3.0 Wants vs. Needs

Name: _____ Date: _____

A common source of stress in our lives is having difficulty distinguishing between our *wants* and our *needs*. For purposes of this exercise, a *need* is something that we could absolutely not live without (for example: food, medical care, clothing, shelter, or love), while a *want* would be something that might be nice to have but is not essential to our survival and well-being (for example: a nice house, a nice car, money for recreation and entertainment).
Imagine being stranded on a deserted island. Think about the things that are absolutely essential to your survival. What would be the bare minimum you would need to live out the rest of your life while having your basic needs met? Write your answers in the space below.

NEEDS

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_____

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Now think about the things in life that it might be nice to have, but that are not absolutely essential for survival. List those things in the space below.

WANTS

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3.0 Wants vs. Needs

Name: _____ Date: _____

Look back over the lists you created on the previous page. Place a check mark beside everything on the list that has brought you pleasure and place an 'X' beside everything that has brought you stress, depression or anxiety. Some of the things on your lists might have both an X and a check mark. For example, under the *wants* section, you might have listed, *"A new car."* You may have the desire for a new car, and the thought of getting a new one might have brought you pleasure, but now you find that the thought of payments, plus maintenance and upkeep are causing you stress. In that case, it's okay to put both an X and a check mark by the item.

When you have finished marking each list, count how many X marks you have, and how many check marks you have. Which list has more X marks, your *needs* list, or your *wants* list? What does this information tell you about the things in your life that cause you stress? Are you getting more stress from your *needs*, or from your *wants*?

What does this information tell you about the things in your life that cause you pleasure? Are you getting more pleasure and enjoyment from your *needs*, or from your *wants*? Once you've added up all the check marks and the X marks, go on to answer the questions below.

I had more check marks in my (circle one) Wants List | Needs List

I had more X marks in my (circle one) Wants List | Needs List

If you had more X marks in your NEEDS list, what specifically would you have to let go of in order to decrease the stressful thoughts associated with these items? For example, if you are stressed out about your diet, how could you change your thinking about the food you eat so that you could be more accepting of your dietary needs?

_____

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If you had more X marks in your WANTS list, is this a 'want' that you could do without? If you did without it, would your life be less stressful? How? Would having the item reduce your stress, or add to it? How?

_____

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3.0 Wants vs. Needs

Name: _____ Date: _____

If you had more check marks in your NEEDS list, what specifically about these items brings you pleasure? For example, if you find pleasure in the place in which you live, what is it exactly about your home that brings you joy?

If you had more check marks in your WANTS list, what specifically about these items brings you pleasure? For example, if you find pleasure in possessions that are not absolutely essential to your survival, what is it exactly about those items that brings you joy? Would it be possible to find similar pleasure in items from your NEEDS list? If so, how?

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