

Parent Toolkit:

# COMMUNICATION & SUPPORT

# MYTHS: HOW THEY IMPACT NEEDS

## MYTH

## FACT

<p>If I ask for what I need or want, they will assume I am weak or unprepared.</p>	<p>People who ask for what they need/want often appear confident and self assured. They also set a good example for other people to feel comfortable expressing their needs.</p>
<p>I should be willing to put myself last, that is what mothers do.</p>	<p>Priorities should be determined by level of need such that the person with the highest level of need in a given situation is prioritized. This is a fair system, and it is important that my children understand that they are not the only people who have needs.</p>
<p>If I could just think differently about this, I wouldn't need to ask for help.</p>	<p>Everyone needs help sometimes--even people who seem like they have it all under control. It is important for my children to learn this lesson as well.</p>
<p>Before I ask for anything, I need to be certain that others are willing to help.</p>	<p>There is no way of knowing for sure whether someone is willing to help unless you ask, and if their answer is no, that's okay!</p>
<p>If they say no, I will feel awful and they will judge me for asking.</p>	<p>It is possible for someone to say no, but still wish they could help and understand your reasons for asking.</p>
<p>I don't need help, if I cannot figure it out on my own it must be a reflection of my inadequacy.</p>	<p>Everyone needs help sometimes--even people who seem like they have it all under control. It is important for my children to learn this lesson as well.</p>

# MYTHS: HOW THEY IMPACT NEEDS

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<p>It is my job to nurture my baby, no one else can provide what I can.</p>	<p>I have a very special connection with my baby and feel like I understand their needs very well. However, it is also important that my baby learn to express their needs to others, and learn that others can be counted on to care of them when I am not around.</p>
<p>My family and friends should already know how to help, I shouldn't have to ask.</p>	<p>What may seem obvious to me may not be obvious to someone else. The only way to ensure that I get the help I need is by communicating effectively about it.</p>
<p>I should be able to get what I want immediately, I am a mother and need support now.</p>	<p>Just as I am in a challenging time right now, others may be dealing with their own challenges and unable to help me in a given moment. Until I can get help, I can use skills to help soothe myself.</p>
<p>They should have known that they hurt me, I should not have to tell them.</p>	<p>What may seem obvious to me may not be obvious to someone else. The only way to make sure my feelings are known is to communicate about them.</p>
<p>I will meet my babies needs immediately and without great difficulty.</p>	<p>All babies are different and sometimes confusing. Sometimes, they are unable to be soothed for a period of time. Therefore, a mother's value is not determined by how quickly she feels like she can meet her baby's needs.</p>
<p>I don't need to be kind or fair, I am a sleep deprived mother.</p>	<p>Everyone needs to do their best to be kind and fair whenever possible, but it may be hard to do so at times. If I find that I am struggling to do this, I need to prioritize myself to help understand what I need to return to a place of kindness and fairness.</p>

# FACTORS THAT INTERFERE

<b>HORMONAL IMBALANCE</b>	Strong Emotion Social Isolation Low Frustration Tolerance
<b>SLEEP DEPRIVATION</b>	High Reactivity Lack Of Desire To Socialize Exhaustion And Poor Concentration Low Frustration Tolerance
<b>FEEDING CHALLENGES</b>	Can Create Bonding Issues With Baby Harsh Self Criticism Social Isolation
<b>CHANGING SENSE OF SELF</b>	Shifting Values And Goals You Don't Know What You Want Difficulty Balancing Your Needs/Wants With Others
<b>EMOTIONS</b>	You Have The Skill, But Emotions Control Your Actions
<b>FORGETTING LONG TERM GOALS FOR SHORT TERM</b>	Immediate Urges Ahead Of Future Goals
<b>OTHER PEOPLE GET IN WAY</b>	They Are More Powerful They May Feel Threatened Or Not Like You If You Get What You Want They May Not Help Unless You Sacrifice Self Respect
<b>THOUGHTS AND BELIEFS</b>	Worries About Saying No Or Asking For What You Want Beliefs You Don't Deserve It

# DEAR MAN SKILLS

DEAR MAN is the skill we use to get a specific need met. It can be used to resolve a conflict or make a request, while maintaining a positive relationship. The skill helps us practice a clear expression of our needs.

Example: You need your family member to take part in caring for the baby at night. You know that they are not a night owl but that they thrive off of compliments, strive to be helpful, and are worried about you. You could say: "I am having a difficult time getting the sleep that I need to feel better emotionally and physically. I would really appreciate if you would wake up with the baby at least once either in late evening or early morning so that I can get some sleep. I know you need your sleep as well and I am confident I can count on you to help. Also, the baby will be able to see you as someone who is comforting and supportive. Most of all, the more sleep I get now, the sooner I will feel better and can return to feeling myself again."



# DEAR MAN PRACTICE

Describe Situation:

What did you want out of this interaction? What was your need or objective?

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What did you need to avoid saying or doing to get your need met?

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**D** Describe the situation:

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**E** Express your feelings/opinion:

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**A** Assert your request:

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**R** Reinforce the person to want to meet your need:

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**M** Mindful, stay on track:

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**A** Appear confident, pay attention to tone, voice, posture:

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**N** Negotiate, don't accept the first no:

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# ROLE TRANSITIONS

Pregnancy and the postpartum period result in multiple changes, some expected and some unexpected. We may anticipate physical and behavioral changes, but may be less prepared to cope with changes regarding our identity, our priorities and the change in the rhythm of our daily routine. Take a moment to consider the ways in which your identity, routine, priorities, values, focus, and daily rhythms have changed. Take into account the time prior to pregnancy, during pregnancy and postpartum.

	SENSE OF SELF (STRENGTHS, IDENTITY)	PRIORITIES/ FOCUS	RESPONSIBILITIES	SUPPORT
<b>PRE-PREGNANCY</b>				
<b>PREGNANCY</b>				
<b>POSTPARTUM</b>				

# EVALUATING MY NEEDS & SUPPORT

Consider the people and types of support that are in your life. Your support needs change from day to day. Who are the people that may be able to provide support for you? What types of support do you need?

## EMOTIONAL SUPPORT

Who will you talk to about:

- Feelings?
- Ask for a hug or physical connection?
- Empathy regarding challenges of motherhood?

## TANGIBLE SUPPORT

Who will:

- Pick up diapers?
- Bring you food?
- Help with childcare?

## ADVICE / INFORMATION

Who will:

- Help you find childcare?
- Prepare for developmental needs of baby?
- Breastfeeding or bottle feeding support?

## COMPANIONSHIP / SOCIAL

Who will:

- Go for a walk with you?
- Talk with you about their motherhood experience?
- Offer reminders of hope and encouragement?

Ask for what you need, it is okay.

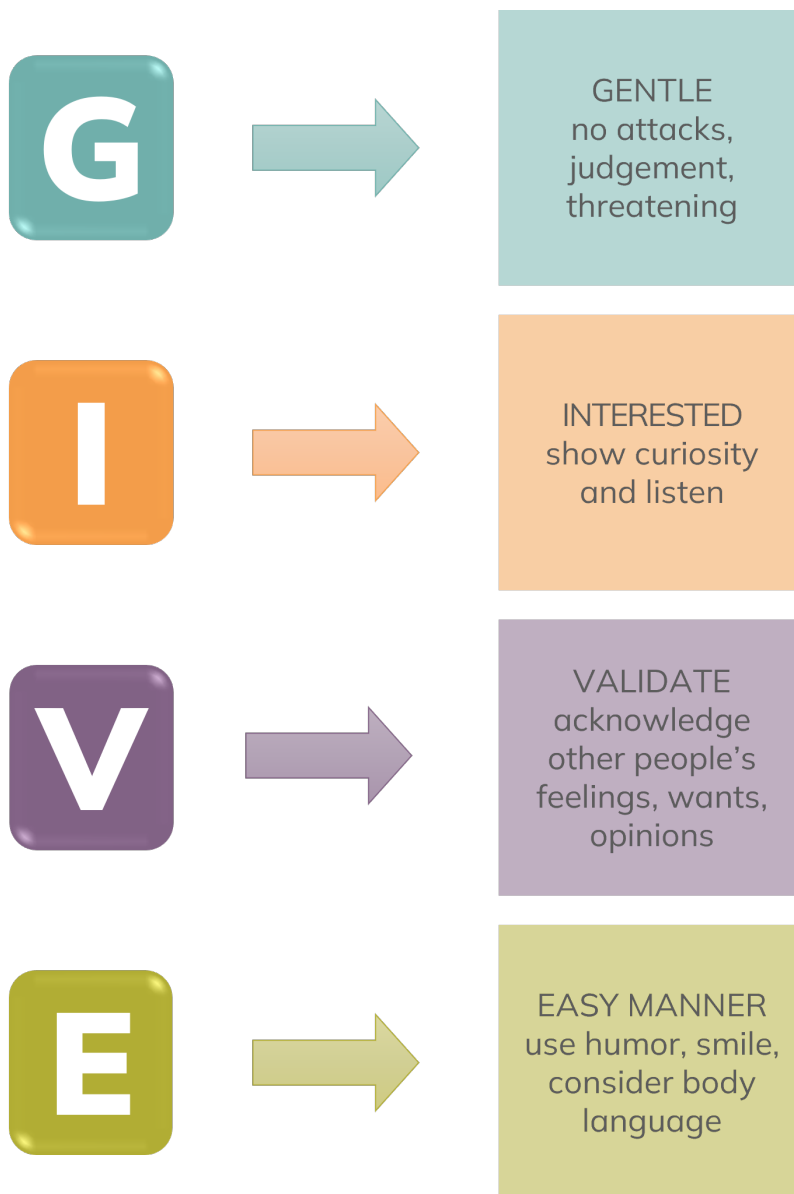
- Others may not know what you need, they may want to help and don't know where to start or offer the wrong things.
- The chance of getting your needs met increases when we are clear.
- Compromise if you don't receive the desired response.
- Be positive, clear and direct with people.



# GIVE SKILLS

This skill is specifically focused on improving current relationships with a focus on validation and a gentle approach. It can be difficult to consider that those around us are also adjusting to change and experiencing strong emotions related to parenting or to having a new baby enter the home.

Example: Consider a mom who is tired and overwhelmed and is often responding to the baby's cues first, while her partner tends to defer to her and often allows her to run the show. She begins to get frustrated and sees the partner as disinterested and lazy, while the partner is actually feeling rather anxious and worried about upsetting the mom. How can this mom use GIVE to discuss the need, keeping in mind the relationship as the priority of the interaction?



# VALIDATION: STEP-BY-STEP

An approach that can help people feel heard and understood, validation is especially useful when navigating emotionally charged situations. Validating someone shows you understand their feelings and point of view, even when you disagree. It establishes trust, helping the other person feel supported and open to discussing solutions. Here is a step-by-step guide to validation.

**1**

Treat the other person as an equal.

**2**

Reflect on what is valid about their point of view

**3**

Consider how the person's experience makes sense.  
Find some truth in their point of view.

**4**

Pay attention to their body, facial expression and nonverbal language.

**5**

Reflect on what you heard them say.  
Paraphrase your understanding without judgment or blame

**6**

Give eye contact.  
Position your body towards the other person.  
Show interest.

# FAST SKILLS

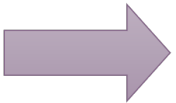
For keeping self-respect.



FAIR  
to yourself and  
others



APOLOGIES  
are not  
necessary



STICK  
to your values, be  
clear, don't sell  
out



TRUTHFUL  
don't lie, act  
helpless or  
exaggerate

# SELF-VALIDATION



## **SELF-VALIDATION:**

An opportunity to organize your internal world and to acknowledge what makes sense about your experience.

## **WHAT SHOULD WE VALIDATE?**

- Thoughts
- Emotions
- Actions

## **HOW DO WE PRACTICE SELF VALIDATION?**

### **OBSERVE** without judgment

Pay attention to your thoughts, feelings, judgments and experiences. Being present will give you more information about your wants, needs and values.

### **DESCRIBE** accurately

Reflect back your observations to yourself. Use words such as “I am hot, sad, shaking. I feel cold, angry, joyful, exhausted. I notice an urge to run, scream, laugh, hide or leave this situation.

### **INVESTIGATE** why it makes sense

Why might you feel this way? How would someone else feel in this situation? How does your response make sense considering your past present, future?

### **COMPASSION** is necessary

Encourage yourself, be gentle and patient. Kindly relate to yourself and consider how you might speak to someone you love in this moment. Give yourself that same level of understanding and support.