

# Fundamental Human Needs (FHN)

## Introduction for adults:

*"During the course of this work, the child does a little reading, writing, mathematics, history, geography, chemistry, physics, natural history, language, handwork, and artistic work." - Mario Montessori*

What's important is that any information that the child gains can be organized in the context of the bigger picture. They know how to relate the knowledge to some kind of greater vision that they have. Once we've initiated the knowledge of FHN, it doesn't matter from where we start. We want the children to choose some area and undertake personal research.

The chart helps the children to think about ordinary people and not about famous ones.

***Ordinary people give us a compass for living our life.***

The fundamental human needs charts are universal and timeless; they apply to all human beings of all times and all places, and also all ages (the difference is how the needs are manifested across the planes and how they are satisfied, but in principle they're universal).

Conditions are very different around the planet, so it is inevitable that human beings satisfy their needs in different ways depending on what the environment can offer.

The second plane children are able to explore different ways of life – fundamental human needs is a great material to understand what is the same and what is different. We want these second plane children to have an open mind.

We all, as human beings, share the same needs and same gifts. However, the solutions to these needs can vary enormously – from one part of the world to another; in the same part of the world over time. This work gives us a balanced perspective, showing what we share and what our differences are. **We hope the children can appreciate these differences (beyond just tolerating), so that they grow with an anti-racist perspective.**

# First Introduction to Fundamental Human Needs (for children)

## **MATERIAL:**

Fundamental Human Needs chart

Can be purchased [here](#) or made by hand

## **Approach #1: Displaying the chart**

- Display the chart at the children's eye level.
- See what the children's response is, what questions they have, etc.

## **Approach #2: Present the chart**

- You can do this if there's not much interest after displaying.
- You can present without displaying the chart, and start out with a discussion (have the chart handy).

## **PRESENTATION:**

(This is given in the form of a conversation. You start without the chart, and then introduce it after having the conversation.)

Today we want to think about human beings and about ourselves.

## **Shelter:**

- Ask the child to briefly describe their home.
- Discuss whether all humans have homes.
- Do people NEED to have a home? Why or why not?
- Discuss different types of homes: house, apartment, cabin, boat, RV, etc.

Let's think of other things that we need...

## **Food:**

- Discuss what they had for lunch.
- Ask if everyone eats the same thing as them.
- Discuss what happens if they don't eat or drink.
- Point out that all humans have this need, and meet it in different ways.

## **Clothing:**

- Discuss with the children what they are wearing.
- Ask: Why do we wear clothes?
- Is it necessary to wear clothes? Why or why not?

## **Transportation:**

- Ask the children how they normally get from place to place.
- Point out: we call this need to get from one place to another 'transportation'.
- Discuss different types of transportation: boats, horses, helicopters, etc.

**Defense:**

- Ask: What would you do if you felt frightened? What if parents feel frightened?
- Discuss: What if an entire country needed help? They would call the army.
- Point out: When a people feels the need to defend themselves, it's a need for defense.

**Culture/Art:**

- Discuss: Do you play an instrument, sing, paint, write?
- Ask: What sort of need do these activities satisfy? It's a way of expressing ourselves.
- Point out: people express themselves through dance, painting, sculpture, music, poetry, and more.

**Religion:**

- Explain: For some people, God helps them to focus on peace and positivity and to be thankful about the good things in their lives. People have felt a need to build special places in which to think about these things. There are people all over the world that feel this need; it's the need for religion.
- We have to remember that there are different religions, so people go to different places to satisfy this need.
- All the people have something in common: a need to think in a way that goes beyond our own personal lives. Many people associate that with God or the divine.

**Vanity:**

- Show your jewelry or point out the child's jewelry.
- Ask: Why do you wear jewelry?
- Discuss: Wearing them makes you feel good about yourself. Do you think that might be true for other people, too? We like to decorate ourselves with things that are bright and colorful and have special meaning to us.
- Point out: We can think of this as a need for vanity. We can think of vanity as looking in the mirror and being pleased with what we see.

**Introducing the Chart:**

Explain: *We have a chart that illustrates all these needs for us. This chart is not just for our needs, in the sense of our little group. These needs are shared by all human beings. That is why we call them fundamental human needs.*

Relate the discussion that you had with the children to what you see in the chart.

**Ask: What do you see that reminds you of what we discussed?**

**We want most of the discussion to come from the children,** but we can start it off.

**Example:** Julia says she plays the violin. We can't find the violin on the chart but we see a musical note. We can think of it as representing all instruments.

**Make sure the children understand the symbolism of the pictures on the chart** (the images only represent one way of meeting each need).

**Note:** In the chart, material needs show examples of the actual objects that satisfy the particular need. In the spiritual needs, however, the pictures are more symbolic and abstract.

Help the children understand the symbolism of the different religious icons. You can show them little black & white images that represent each religion (order: Jewish, Christian, Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, etc.).

**Note:** They can explore these religions around the world, including facts and details on each religion. If you do this exploration, you are helping children explore and understand religions and to be open to the reality of the world and its diversity.

### **Following Activities:**

- Books that cover the different needs:
  - [Human World](#) (non-fiction)
  - [Weslandia](#) (fiction)
- Cards that come with the downloadable material.
- Children can create their own chart and illustrate/cut pictures from magazines to show how they meet their fundamental needs.
- Experts in the different needs/knowledgeable practitioners: Make sure the children know about the visit ahead of time so they can prepare themselves psychologically.
- Magazines: for reading and collage work.
- Collection box: a box with items that illustrate one of the fundamental human needs (examples: decorative jewelry from different civilizations or types of fabrics or materials [wool, cotton, hemp] for making clothing)