



## STEP 5: CONSIDER THE INTENTIONS AND UNMET NEEDS OF OTHERS

**Directions:** In difficult situations, I can de-escalate the intensity of my emotions by considering the possible unmet needs and intentions that could be fueling the behaviors I find disruptive and ineffective. From a

more grounded stance I am far more likely to respond in effective ways. I first learned of this approach through the work of Marshall Rosenberg and Nonviolent Communication.

For each of the scenarios below, imagine what might be the unmet needs fueling the person's unproductive behaviors. Some of the needs and values that seem particularly related to difficult situations I experience include dignity, respect, trust, integrity, safety, belonging, acceptance, honesty, connection, support, mutuality, partnering, community, ease, harmony, fairness, understanding, clarity, recognition, competence, effectiveness, consideration, purpose, equity, and inclusion.

Unproductive behavior	Their possible unmet needs
1. Gossiping about your to colleagues	To belong, to matter, self-expression, connection
2. Someone stays quiet and colludes with offensive behaviors	Safety, security, to belong, peace, acceptance
3. Someone is texting on their smart phone during the conversation.	
4. Someone is trying to control and micro-manage tasks	
5. Someone looks away from you as you are talking to them and asks someone else a question.	
6.	
7.	

Take a moment and focus only on the unproductive behavior:

What are your thoughts and feelings about this person?



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Then, only focus on their possible unmet needs:

What are your thoughts and feelings now?



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When I take the time to explore what needs someone may be trying to meet in a difficult dialogue, I gain more understanding and enough distance from them to feel less triggered and more open to engaging them in productive ways.

**For further resources:**

Gill, R., Leu, L., & Morin, J. (2009). *NVC toolkit*. BookSurge Publishing.

Rosenberg, M. (2005). *Nonviolent communication: A language of life*. Encinitas, CA: Puddle Dancer Press.