

## Psyche & Soul 8

### NEED FULFILMENT AND EMOTIONAL MATURATION

Podcast link:

<https://anchor.fm/boscom/episodes/2-8-Psyche--Soul---NEED-FULFILLMENT-AND-EMOTIONAL-MATURATION-23-eievct>

Hello, this is Jose Parappully, Salesian priest and clinical psychologist at Sumedha centre, Jeolikote, with another edition of Psyche & Soul.

This weekend we shall look at some basic needs that have to be satisfied for us to experience emotional maturation and wellbeing.

#### We Are All Needy!

All of us – infants, children, adolescents and adults - are needy! Needy for food, needy for rest, needy for attention, needy for appreciation, needy for love ... and so on.

When our need is fulfilled, we feel happy and we spread happiness around. Just think of an infant that has been breastfed – and the blissful face of satisfaction and contentment that results. And how that bliss becomes infectious, bringing happiness to the mother and the others around.

Our happiness depends, among other important contributors, to need fulfilment. A fundamental principle in psychology is that “All behaviour is need-driven!” In other words, we behave in a particular way - whether that behaviour is good, bad, beautiful or ugly - because we have a need that we want to satisfy.

The various theories of development that we have explored in the previous columns – Eriksonian, Self Psychology, and Attachment -- describe the healthy ways to fulfil these needs and what happens when we are able or not able to fulfil them.

#### Basic Emotional Needs

Many of us would be familiar with Abraham Maslow’s Hierarchy of Human Needs – represented by the famous triangle, at the wide base of which is survival needs for food, shelter and clothing and at the narrow top the self-actualization needs. Maslow refers to all human needs.

In this podcast we shall focus only on our emotional or psychological needs. Psychologists have been trying to short list the basic psychological needs. One such short list is the one proposed by Richard Ryan and Edward Deci, who formulated what is known as “Self-Determination Theory.”

According to the Ryan and Deci there are three basic emotional needs. When these are satisfied we grow up healthy, are driven by intrinsic motivation, and experience a sense of well-being. When these are not realized our emotional development is stunted, motivation diminished and our happiness compromised.

Which are these basic emotional needs?

1) *Relatedness*: the need for belongingness and connectedness, to feel accepted and loved; 2) *Competence*: the need to have a sense of self-efficacy, to feel that we are capable achieving desired results, to feel confident that we can be successful and effective in what we set out to do; and 3) *Autonomy*: the freedom to give direction to our lives, to make choices or have a say on matters that affect our lives. These basic needs must be satisfied, not only in childhood, but across the life span for us to experience an ongoing sense well-being

### **Basic Needs and Intrinsic Motivation**

One major dynamics that we need to keep in mind in understanding emotional maturation is motivation. Success in life as well as satisfaction in life is built on what is called *intrinsic motivation* which refers to doing an activity for the inherent satisfaction of the activity itself, that is, when we are motivated by the value of an activity or by an abiding personal interest in it. On the other hand, *extrinsic motivation* is at work when an activity is undertaken to attain some expected or promised external rewards contingent on compliance or task performance.

Thus, in the school setting, intrinsic motivation is involved when one studies because one is really interested in the subject. Extrinsic motivation is involved when one studies because of the benefits it may bring.

The basic needs of relatedness, competence and autonomy are all involved in fostering intrinsic motivation.

A secure, supportive relational base is essential for developing intrinsic motivation. For example, when children engaged in a task are ignored by their caretakers (when there is no mirroring) they are observed to have low intrinsic motivation and their achievement level is lowered. When students experience their teachers as cold and uncaring, intrinsic motivation is reduced. Thus, high quality performance seems to require the presence of appreciative and encouraging mirroring figures.

Opportunities for choice, initiative, creativity and experimentation, so very necessary to build competence, also enhance intrinsic motivation because these provide us a greater feeling of autonomy. Thus, when, both children and adults are given freedom to organize their activities the way they would like to, they are more intrinsically motivated and show greater interest and creativity.

Research has shown that teachers who support autonomy generate in their students greater intrinsic motivation, curiosity, and desire to face and overcome challenges. On the contrary, students who are taught with a more controlling approach not only lose initiative, but learn less effectively. Parents who support autonomy, compared to controlling parents, have children who are more intrinsically motivated.

In regard to adults, autonomy basically means the capacity to make one's own decisions without undue pressure or fear. It supposes a setting where thinking and personal responsibility are not stifled or just tolerated, but encouraged.

### **A Facilitative Environment**

An important point to note here is that what matters more than someone helping us to meet these basic needs is whether the environment in which we find ourselves is one that facilitates or thwarts the fulfillment of these needs. An environment that encourages relatedness, competence and autonomy facilitates healthy emotional development. On the other hand, an environment characterized by lack of connectedness, excessive control, non-optimal challenges, disrupt our inherent growth potentials, curb our initiative and lead to distress and psychopathology.

So if we are to grow emotionally healthy as well achieve our potential for growth and high quality performance we need environments that foster the fulfillment of these basic emotional needs. And if we want others to experience the same, we need to create from them such an environment.

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### **Quiet Time**

We could take a few moments to consider if our needs for relatedness, autonomy and competence are being met or not. We could also consider how we are helping those around us to meet these needs.

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We know that our God is very interested in our emotional wellbeing, our health and happiness. God wants us to experience relatedness, become competent. God respects our freedom to make choices by giving us free will. God wants us to make choices that lead to health and happiness. But God does not force us.

We could stay for a while with the memories and feelings this reflection is evoking in us and talk to this God about our experiences and desires and longings related to these basic emotional needs for relatedness, competence and autonomy.

Have a pleasant weekend where you experience enhanced relatedness, competence and autonomy. Be well, be safe, be blessed.

**Jose Parappully SDB, PhD**