

Name: _____ Class: _____

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

By CommonLit Staff
From Wikipedia • 2015

Abraham Maslow (1908-1970) was an American psychologist who wrote extensively about human behavior, motivations, and needs. He is one of the most frequently cited psychologists of the 20th century, and is best known for creating the hierarchy of needs. As you read about this theory, consider how Maslow describes human development.

- [1] Psychologist Abraham Maslow first introduced his concept of a hierarchy (arrangement) of needs in his 1943 book called *Motivation and Personality*. His theory states that all human behavior is motivated by universal needs and desires.

According to Maslow, our most basic needs—such as the need for food, air, and water—are inborn. These needs are required for the survival of our species. According to Maslow, humans are motivated to fulfill the obvious needs for survival *first*. Only once these needs are met do we begin to grow and focus on our “higher order” needs.

This hierarchy is most often displayed as a pyramid. The lowest levels of the pyramid are made up of the most basic needs, while the more complex needs are located at the top of the pyramid.



"A person too. The same needs and wants." is licensed under CC BY-NC-ND 2.0.

Five Levels of the Hierarchy of Needs

There are five different levels in Maslow's hierarchy of needs:

I. Physiological Needs

- [5] Physiological needs are the physical requirements for human survival. If these requirements are not met, the human body cannot function properly and will ultimately fail. Physiological needs are thought to be the most important; they should be met first.

Air, water, and food are metabolic requirements for survival in all animals, including humans. Clothing and shelter provide necessary protection from the elements.

II. Security Needs

Security needs are important for survival, but they are not as critical as physiological needs. Security needs include financial security (usually through employment), and protection against fear, harm, or illness. This level also includes law and order, and general stability. In other words, at this level, humans tend to focus on making sure that their physiological needs will be provided to them in the future.

III. Social Needs

After physiological and safety needs are fulfilled, the third level of human needs is interpersonal and involves feelings of belongingness. Humans need to feel a sense of belonging and acceptance and may achieve this through clubs, office culture, organized religion, sports teams, or gangs. People may also seek to fulfill this need through social interactions with family, boyfriends or girlfriends, mentors, close colleagues, or confidants.

According to Maslow, the need to love and be loved by others is a very powerful need in human beings. In the absence of it, many people become vulnerable to loneliness, social anxiety, and clinical depression. This need for belonging can sometimes overcome physiological (Level 1) and security needs (Level 2), in the presence of peer pressure. An anorexic, for example, may ignore the need to eat and the security of health for a feeling of belonging.

IV. Esteem Needs

- [10] All humans have a need to feel respected; this includes the need to have self-esteem and self-respect. Esteem refers to the normal human desire to be accepted and valued by others. For example, people often engage in a profession or hobby to gain recognition. These activities give the person a sense of that they are contributing something of value to society.

Maslow noted two versions of esteem needs, a lower one and a higher one. The lower one is the need for the respect of *others*, the need for status, recognition, fame, prestige, and attention. The higher one is the need for self-respect, the need for strength, competence, mastery, self-confidence, independence, and freedom. The latter one is considered to be “higher” because it rests more on inner competence won through experience.

V. Self-Actualizing Needs

In 1945, Maslow wrote, “what a man can be, he must be.” This quotation forms the basis of Maslow’s theory about the universal need of self-actualization – the idea that each person has a basic need to reach their full potential. Maslow describes this level as the desire to accomplish everything that one can, to become the most that one can be. For example, one individual may have the strong desire to become an ideal parent. Another person may work relentlessly to become a top athlete. People may also create art, donate to charity, or invent something new. As previously mentioned, Maslow believed that to understand this level of need, the person must not only achieve the previous needs, but master them.

© 2015, *Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs by CommonLit* is a derivative of Wikipedia, licensed under CC BY NC-SA 2.0.

Text-Dependent Questions

Directions: For the following questions, choose the best answer or respond in complete sentences.

1. Based on the information in the article, the reader can conclude: [RI.2]
 - A. All human behavior follows the same pattern.
 - B. There are no exceptions to Maslow's theory.
 - C. You have reached self-actualization if you have a stable job and income.
 - D. Some people never reach self-actualization.
2. Re-read the following line from section 3 :"Social Needs": "An anorexic, for example, may ignore the need to eat and the security of health for a feeling of control and belonging." The author most likely included this sentence for the purpose of: [RI.5]
 - A. Demonstrating the danger of anorexia, an eating disorder
 - B. Showing an exception to a person's progression through Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs.
 - C. Providing an example of a disease that commonly manifests during Level 3.
 - D. Convincing the reader to accept the Hierarchy of Needs.
3. Which of the following statements best summarizes the idea of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs? [RI.2]
 - A. As people get older, they get better and better at assessing their needs and providing for themselves and others.
 - B. A person can not achieve a meaningful life until his or her basic needs are met.
 - C. Once a person's basic needs are met, they begin to focus on achieving needs that are increasingly psychological (emotional) in nature.
 - D. All human beings are social creatures and thrive in orderly, lawful environments that protect their health and safety.
4. Describe the two types of esteem needs in your own words. [RI.2]

5. Which of the following application of Maslow's theory of Heirarchy of Needs best aligns with its intended purpose? [RI.6]
- A. A doctor uses Maslow's Heirarchy of Needs to diagnose a sick patient.
 - B. A psychologist uses Maslow's Heirarchy of Needs to understand what kind of activities to suggest for a person who was formerly part of a gang.
 - C. A parent uses Maslow's Heirarchy of Needs to decide which school might be best for her children.
 - D. A professor uses Maslow's Heirarchy of Needs to grade students in his class.

Discussion Questions

Directions: Brainstorm your answers to the following questions in the space provided. Be prepared to share your original ideas in a class discussion.

1. Use Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs to explain why a student who doesn't eat a nourishing lunch will likely do poorly in school.
 2. How can psychological theory (like Maslow's Heirarchy of Needs) be useful in evaluating the motivations of people?
 3. Maslow's Heirarchy of Needs is a psychological theory of human behavior – it has not been proven concretely with hard science. Explain why it would be difficult to prove Maslow's theory.