



# Celebrate Life

## FREE RESOURCES

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## Responding to Life

### With an Open Heart

From childhood, most of us were taught that we must “be responsible.” But what does responsibility really mean?

At its core, responsibility is not about duty or control—it is about our **ability to respond**. And the only thing we can truly respond to is **Life itself**.

Yet instead of responding, we learn to *react*. Reaction narrows us, leaving us unfree. It usually takes one of two forms:

**Adaptation** (yielding, complying, repressing) or

**Defiance** (rebellious, resisting, reacting)

Both are reactions, not true freedom or flow.

True response arises when we meet life with an **open heart**. Whenever we feel constricted, heavy, frustrated, or drained of joy, it is a sign that we are not responding from love. This doesn't mean that love is gone—we are always, already love. But constriction makes it harder to hear love's voice within us.

The first step back is simply: **Notice**. Pause. Become aware. Behind the reaction, there is often a vulnerable inner child who longs to be seen. By pausing, we create space for **self-empathy**—and love begins to flow through us again.

As we listen inwardly, we may discover unmet needs: for **freedom, play, intimacy, safety, care, or joy**. Naming these needs brings clarity. It also helps us see the difference between our own needs and those of others. When we confuse the two, conflict and projection arise. But when we honor our own needs with empathy, then first we can meet the world and also others from openness.

Empathy begins with ourselves. From there, it becomes the bridge to others. And in that space, responsibility is no longer a burden— **it is simply love responding to life**.

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# Feelings & Needs



## Feelings when needs are met:

- Affectionate, compassionate, loving, tender, warm
- Confident, safe, secure, proud
- Engaged, curious, interested, captivated
- Excited, energized, enthusiastic, alive, joyful
- Peaceful, calm, content, relaxed, serene
- Grateful, appreciative, moved, touched

## Feelings when needs are *not* met

- Angry, irritated, frustrated, annoyed
- Afraid, scared, insecure, worried, nervous
- Sad, lonely, heartbroken, grief, miserable
- Disconnected, detached, distant, numb, withdrawn
- Confused, torn, bewildered, perplexed
- Overwhelmed, stressed, exhausted, fatigued



## Universal Human Needs

- **Connection:** acceptance, affection, belonging, intimacy, closeness, empathy, compassion, community, companionship
- **Autonomy:** freedom, choice, independence, self-expression, space, authenticity
- **Peace:** harmony, ease, order, balance, calm
- **Physical well-being:** rest, safety, nourishment, shelter, movement, touch, water
- **Meaning:** clarity, contribution, purpose, growth, creativity, discovery, effectiveness
- **Play / Recreation:** fun, laughter, humor, joy, relaxation
- **Support / Understanding:** to be heard, to be seen, to be understood, trust, respect, reliability, emotional safety