

“Need” is an Emotional Trump Word

You probably should generally remove the word “need” from your vocabulary. The term is an emotional trump word that makes it so people don’t critically examine a subtle weighing of values.

We don’t live on the edge of survival. Your burrito from Del Taco isn’t a need. Your bottle of Fuji water isn’t a need. The extra hour of sleep isn’t a need. A hug when things are hard isn’t a need.

Don’t get me wrong. Hugs, extra sleep, burritos and bottled water are wonderful. We all desire these things and they enhance our lives. We should respect our desires and value them. We should analyze our desires in a wide spectrum of costs, benefits and compromises. However, the word “need” doesn’t really apply to any emotion, desire or impulse in our lives outside of maybe breathing.

The reason people use the word “need” is largely to stop weighing values, costs and benefits. It is used as a trump card. Person 1 has these desires, but person 2 has these needs ... ergo, person 2 wins. Sometimes people use it so they can get whatever they want, but other times it is towards others.

I am seeing it often with parents. Your child doesn’t need anything right now, you are categorizing it in a way that is making you neurotically prioritize your child’s desires above yourself and others. Your kids have desires. Those desires are important and they should be treated with honor, but so are your desires, and Joe’s desires. When desires conflict with people, we tend to prioritize “needs” and this is the major issue. There are no needs in our lives, there are only desires.