

The No-Fault Zone®



Contents:

2 Internal Operating System (IOS) Mats;
2 Card Decks (includes Feeling Cards, Need Cards & Choice Cards);
2 place markers; 4 Mini-Posters & this Instruction Booklet

• **For Adults - Individually**

- Increase well-being & effective functioning
- Proactively direct your thoughts to identify feelings, determine the needs behind feelings & find strategies to meet needs
- Practice ways to direct your thinking in constructive ways that meet your needs & help others meet theirs
- Resolve inner turmoil & outer conflicts
- Give yourself empathy & understanding
- Meditatively explore & deepen your understanding of yourself

• **For Teachers & Students**

- The No-Fault Game® is compatible with *The No-Fault Classroom: Tools to Resolve Conflict & Foster Relationship Intelligence* (PuddleDancer Press, 2008). This is a 21-week course for grades 1–6, adaptable for older students.

• **For Families**

- Use the IOS Mats & Card Decks for check-ins for family meetings
- Make decisions mutually by clarifying feelings & needs surrounding family plans & concerns—from vacation options to determining policies for watching television, doing chores & more
- Give your children the tools to recognize & express their feelings & needs
- Support children in looking for strategies to meet their own needs
- Immediately clear up misunderstandings between family members
- Problem-solve together & resolve conflicts peacefully

• **For Children**

- Children as young as 4-years old use the Internal Operating System Mat & the Picture Card Deck to clarify feelings & needs
- Siblings & friends learn to resolve conflicts on their own

• **For Adults- Couples or Groups**

- Get to the root of conflicts between you & a spouse or life partner, significant other, business partner, relative or friend
- Create mutually agreeable, peaceful solutions

Get to Know Your Internal Operating System

The Mat

The Mat illustrates the human Internal Operating System (IOS), which, for our purposes, is made up of two primary zones: the Fault Zone & the No-Fault Zone. When you learn to read your IOS & develop the habit of directing your attention to the No-Fault Zone, you are able to function most effectively in your daily life, to avoid stress & burnout in challenging situations & to foster relationships that are nurturing & mutually supportive.

The Two Primary Zones of the Internal Operating System

The **No-Fault Zone**: This colorful zone includes the fields of: Calm Alert, Choices, Observations, Feelings, Needs, Requests. This is the zone of well-being. It is where we can be most effective in fulfilling our own needs, contributing to the needs of others & helping to create a sustainable, peaceful world. We always have the choice to focus on the *No-Fault Zone*.

The **Fault Zone**: The black & white areas of the Mat represent the *Fault Zone* and Black & White Thinking (B&W Thinking). B&W Thinking includes: complaining, blaming, labeling, demanding, fault-finding, all or nothing & “should” thinking. B&W Thinking can be directed at yourself or at others. B&W Thinking causes separation & distrust & gives rise to arguments, conflict & war.

The Feeling Thermometer

The horizontal band at the bottom of the Mat is the Feeling Thermometer. It serves as a gauge of your feeling state. It can help you notice when you are functioning at your best—in a state of Calm Alert or Homeostasis—or when you are far from it. When you are aware of your inner feeling state, you can make better choices about your actions. And, you can find ways that work to shift your energy & get to Calm Alert—the emotional state from which you have the widest range of choices & can take the most effective action in support of your well-being.

Choice Cards

We always have a choice about how we speak and how we listen—whether we speak and listen from the *Fault Zone* or the *No-Fault Zone*. The following Choice Cards indicate daily choices that are readily available.

No-Fault Zone Choice Cards

- **Energy Shift/Get to Calm Alert:** Follow the steps on the Getting to Calm Alert Mini-Poster.
- **D.E.F.U.S.E. Anger:** Follow the steps on the D.E.F.U.S.E. Anger Mini-Poster.
- **Problem Solve:** Follow the steps on the 9 Steps to Problem Solve Mini-Poster.
- **Observe Reality (Make an Observation):** Look for the facts of a situation as if you were a video camera. Say only what a video camera could record. Try to keep your observations free of evaluations, interpretations and stories. *She got home 10 minutes after she said she would be here*, rather than *She's always late!* *I heard him say he thinks I'm mean*, rather than *He always exaggerates; he's a liar.* *I didn't hear you say hello when you walked in the door*, rather than *That was so rude when you ignored me and didn't say hi.*

- **Listen for *My* Feelings & Needs:** Use your Mat & Card Decks to identify your own feelings & needs.
- **Listen for *Your* Feelings & Needs:** Use your Mat & Card Decks to identify the other person's feelings & needs.
- **Make a Request:** A request is a specific, positive, doable action. *Would you be willing to be more respectful* is not specific enough to be doable. *Would you be willing to wait to talk until after I've finished* is specific & doable. If you are clear about what you need & you have a strategy in mind to fulfill that need, you can go directly to making a request of yourself or others. A key question to determine whether you have made a request or a demand is: *Am I willing to hear "No" & listen to the feelings & needs behind the "No"?* Your chances of successfully meeting your needs are greatly diminished when you make a demand instead of a request.

Fault Zone Choice Cards

The following seven cards are Choices that take you to the Fault Zone where Black & White Thinking prevails. These cards represent defensive strategies that take the place of making clear observations, identifying feelings & needs, & making requests.

- **Complain:** Whine & think about what you or others should or shouldn't be doing, ought to be doing, "have to" do. This puts the focus on what is wrong with yourself or others rather than on what is actually happening—the observable behavior & what you & others feel & need.
- **Label:** Use name-calling & put-downs, make quick judgments. *You're mean. You're stupid. You're so irresponsible. You're disrespectful.* Labels can be positive as well as negative: *You're so responsible, kind, smart,* etc.
- **Blame:** Determine who is "right" & who is "wrong" & who is at fault.
- **Demand:** Expect others to do things because you tell them to. Demands are often backed by the threat of punishment.
- **Tell My Story:** Argue with, deny, or refuse to accept the way things are. Make up stories about reality rather than see it directly & express it accurately.
- **Listen to Thoughts About YOU & Listen to Thoughts About ME:** Listen to negative or positive evaluative thoughts about yourself & others. This distracts attention from feelings and needs.

Feeling & Need Cards

Developing a feelings & needs vocabulary helps us become aware of our present feelings and needs & able to understand our own & others' moment-to-moment experience of life. A set of Feeling Cards & a set of Need Cards are included in each full Card Deck for this purpose. Since there are more feelings & needs than are found on the cards, blank Feeling Cards & Need Cards are added for you to expand your deck.

- **Needs:** Every human has the same needs. The term *needs* points to our deepest values, dreams & requirements for well-being. Needs are the motivation for all actions. However, if we have not been educated about needs we often do things that don't meet needs well. When we are aware of needs & values we are empowered to take more effective actions in the service of our well-being.
- **Feelings:** Feelings tell us how well our needs are being met. When needs are not met we might have feelings such as frustrated, upset & discouraged—and when needs are met we might have feelings such as contented, joyful & satisfied. Feelings can be triggered when instead of focusing on facts, we add our interpretations & thoughts to reality & tell stories about the situation.

How to Use the IOS Mat & Card Decks

For Individuals

#1 Energy Shift to Calm Alert

Materials: IOS Mat, Feeling & Need Card Decks, place marker.

Procedure:

1. Put your place marker on the Feeling Thermometer to show how hot or cold your feelings are at the moment.
2. If feelings are very hot or very cold, breathe slowly & deeply for about a minute, take a short walk, or do some other Energy-Shifting Exercise.
3. When your energy has shifted, move your place marker to the spot on the Feeling Thermometer that indicates your new feeling state.
4. Make an observation about your situation with no evaluation mixed in:
When I see, hear, remember...
5. On your IOS Mat, place Feeling Cards that match your present feelings.
6. Place Need Cards on your Mat that match your present needs (either met or unmet).
7. Check the Feeling Thermometer to see whether your emotions have shifted again.

Round 1

1. Identify the feelings you now have & place Feeling Cards on your Mat.
2. Identify the needs you now have & place Need Cards on your Mat.
3. Check the Feeling Thermometer to see whether your emotions have shifted.
4. Continue in this manner until you reach Calm Alert.

Round 2

#2 When Black & White Thinking Is Triggered: Uncover the Needs

Materials: IOS Mat, Feeling & Need Card Decks, Choice Cards, place marker.

Procedure:

1. Notice when you are entertaining Black & White Thinking.
2. Recognize the B&W Thinking: *She's stupid. He shouldn't have done that. They have no right to. I'm a loser.*
3. Mark the place where you are on the Feeling Thermometer.
4. Take one thought at a time & ask yourself, *What feelings are stimulated when I think this thought? What need am I valuing in this situation? What need do I want to meet?*
5. Lay down the corresponding Feeling & Need Cards & connect especially with the life energy of the needs.
6. Notice whether other feelings arise & if other needs also want attention in this situation.
7. Formulate requests (of yourself or others) that could address those needs.

#3 Self-Exploration / Meditation

Materials: IOS Mat, Feeling & Need Card Decks, Choice Cards, place marker.

Procedure:

1. Put a place marker on the Feeling Thermometer to show hot or cold emotions.
2. Look through the Choice Cards to determine what you want to do first.
3. Proceed with your first choice.
4. Proceed with your second choice, etc., until you feel satisfied.

#4 Self-Empathy

Materials: IOS Mat, Feeling & Need Card Decks, place marker.

Procedure:

1. Very slowly place Feeling Cards on your IOS Mat that describe your present experience.
2. Consider the needs that might be behind those feelings. Place those Need Cards on the Mat.
3. Hold each Need Card, one at a time. Recognize how important that need is to you. Celebrate it! Mourn the fact that it isn't currently being met, but don't actively seek a solution.

#5 Finding Solutions

Materials: IOS Mat, Feeling & Need Card Decks, pencil & paper.

Procedure:

1. Place the Observe Reality Card in the Observations area of the Mat & describe only the facts of the situation.
2. Place Feeling Cards on your IOS Mat that describe your feelings.
3. Find the Need Cards that describe the needs behind your feelings.
4. Hold each Need Card, one at a time, for at least one minute & recognize how important that need is to you.
5. Wait for some strategies to come to mind that will help you meet that need.
6. Write down specific actions you could take.
7. Place the Make a Request Card on the Requests area of the Mat & ask yourself or others if there is willingness to carry out your request.

#6 Making Decisions

Materials: 2 IOS Mats, 2 Feeling & Need Card Decks.

Procedure:

1. Think about a choice you are considering making.
2. On one Mat, place Feeling Cards that describe how you feel about making this choice.
3. Place the Need Cards that describe what needs will be met by making this choice.
4. On the second Mat, place the Need Cards that describe the needs that won't be met by making that choice.
5. Look at both Mats to determine which choice meets the most needs.

How to Use the IOS Mat & Card Decks

For Families

#1 Check-in for a Family Meeting

Materials: IOS Mat & a full Card Deck (Feeling, Need, Choices) for each person.

Procedure:

1. Each person places Feeling & Need Cards descriptive of their current experience on their own Mat.
2. Each person reads his/her cards. For example: *I feel happy because I need understanding & that need was met today when Dad listened to me tell about what happened at school.* Or, *I feel sad & scared because I don't understand my homework.*
3. Each person then states any requests they have for the meeting. *Would everyone be willing to talk about ways I can get help with my homework?*

#2 Conflict Resolution (for 2 or more)

Materials: IOS Mat & a full Card Deck (Feeling, Need, Choices) for each person.

Procedure:

1. Each family member places three Choice Cards on the Mat in the Choices area—Listen for My Feelings & Needs, Listen for Your Feelings & Needs, Make a Request.
2. Each person proceeds to place the Feeling & Need Cards that currently describe them on their own Mat.
3. Place all of the Mats in the middle of the same table with the Need & Feeling Cards facing each other.
4. One at a time each member of the family states how s/he feels & what his/her needs are. *I feel ... because I need ...* **OR**

Family members move in a circle around the table, stopping to silently read each person's feelings & needs. **OR**

Each member reads & inquires about the feelings & needs of the person to the right. *Are you feeling ... because you need ...?* Each member has a chance to add more feelings & needs at this time.

5. When all members have been acknowledged for their feelings & needs, ask: *What is a strategy that could meet all of these needs?*
6. When someone thinks of a request, they put their Make a Request card in the Requests area & say, *Would everyone be willing to try ...?*

#3 Solve a Problem

Materials: IOS Mat & a full Card Deck (Feeling, Need, Choices) for each person.

Procedure: Follow the steps on the *9 Steps to Problem Solve* Mini-Poster.



#4 Giving & Receiving Empathy

Materials: IOS Mat & one full Card Deck (Feeling, Need, Choices).

Procedure:

1. Spread the Need Cards on the table, face up, so everyone can read them.
2. One family member who needs empathy holds the Feeling Cards and tells a short story, laying the corresponding Feeling Cards on his/her IOS Mat.
3. One at a time, family members pick up a Need Card, place it on the person's Mat & ask: *Are you feeling ... because you need ...? Are you feeling upset (referring to one of the Feeling Cards placed on the Mat) because you need understanding?* Guessing needs can take two or three or four rounds, with each participant placing a Need Card on the Mat each round.
4. While guesses are being made, the person receiving empathy quietly considers the needs that are guessed. When all guesses are made, s/he then shares his/her responses & the needs that are most alive for him/her.

Create Your Own Ways to Use the Mat

The IOS Mat & the Card Decks can be used in many ways. Continue to explore for yourself to find additional ways to get to know & stay in touch with your Internal Operating System—your source of effective power within yourself & with others.

Learn More

If you would like more information about the concepts developed in this game, we offer private coaching, telecourses, and on-site trainings. Please email Sura or Victoria at contact@thenofaultzone.com. We also recommend the following reading:

Sura Hart and Victoria Kindle Hodson:

Respectful Parents, Respectful Kids: 7 Keys to Turn Family Conflict Into Co-operation (PuddleDancer Press, 2006)

The Compassionate Classroom: Relationship Based Teaching and Learning (PuddleDancer Press, 2004)

The No-Fault Classroom: Tools to Resolve Conflict & Foster Relationship Intelligence (PuddleDancer Press, 2008)



Marshall Rosenberg:

Nonviolent Communication: A Language of Life (PuddleDancer Press, 2003)



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