

# Mindful Compassionate Dialogue – Core Concepts

In this work, the **quality of connection** with yourself and others is the primary focus of attention. Through cultivating the quality of connection needed in a given situation, true collaboration becomes possible.

**Feelings** are complex body sensations that arise based on the perception of **met or unmet needs**.

**Needs are universal**, and this universality can connect us to others. Because we all have the same needs, connecting with needs can help us access empathy and compassion.

**Empathy** is a willingness to offer curiosity and compassionate presence for another person's experience without trying to fix them or insert your own agenda.

**Honest expression** contains the intention to connect through shared vulnerability and self responsibility. It often includes an observation, thought, feeling, need, and request.

**Tragic strategies** are behaviors that attempt to meet needs (like all behaviors), but result in more unmet needs. Our goal is to find strategies to meet needs in harmony with others.

**Self-responsibility** involves distinguishing universal needs from the strategies to meet them. Knowing how you meet your needs and having multiple trusted strategies to meet a single need, allows for flexibility, creative collaboration, and meeting your needs in harmony with others.

**Reactivity:** Reactivity is defined as the misperception of threat to one or more needs. The most obvious symptom is contraction.

The concept of **Tender Needs** refers to a chronic reactive relationship to particular needs. Most reactivity is related to Tender Needs.

## Key Points of Focus in Dialogue

**Anchor:** Something you can do any time, anywhere, to shift into an expansive perspective and out of the trance of reactivity.

**Intentions:** Become aware of your intention before engaging in dialogue, e.g., "My intention to connect." Or, "My intention is to create shared understanding."

**Observation:** A specific, neutral description of the trigger moment or behavior that met or didn't meet needs; something a camera could record.

*Usually answers what, where, who, what, how long, how often*

**Thoughts:** The meaning you make of an observation: thoughts, ideas, interpretations, evaluations, stories, predictions, beliefs, etc.

*If you share these, it is helpful to only share what you think will lead to connection. At times, you can say something like, "I'm having a reactive thought," instead of sharing the thought.*

**Feelings:** Complex body sensations that signal the perception of met or unmet needs.

*It is helpful to focus on the top two or three feelings for a given situation*

**Needs:** Something you are valuing related to a given situation

*It is helpful to focus on the top two or three needs for a given situation*

**Requests:** A proposal of a strategy to meet needs

*Could be for yourself or someone else. Usually answers what, where, who, what, how long, how often. Appreciation usually does not include a request, rather, a phrase like, "Just wanted to let you know."*

**Negotiation:** Negotiation is the process of creating specific and doable agreements that can meet the needs expressed. When there is a particular quality of connection that includes mutual caring and respect, the process of negotiation can begin.

**MCD** describes 12 Relationship Competencies (72 skills) and nine supportive foundational practices. These foundational practices are the place to turn when you have difficulty with one of the 12 Relationship Competencies.