



Abraham Maslow

The Hierarchy of Needs

"A musician must make music, an artist must paint, a poet must write, if he is to be ultimately at peace with himself. What a man can be, he must be"

A. Maslow



Why do our needs matter?

Psychological and physical needs matter because they define our 'well-being' and effect our ability to perform in life and business.

American psychologist Abraham Harold Maslow (April 1, 1908 – June 8, 1970) dedicated much of his life to studying the needs of people.

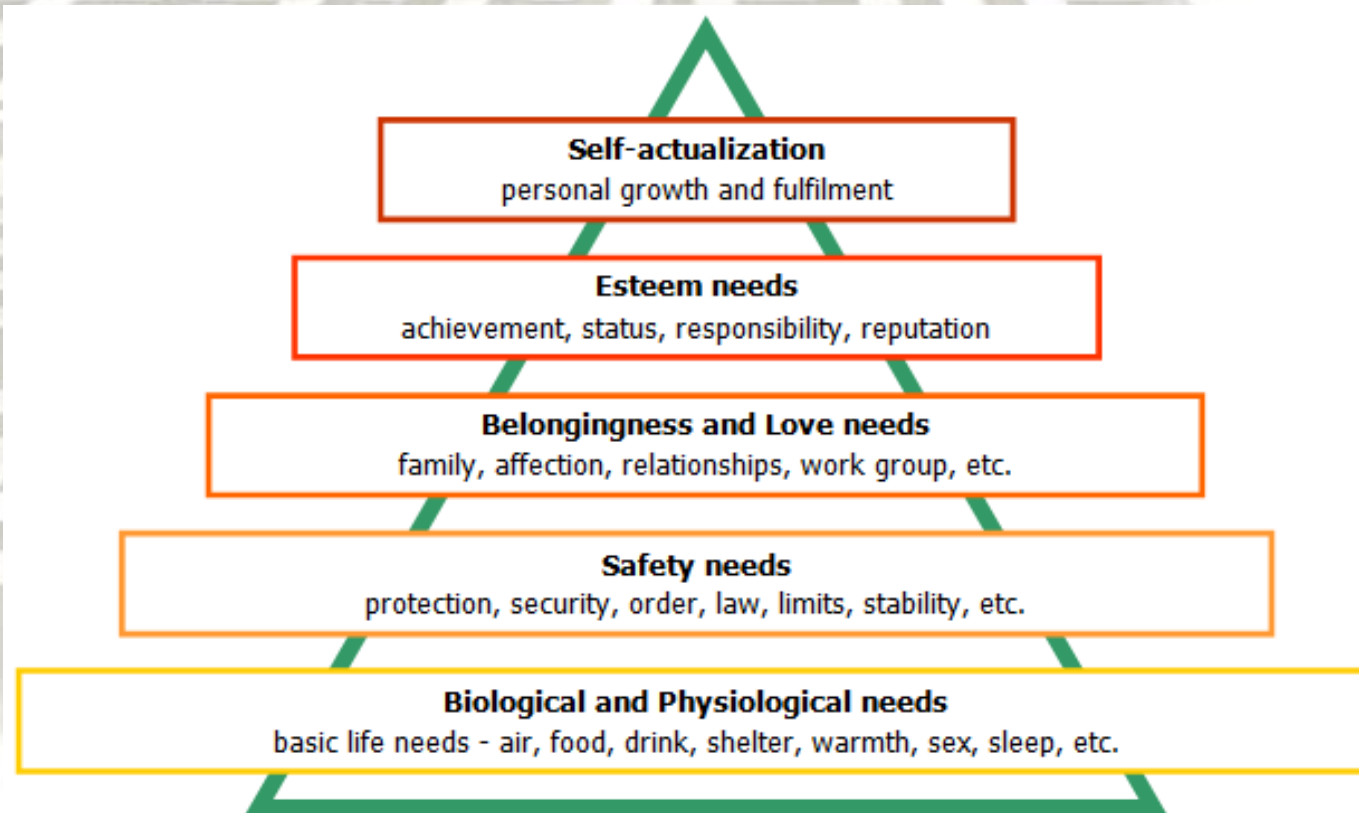
Rather than focusing on the mentally ill he focused his study on how people developed a positive state of mental health.

This enabled him to discover that people experience "peak experiences," high points in life, when the individual is harmony with himself and his surroundings.



The Hierarchy of Needs

A visual aid Maslow created to explain his theory, which he called the Hierarchy of Needs, is a pyramid depicting the levels of human needs, both psychological and physical.



Levels of the Pyramid

At the bottom of the pyramid are the “Basic needs” of a human being, food and water and touch. The next level is “Security and Stability.” These two steps are important to the physical survival of the person. Once individuals have basic nutrition, shelter and safety they attempt to accomplish more.

The third level of need is “Love and Belonging,” which are psychological needs; when individuals have taken care of themselves physically, they are ready to share themselves with others.

The fourth level is achieved when individuals feel comfortable with what they have accomplished. This is the “Esteem” level, the level of success and status.

The top of the pyramid, “Self-actualization,” occurs when individuals reach a state of harmony and understanding.



Development through the ages

In the 1970's and 1990's the model was further developed with an adapted hierarchy of needs including cognitive, aesthetic and transcendence needs

1. Biological and Physiological needs - air, food, drink, shelter, warmth, sex, sleep, etc.
2. Safety needs - protection from elements, security, order, law, limits, stability, etc.
3. Belongingness and Love needs - work group, family, affection, relationships, etc.
4. Esteem needs - self-esteem, achievement, mastery, independence, status, dominance, prestige, managerial responsibility, etc.
5. Cognitive needs - knowledge, meaning, etc.
6. Aesthetic needs - appreciation and search for beauty, balance, form, etc.
7. Self-Actualization needs - realising personal potential, self-fulfillment, seeking personal growth and peak experiences.
8. Transcendence needs - helping others to achieve self actualization.



New levels to the Pyramid?

Abraham Maslow created the original five level Hierarchy of Needs model, and for many this remains entirely adequate for its purpose.

The seven and eight level 'hierarchy of needs' models are later adaptations by others, based on Maslow's work.

Arguably, the original five-level model includes the later additional sixth, seventh and eighth ('Cognitive', 'Aesthetic', and 'Transcendence') levels within the original 'Self-Actualization' level 5, since each one of the 'new' motivators concerns an area of self-development and self-fulfilment that is rooted in self-actualization 'growth', and is distinctly different to any of the previous 1-4 level 'deficiency' motivators.

For many people, self-actualizing commonly involves each and every one of the newly added drivers. As such, the original five-level Hierarchy of Needs model remains a definitive classical representation of human motivation; and the later adaptations perhaps serve best to illustrate aspects of self-actualization.



Satisfying the drivers of need

Maslow said that needs must be satisfied in the given order.

Aims and drive always shift to next higher order needs.

Levels 1 to 4 are deficiency motivators; level 5, and by implication 6 to 8, are growth motivators and relatively rarely found.

The thwarting of needs is usually a cause of stress, and is particularly so at level 4.

Examples in use:

You can't motivate someone to achieve their sales target (level 4) when they're having problems with their marriage (level 3).

You can't expect someone to work as a team member (level 3) when they're having their house re-possessed (level 2).



Beyond the Pyramid

Maslow's work and ideas extend far beyond the Hierarchy of Needs.

Maslow's concept of self-actualisation relates directly to the present day challenges and opportunities for employers and organisations - to provide real meaning, purpose and true personal development for their employees. For life - not just for work.

Maslow saw these issues fifty years ago: the fact that employees have a basic human need and a right to strive for self-actualisation, just as much as the corporate directors and owners do.

Increasingly, the successful organisations and employers will be those who genuinely care about, understand, encourage and enable their people's personal growth towards self-actualisation - way beyond traditional work-related training and development.



Application to management

The best modern employers and organisations are beginning to learn at last: that sustainable success is built on a serious and compassionate commitment to helping people identify, pursue and reach their own personal unique potential.

When people grow as people, they automatically become more effective and valuable as employees.

In fact virtually all personal growth, whether in a hobby, a special talent or interest, or a new experience, produces new skills, attributes, behaviours and wisdom that is directly transferable to any sort of job role.

"I suppose it is tempting, if the only tool you have is a hammer, to treat everything as if it were a nail"

