



## Clear Thinking Issue 129

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## Simple ways to check for lifestyle health in therapy

Article by *Mark Tyrrell*

Each and every one of us has a number of primal emotional and physical needs. When these needs are not adequately met, we fall prey to every kind of emotional disorder, from depression to addiction, in an often unconscious attempt to satisfy them *somehow*. When they are well met we feel fulfilled and contented and also have 'spare capacity' to focus on long term goals of our choice.

### The basic needs

We all need:

- to give and receive attention
- to feel safe and secure
- a sense of control
- a sense of status and competence and therefore self worth
- good nutrition, sleep and exercise

- to feel connected to a community and have a sense that we contribute and are respected
- to feel a sense of intimacy with at least one other person
- challenge and stimulation from our environment and opportunity to exercise creativity
- goals that bring meaning to our lives

Of course, many of these needs overlap and can be met in various combinations. But when you look at life from this perspective, it is easy to see how much negative impact *not* having these needs met over an extended period can have on people's lives.

And notice also how every form of human cruelty, from workplace bullying to political tyranny, involves *blocking* the meeting of one or more of these needs.

Now, unless we get a sense of how well these needs are being met in a client's life, and address any deficits, our attempts to help them risk ending up being no more than tinkering with symptoms (be it smoking, chronic drinking, or depression, or whatever).

So how do we go about ascertaining how well these needs are being met?

### 'Small talk' is sometimes 'big talk'

An elegant way to ascertain the health of someone's lifestyle is by asking general questions in the course of conversation. This can seem like no more than 'small talk' but it can reveal a great deal about their overall welfare.

For example:

*How often do you get to meet up with friends? (attention)*

*Can you and your partner really talk together? (attention)*

*How are you sleeping these days? (physical needs)*

*Are you happy with your diet? (physical needs)*

*How much exercise are you getting? (physical needs)*

*Is there anyone you feel really understands you and is close to you? (intimacy)*

*What choice do you have about what happens in your life? (control)*

*Do you have a clear sense of where you want to take things in life? (meaning)*

*Do you feel excited by stuff in your life? (stimulation)*

*What involvement do you have with people around you? (community)*

In practice, of course, you'll be able to ascertain the lifestyle health of your clients just by listening to them and encouraging them to talk about their lives. I am not suggesting that you should ask these exact questions, one after the other!

It's important that the conversation should flow naturally, rather than become an interrogation (however well-intentioned). These sample questions are just pointers to the kinds of thing to ask that will elicit answers specific to certain needs. Feel free to devise your own questions.

Unless we can gauge the extent to which these universal timeless - that's why they're 'primal' - basic human needs are being met, then we may end up like the man who wondered why his car wouldn't start but never checked to see if it had any fuel in the tank.

## **Save money on hypnosis scripts and receive 3 buying credits worth over \$26**

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Anyone joining the Growth Zone before Tuesday 27th September midnight GMT will receive 3 extra buying credits worth over \$26. You can use Growth Zone credits to buy scripts, audio, CDs or DVDs,

To claim your 3 credits, simply [join the Growth Zone](#), and forward your confirmation email to Kirstin at [support@unk.com](mailto:support@unk.com). The credits will be added to your Growth Zone account after Wednesday 28th September.

See you in a fortnight.

Mark Tyrrell  
Co-Founder  
Uncommon Knowledge

Psychology trainers since 1995

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