain.)*

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2. How was your need for alcohol or other drugs different from other biological needs, such as your need for air or water?

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**During active addiction, the drive for alcohol and other drug use is stronger than most other needs.**

## Safety Needs

When people's biological needs are satisfied, they can then pay attention to their environment. They can then focus on living conditions, such as having a safe place to live, sleep, and eat. People can gain control over their physical environment in other ways as well. They can hold jobs that give them financial security and a level of security in their community.

At the level of safety, the issues are still rather basic, such as having a job, a place to live, and a way to consistently have food and other basic needs. During active addiction, many of these safety needs are not met. People lose their jobs, become evicted, or get kicked out of their house. While they may recognize the importance of these things, they are not willing to give up what has become a more basic need—using alcohol and other drugs—to keep them. For example, people may spend their rent money on drugs and lose their apartment.



### EXERCISE 3

*Please answer the following questions:*

1. When you were actively using drugs, did you feel safe and secure in your life? Did you feel that you were in danger of losing something important, such as your job or apartment? Please explain.

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2. Did alcohol or other drugs ever threaten your basic living conditions, such as having a place to stay or having a job?

- Yes     No

If so, why do you think that happened?

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**Social Needs**

Only after people’s basic biological needs are met, and they have some control over their environment, are they able to turn their attention to meeting social needs. Although there are many different types of social needs, the most basic is the need for affection and love.

Fulfilling social needs generally involves being part of some type of group or groups that have a common purpose. While addicted, people are typically part of a group that includes other people who drink, use drugs, or sell drugs. These relationships center on drinking and using drugs. These relationships are often based on using each other to get drugs, selfishness, exploitation, and sometimes violence. Some relationships during addiction may feel like loving relationships, but these are often really just another form of addiction, meeting very basic physical and emotional needs.

When someone in such a group stops drinking or using drugs, the group can no longer satisfy his or her social needs. The person in recovery has a need to be with people who support his or her recovery. Thus, people in recovery generally find new and healthy relationships that support recovery. Indeed, in self-help groups, there is a shared interest in becoming and staying drug free, but the core theme is genuine concern, genuine friendship, and genuine love based on giving as well as taking.



**People in recovery generally find new and healthy relationships that support recovery.**



**EXERCISE 4**

*Please answer the following questions:*

1. Before your addiction, did you have a circle of friends who didn't drink or use drugs? Or at least whose life did not focus on drinking and drugging?

Yes     No

If so, did you and your friends share some kind of common interest or activity, such as sports or work?

Yes     No

2. During active addiction, did you replace your old friends with drug-using acquaintances, or did your old friends start using alcohol and other drugs, too?

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3. How comfortable are you with the social aspects of the Twelve Step programs?

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4. In what situations have you felt really accepted by others for who you are?

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**TWELVE ISSUES FOR HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS:**

- 1. Vulnerability
- 2. Understanding
- 3. Empathy
- 4. Compassion
- 5. Respect
- 6. Trust
- 7. Acceptance
- 8. Honesty
- 9. Communication
- 10. Compatibility
- 11. Personal integrity
- 12. Consideration

**What Makes for a Healthy Relationship?**

Psychologist Janet Woititz, Ed.D., teaches that healthy relationships are centered on twelve different issues (listed to the left and below). Each of these things needs to be present in some degree for the relationship to be healthy. As you read through this list, consider the questions for each issue and how each of them applies to your relationships with other people.



**EXERCISE 5**

*Please answer the following questions:*

1. **Vulnerability:** *To what degree am I willing to let down my barriers? To what degree am I willing to allow the other person to affect my feelings?*

What role does vulnerability have in your personal relationships? Are you willing to be vulnerable with other people? What does *vulnerability* mean to you?

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2. **Understanding:** *Do I understand the other person? Do I understand what other people mean by what they say or by what they do?*

What role does understanding have in your personal relationships? Do you make an effort to understand other people? Explain.

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3. **Empathy:** *To what degree am I able to allow myself to feel what other people feel?*

What role does empathy have in your personal relationships? Are you able to understand what someone else is feeling?

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4. **Compassion:** *Do I have a genuine concern for the issues that cause the other person concern?*

What role does compassion have in your personal relationships? Are you able to feel real concern for what others are going through? Explain.

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5. **Respect:** *Do I treat the other person as if he or she is of value?*

What role does respect have in your personal relationships? Do you respect others? Explain.

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6. **Trust:** *To what degree and on what levels am I willing to let the other person know things about me that I don't want everybody to know?*

What role does trust have in your personal relationships?  
Do you trust others?

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7. **Acceptance:** *Am I okay the way I am? Is my friend?*

What role does acceptance have in your personal relationships? Do you accept who you are and accept others for who they are? Explain.

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**What role does trust have in your personal relationships? Do you trust others?**

8. **Honesty:** *Is this relationship built on truth, or are there games involved?*

What role does honesty have in your personal relationships?  
Are you honest with others? Explain.

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9. **Communication:** *Are you able to talk freely about issues that are important in the relationship? Do you know how to do it so you are understood and the relationship goes forward because of the sharing?*

What role does communication have in your personal relationships? Do you communicate well with others?  
Explain.

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10. **Compatibility:** *To what degree do you like and dislike the same things? To what degree does it matter if you differ with others regarding certain attitudes and beliefs?*

What role does compatibility have in your personal relationships? Do you feel compatible with the people in your life? Explain.

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11. **Personal integrity:** *To what degree am I able to be honest with myself as well as with the other person?*

What role does integrity have in your personal relationships? Do you feel that you are able to be true to yourself when you're with the people in your life? Explain.

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The previous listing and explanation of twelve issues for a healthy relationship are adapted from Woititz, Janet, Ed.D., *Adult Children of Alcoholics*, Deerfield Beach, Fla.: Health Communications, 1990.

**Feeling good about oneself is called positive self-esteem.**

**12. Consideration:** *Am I mindful of the other person's needs as well as my own?*

What role does consideration have in your personal relationships? Are you considerate toward other people? Explain.

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**Esteem Needs**

People help each other by being good models for how to act and reach healthy goals. People can help each other by encouraging one another to go after positive goals. When you've reached these goals, people can help you by telling you you've done a good job. When you get positive feedback from others, you feel good about yourself. Feeling good about oneself is called positive self-esteem.

When you were using, you probably wanted to reach certain goals. You may have promised yourself that you would save money or stop drinking or using drugs at certain times (or perhaps altogether), but you were probably unable to reach these goals.

In recovery, and especially in Twelve Step groups, people learn to make and reach realistic goals. When they accomplish these goals, they receive strong approval, positive feedback, and praise from other recovering friends. When you get this support and positive feedback over and over again, it helps to build your self-esteem.



**EXERCISE 6**

*Please answer the following questions:*

1. When you were actively drinking alcohol and using other drugs, were you able to make and reach important goals in life?

Yes     No

If not, what happened to keep you from doing so?

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2. Since going to treatment, what goals have you made for yourself? What are some of the goals that you had at an earlier point in your life, then put aside, but would like to renew now?

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3. What does *self-esteem* mean to you? What does it feel like when someone says good things about what you've done?

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**Self-actualization is a way of saying that someone is becoming the best person possible, regardless of what kind of job, skills, or intelligence he or she has.**

### Reaching Your Potential

The psychologist Abraham Maslow developed something he called a “hierarchy of needs” to understand and describe the stages that people go through along the path of reaching one’s potential. He found that people who had reached their potential shared certain qualities. He called the process of finding those qualities and reaching one’s potential “self-actualization.”

Self-actualization is a way of saying that someone is becoming the best person possible, regardless of what kind of job, skills, or intelligence he or she has. What is important is how well people perform based on their own abilities.



#### EXERCISE 7

*Please answer the following questions:*

1. What does it mean to you to reach your potential?

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2. Is there something in your life that you think is preventing you from reaching your potential? What do you think you can do about it?

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3. Do you think that reaching your potential is something rare, or is it a normal part of living? Explain.

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4. Name someone you know who you believe has reached his or her potential.

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**Qualities of Self-Growth**

Certain personal qualities make self-growth possible. You don't need to have all of these at all times, and some take months or years to develop. However, these are all important qualities that you can work on developing. The process of recovery, especially involvement with self-help groups, will help these qualities to grow:

- Tolerating uncertainty in life
- Accepting yourself and others
- Genuinely caring for others
- Having a sense of humor
- Being able to have deep relationships with others
- Having spontaneity and creativity
- Being able to spend time alone in a healthy manner
- Accepting apparent opposites within yourself (such as weakness and strength, love and hate, masculine and feminine)

**Certain personal qualities, such as accepting yourself and others, make self-growth possible.**





**EXERCISE 8**

*Please answer the following questions:*

1. Do any of the qualities listed on the previous page seem to come naturally to you?

Yes     No

If yes, which ones?

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2. Are there ones you've developed but only through an effort on your part? Explain.

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3. Which of these qualities do you have the most difficulty with? Why do you think that is?

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## Part 2: Social Relationships

Social relationships are an important part of everyone’s life. Addiction may have temporarily hurt your social relationships. But in recovery you can begin a process of repairing them.

You may need to relearn (or learn for the first time) how to have healthy relationships with others, how to cooperate and compromise, and how to accept social responsibilities. In recovery, you can learn how to live in balance socially—balancing things such as dependence and independence, leading and following, closeness and isolation—in order to maintain healthy relationships.

Substances of abuse have had a major and bad impact on your social life. You may have dropped healthy relationships and made unhealthy ones that centered on drinking and drugging. You may have developed dishonest relationships with family and friends.

Luckily, you can learn to make and keep healthy social relationships. You can do this by identifying your strengths and weaknesses regarding social relations and make goals so you can improve in this area. You may need to learn how to ask for help from a friend, a lover, a co-worker, or a group of people. You may need to ask for help from your Higher Power.



### EXERCISE 9

Please answer the following questions:

1. Who are the important people in your life? Why are they important?

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### LEARNER OBJECTIVES FOR PART 2:

You will

- Understand the importance of social relationships in your life
- Understand why you need to be able to take risks and reveal your feelings to others
- Understand the importance of having people in your life and how other people (from friends to brothers and sisters) can shape your life

**You can learn to make and keep healthy social relationships.**

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2. In terms of your social well-being, what are your personal strengths?

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3. In terms of your social well-being, what are some areas for improvement?

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4. In terms of your social well-being, what are your most important goals?

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5. In order to reach these goals, what steps will you need to take?

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**Rediscovering Relationships**

Addiction does a lot of damage to relationships. Your substance use competes with relationships and often wins. Healthy relationships are replaced by unhealthy ones that center on alcohol and other drug use.

Part of recovery is rediscovering healthy relationships that center on emotional health, growth, common interests, and shared enjoyment. It is a big shift from a destructive, self-centered, or drug-centered lifestyle to a healthy lifestyle. It will take time and won't always be easy.

**Part of recovery is rediscovering healthy relationships.**



**EXERCISE 10**

*Please answer the following questions:*

1. When you were using alcohol or other drugs, were there any relationships that were more important than drugs?

Yes     No    *(If yes, please explain.)*

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2. In sobriety, what kinds of healthy relationships have you developed?

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**Hiding your feelings  
stops people from  
really understanding  
how you feel.**

### **Revealing Feelings to Others**

Many people find it difficult to let others know when they are hurt, they are angry, or they disagree. Most have had experiences where they regretted not speaking up.

Hiding your feelings stops people from really understanding how you feel. Hiding your feelings also makes it hard to have honest conversations with others. Such conversations might otherwise resolve problems.

Many people find it hard to let others know when they are feeling love, caring, concern, or appreciation. They may keep these feelings hidden and not let others know how they really feel.

Most people find it hard to share deeply felt emotions with others because of what they imagine might happen. They may think the other person will feel uncomfortable or embarrassed. Some people believe that if they cry, the other person will think they're weak. Others imagine that it is simply safer not to let anyone see their real self, so they don't share their real feelings with other people.



**EXERCISE 11**

*Please answer the following questions:*

1. How did you feel the first time you talked about your feelings in a self-help group or treatment meeting?

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2. Before you spoke, what did you imagine might happen after you spoke? Did it happen?

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3. How did you feel after you spoke about your feelings?

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**Revealing your true feelings is risky, but it is a necessary part of emotional growth.**

### Take the Risk

Everyone has qualities that they don't like and would like to change.

Revealing your true feelings is risky, but it is a necessary part of emotional growth. The rewards far exceed the risks. Communicating with your family and friends, or trying to make friends, involves the risk of letting people know who you really are.

When you were using, you may have kept your feelings to yourself to protect yourself and keep other people away. You may have also had emotional outbursts in which you battered people with pent-up emotions. Neither of these things produces good results, and neither is healthy for your recovery. In recovery, you need to deal with reality, and that includes sharing real emotions.



### EXERCISE 12

*Please answer the following questions:*

1. Do you feel that you are holding back emotionally from other people, perhaps waiting for a better or "safer" time?

Yes     No    *(If yes, please explain.)*

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2. What is the worst thing that can happen to you if you share an important, troubling part of your life with someone else?

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## Relationships and Independence

Society puts major emphasis on independence and self-reliance. In fact, success is often measured in terms of how independent you are.

The recovery process is not built on independence, nor is it built on being overly dependent. Rather, recovery is built on the idea of *interdependence*, the dependence of people on one another for a common good. In plain English, it means, “I depend on you, and you depend on me. We depend on each other.”

Interdependence means that people cooperate and share resources and strengths. The qualities of an interdependent relationship include (1) open communication, (2) shared decisions, (3) joint action, (4) trust, and (5) concern for each other.

During early recovery, you may need to take more than you can give to others. As you gain time in recovery and become more comfortable with social situations, your ability to give to others will increase. You will also realize, if you haven’t already, that you need other people in your life, and they need you as well.

**Recovery is built on the idea of *interdependence*, the dependence of people on one another for a common good.**



### EXERCISE 13

*Please answer the following questions:*

1. What does being independent mean to you?

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2. How does it feel when you ask someone for help?

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3. How does it feel when someone asks you for help?

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4. What does being interdependent mean to you?

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**Brothers and Sisters**

Not everyone has a brother or a sister, but many people do. Growing up and living with brothers, sisters, cousins, and other family members can have a strong influence on your personality and emotional development.

Having brothers and sisters (and not having them) may affect your personality, the way you interact with others, and your ability to solve problems. In particular, living with brothers and sisters can give you unique experiences regarding trust, cooperation, competition, honesty, and communication. These experiences can shape the ways that you are trustful or distrustful, cooperative or competitive, honest or dishonest, open or emotionally distant.

These early family experiences help to shape the way that people see the world. People who have brothers and sisters may learn that cooperation with others is more important than competition. They may learn to solve problems in a group setting with input from others rather than on an individual basis. On the other hand, competition with brothers and sisters may lead someone to have a very competitive personality.



**Growing up and living with brothers, sisters, cousins, and other family members can have a strong influence on your personality and emotional development.**



**EXERCISE 14**

*Please answer the following questions:*

1. If you grew up with brothers and sisters, what experiences with them do you think had the most influence on you?  
How did these experiences influence you?

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**Old Friends and New Friends**

One of the most obvious and common signs of addiction is getting rid of old friends and replacing them with drug-using friends. (Unless, of course, your old friends start using alcohol and other drugs as well.) Old hobbies and habits get replaced with activities that center on obtaining and using drugs.

Similarly, one of the most obvious and common signs of a good recovery is getting rid of drug-using friends and replacing them with healthier, drug-free friends. People also often return to earlier, healthy activities that they stopped doing when they started using alcohol and other drugs.

Being part of a group means accepting the values and expectations of that group. Even a casual group of friends has unspoken rules and expectations about what is important and how to act. Most of the time, people are not aware of these hidden influences on their behavior. However, in recovery, it is important to remain very aware of these rules because they can influence whether or not you relapse. In particular, one of the most common reasons for relapse is attempting to stay close with your drug-using friends and acquaintances.

**One of the most common reasons for relapse is attempting to stay close with your drug-using friends and acquaintances.**



**EXERCISE 15**

*Please answer the following questions:*

1. Before your addiction, what people did you associate with?  
What were they like?

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2. During your addiction, what people did you spend time with? What were they like?

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3. At this point in your recovery, what people do you associate with? What are they like?

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## Part 3: Introduction to Parenting

### What Is Parenting?

Parenting means taking care of babies, young children, school-age children, and teenagers. Parenting includes the following:

- Taking care of a baby before it is born by eating healthy food, getting medical care, and staying in recovery—or by helping a pregnant mother do these things.
- The daily care given by a parent or other relative or friend to a child. This includes providing food, clothing, shelter, medical care, and a safe environment. It also includes giving a child love and attention.
- The care given to a child by other people who are with that child during the day, such as baby-sitters, nursery school workers, and teachers.
- The occasional care given by relatives, friends, and neighbors who come in touch with a child. This includes briefly spending time with a child, watching that he or she doesn't get hurt, showing affection, teaching small lessons, and playing games.
- Accepting the role of being a nurturing adult to a child. It includes preparing a child to become an adult.
- Learning about the developmental stages of children and helping children to achieve the tasks of each stage.



#### LEARNER OBJECTIVES FOR PART 3:

You will

- Understand what is involved in being a parent and practicing good parenting
- Understand the special needs that parents and children have

**Parenting means taking care of babies, young children, school-age children, and teenagers.**



**EXERCISE 16**

*Please answer the following questions:*

1. What does *parenting* mean to you?

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2. What people provided parenting to you as a child?

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3. What role does parenting play in your life? Are you providing parenting to a child? Explain.

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**Adults Who Care for Children: The Need for Support**

**Who are parents?** The people who raise children and have parenting responsibilities are parents. These may include biological parents, stepparents, foster parents, grandparents, older brothers and sisters, other relatives, or close friends.

**What kinds of support do parents need?** Parents and other caregivers need basic support and social support. *Basic support* includes such things as food, shelter, and clothing. *Social support* involves other people and agencies that can help a person with the job of raising children.

People who take care of children must also take care of themselves. No matter how much love parents have for children, if they are constantly tired, worried, anxious, or depressed, they will not have enough energy to be effective parents.

When people feel stressed out, depressed, tired, or worried, the normal demands that children make can seem overwhelming or can make that person angry. During times like this, it is difficult to be an effective parent. This happens to all parents at times. When it happens frequently, it could mean that the parent is not taking care of his or her own needs. It may also mean that the parent doesn't know how to handle the responsibilities of parenting, and may need to learn some parenting skills.



**EXERCISE 17**

*Please answer the following questions:*

1. Did you ever get angry at someone you cared about because you were tired or stressed out? Did you understand what was causing your anger? What happened?

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2. Have you ever felt overwhelmed by the responsibilities of parenting? What happened?

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3. What things do children need most from parents?

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4. What things do parents need most when it comes to raising kids?

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**Families Help Children to Get Their Needs Met**

A family is the primary group responsible for meeting a child’s basic needs. There are different kinds of families, and there are many different ways of raising children.

**The nuclear family consists of two parents and their children living in one household.** The parents share the work of making a living and taking care of their children. This family type is the traditional family form in the United States. However, it is much less common now than it used to be.

**A single parent and his or her children are also a family.** While this type of family is smaller in size than a nuclear family, and has fewer people sharing the work of making a living and taking care of the children, it is another common family form in the United States.

**The extended family is one of the most common forms of family in the world.** Whether the children have one or two birth parents, an extended family will include other relatives such as grandparents, aunts and uncles, cousins, and friends who are accepted as part of the family. Sometimes many members of the extended family live together and share chores and responsibilities. Other members of the extended family may help out occasionally and provide emotional or financial help.



**There are different kinds of families, and there are many different ways of raising children.**



**EXERCISE 18**

*Please answer the following questions:*

1. In what type of family were you raised? In what type of family are you now?

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2. What are some of the challenges that you face because of the type of family that you are in today?

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**Basic Family Support**

Basic support involves giving children enough food to eat, a stable place to live, clothes to wear, and basic materials such as diapers or school supplies. This kind of support is called “basic” because it is required. Food, for example, is a basic need for everybody. Diapers are a basic need for a baby; school supplies are basic needs for school-age children.

Addicted people may ignore basic needs. They may put more money and effort into drinking and using drugs than they put into meeting their basic needs or those of their children. People in active addiction will often have a great need for basic support for their families.

Substance use can interfere with getting basic needs met. Alcohol and other drugs upset the natural balance of your brain’s chemistry. The craving for alcohol and other drugs becomes stronger than your normal drive for food, water, and shelter. Thus, alcohol and drug craving can push aside basic support needs, including what you need to be an effective parent. Craving can even push aside the normally strong bonds between parent and child.



**EXERCISE 19**

*Please answer the following questions:*

1. Did you ever neglect your own basic needs because of your substance use?

Yes     No    *(If yes, please explain what happened.)*

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2. Did you ever neglect the needs of a child because of your substance use?

Yes     No    *(If yes, please explain what happened.)*

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3. If you've had the experience of neglecting yourself or a child because of substance use, how do you think you can use that experience in your recovery?

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## Social Support

For parents, social support can come in many forms. It can be

- One or more people whom a parent can trust and talk to—in other words, friends
- One or more other parents with whom a parent can talk about the joys and problems of parenthood
- One or more people who can sometimes provide practical help with parenting chores, such as running errands, cooking a meal, doing a load of laundry, or simply watching a child while the parent rests
- One or more people who can provide expert advice about problems in parenting, such as a counselor, therapist, physician, or minister
- People and organizations that can provide special kinds of services, information, and even recreational opportunities for a parent and child

Alcohol and other drug use can interfere with getting social needs met. During active addiction, the need for alcohol or other drugs is more powerful than a person's social values and needs. When someone is in an active addiction, friendships end, trusts are broken, and the person becomes increasingly isolated. Very often, addicted people will take advantage of others in order to get money or drugs, which causes other people to become reluctant to help.

Parenting during recovery means that you must take the necessary steps to reestablish healthy relationships and create new social bonds and networks. Part of effective parenting is seeking out and getting needed help with parenting.

**Alcohol and other  
drug use can  
interfere with getting  
social needs met.**





**EXERCISE 20**

*Please answer the following questions:*

1. If you are a parent, is there someone with whom you can talk openly about parenting?

Yes     No

Who? \_\_\_\_\_

2. If you are a parent, is there someone who helps you with your parenting responsibilities?

Yes     No    *(If yes, please explain.)*

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Do you help someone else with his or her parenting responsibilities?

Yes     No    *(If yes, please explain.)*

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3. In what ways does recovery make parenting more difficult?  
In what ways does recovery make parenting easier?

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## **The Needs of Parents**

Parenting can be one of the most difficult and challenging jobs in life. Parents also have special things that they need in order to be successful at parenting. Some of these needs are immediate needs—things they must have in order to survive. Others can be described as long-term needs, things parents may not need constantly, but which make them thrive, feel satisfied with their lives, and feel confident in their ability to meet their children’s needs.

**Biological needs.** Biological or physical needs are perhaps the most basic needs of all. The most obvious biological needs are food and water. Other biological needs include good physical health, good hygiene, enough sleep, and even relaxation. Without having physical and biological needs met, adults cannot be effective parents.

**Emotional needs.** In order to function as effective parents, adults need to be emotionally and psychologically healthy. While it is normal for people to have emotional highs and lows, parents need to be able to have emotional stability and not constant crisis if they are going to be effective at parenting. Parenting makes special demands on a person, and parents will have emotional needs that nonparents do not have to deal with.

**Social needs.** Humans are “social animals.” They need to be around other people at least some of the time, and most people realize that being too isolated is unhealthy. People have a need to share with others, to teach and learn from others, and to help and be helped by others. Parents have their own social needs for themselves and their children, and fulfilling these needs may put additional demands on parents.

**Spiritual needs.** Most people have the need to explore why they exist. Parents may wonder why they were put on earth or why bad things happen to generally good people. In many different ways, people continually search for meaning and a deeper understanding of their place in the world.



**Material needs.** Most of us have wondered what it would be like to win the lottery so we could buy anything we want. In reality, there are a few material things that are absolutely necessary for being an effective parent. For example, parents will need to buy a crib or diapers for an infant. For school-age children, they may need to obtain textbooks and school supplies. Without these things, the health, safety, and growth of a child may be endangered. Parents may also need transportation to work or to the store to provide for their children’s needs. While some material things can be described as “wants,” other things really are needs.



**EXERCISE 21**

*Please answer the following questions:*

1. Which of the needs discussed above are most important for you? Which are the least important? Why?

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2. In general, how do you think the needs of a parent differ from those of a nonparent?

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## Children's Basic Needs

There are certain needs so basic that without them, children will have a hard time surviving. Also, if they don't have these needs adequately met, children will have a hard time growing and thriving as adults.



**Children of all ages need someone to provide them with love, attention, and appreciation.**

- Young children need someone to take care of them physically. They need someone to provide them with food and drink, to help them stay healthy, and to carry them when they are too young to get around by themselves.
- All children, especially young children, need someone to protect them from physical danger and emotional harm.
- Children of all ages need someone to provide them with love, attention, and appreciation. Without this, children will not develop emotional bonds with others.
- In addition to love, children need to have limits set for them in a kind but firm way. They need to learn how to behave with others through appropriate discipline from adults. This does not mean physical punishment, but using parenting strategies such as giving time-outs and positive reinforcement to teach children self-discipline.
- All children need someone who will teach them what they need to know, someone they can imitate and who can be a role model. Most importantly, children need someone who can educate them about right and wrong.



### EXERCISE 22

*Please answer the following questions:*

1. When you were a child, were your parents unable to meet some of your basic needs?

Yes     No

If so, how did that affect you?

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2. If you have children, do they have any needs that you aren't consistently able to meet?

- Yes     No

If so, what can you do to get help in meeting those needs?

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***When children's needs aren't met.*** Children whose basic needs are not met can be seriously harmed. They might be so emotionally harmed that they have great difficulty becoming healthy adults.

Many years ago, in an orphanage, babies were becoming sick and even dying despite the fact that they received proper physical care. The babies were bathed, changed, fed, and properly clothed, but they stayed in their cribs all day. They weren't cuddled, talked to, or played with, so they didn't develop normally.

They had no energy and showed no reaction toward things going on around them. They were wasting away until people figured out that it was the lack of love, stimulation, and a chance to learn that was harming them.



**EXERCISE 23**

*Please answer the following questions:*

1. What needs of these orphans were not being met? If you were the manager in charge of this orphanage, what would you do to correct the situation?

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2. What can happen to a child if a need is not met? What can happen from lack of physical care? Lack of love? Lack of protection from emotional harm? Lack of protection from physical harm? Lack of teaching and guidance? Describe some examples.

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**Repairing the harm.** Addiction can harm effective parenting in many ways. Addiction can weaken the emotional bonding between parent and child, diminish the parent’s sense of social responsibility, and hurt the infant exposed to drugs before birth.

While a parent’s addiction can seriously harm a child, that harm can be repaired by providing good care once the parent enters recovery. Children have a remarkable ability to recover from poor treatment, and they respond well to affection, attention, and love. For example, babies who have been harmed because their mothers took drugs while pregnant can regain their health if they get attention and special care, and are treated with extra patience.

When parents enter treatment and recovery, they may become depressed and sad about the way that they treated their children in the past. It becomes important for them that they specifically address these issues in support and therapy groups, and perhaps in individual therapy. It will not help improve parenting to keep feeling guilty and blaming oneself. Rather, parents who have harmed their children because of their alcohol and other drug use need to take steps that will make their *current* relationships with their children healthy and positive.



**EXERCISE 24**

*Please answer the following questions:*

- 1. If you’re a parent, are there any specific ways that your addiction may have harmed your child? What have you done to make that situation better?

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**Parents need to make their *current* relationships with their children healthy and positive.**

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2. What steps can parents who harmed their children because of addiction take in order to move on and become effective parents?

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### **Session 21 Summary**

In this session you have looked at the things human beings need in order to survive and thrive. This session has also discussed addiction and how it affects people's priorities, causing them to go without things they really need. Special attention was given to the need for social interaction, and how you can better understand your ways of relating to others and improve them. Finally, the session has introduced the idea of parenting. If you are a parent, this session has asked you to look at how you meet the needs of your children as well as how your special needs as a parent are being met by others.