

23.5: Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

Learning Objectives

- List the various levels of needs in Maslow's hierarchy
- Explain the impact that Maslow's levels of needs have on worker motivation

Human motivation can be defined as the fulfillment of various needs. These needs can encompass a range of human desires, from basic, tangible needs of survival to complex, emotional needs surrounding an individual's psychological well-being.

Abraham Maslow was a social psychologist who was interested in a broad spectrum of human psychological needs rather than on individual psychological problems. He is best known for his hierarchy-of-needs theory. Depicted in a pyramid (shown in Figure 1), the theory organizes the five different levels of human psychological and physical needs in order of importance.

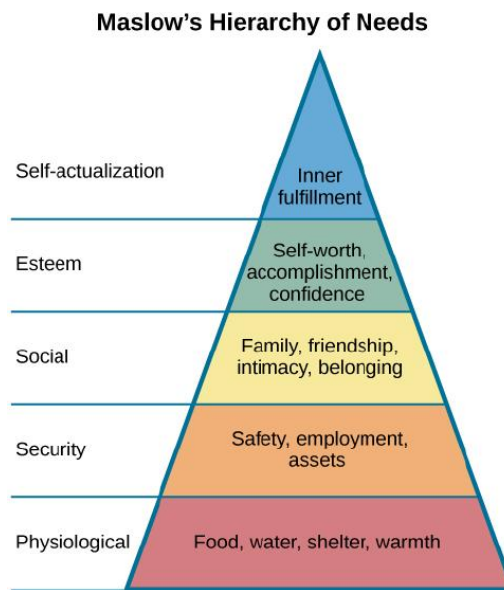


Figure 23.5.1: Maslow's hierarchy of needs is illustrated here. In some versions of the pyramid, cognitive and aesthetic needs are also included between esteem and self-actualization. Others include another tier at the top of the pyramid for self-transcendence.

The needs in Maslow's hierarchy include physiological needs (food and clothing), safety needs (job security), social needs (friendship), self-esteem, and self-actualization. This hierarchy addressing five needs can be used by managers to better understand employees' motivation and address them in ways that lead to high productivity and job satisfaction.

At the bottom of the pyramid are the **physiological** (or basic) human needs that are required for survival: food, shelter, water, sleep, etc. If these requirements are not met, the body cannot continue to function. Faced with a lack of food, love, and safety, most people would probably consider food to be their most urgent need.

Once physical needs are satisfied, **security** (sometimes referred to as individual safety) takes precedence. Security and safety needs include personal security, financial security, and health and well-being. These first two levels are important to the physical survival of the person. Once individuals have basic nutrition, shelter, and safety, they seek to fulfill higher-level needs.

The third level of need is **social**, which include love and belonging; when individuals have taken care of themselves physically, they can address their need to share and connect with others. Deficiencies at this level, on account of neglect, shunning, ostracism, etc., can impact an individual's ability to form and maintain emotionally significant relationships. Humans need to feel a sense of belonging and acceptance, whether it comes from a large social group or a small network of family and friends. Other sources of social connection may be professional organizations, clubs, religious groups, social media sites, and so forth. Humans need to love and be loved (sexually and non-sexually) by others. Without these attachments, people can be vulnerable to psychological difficulties such as loneliness, social anxiety, and depression. These conditions, when severe, can impair a person's ability to address basic physiological needs such as eating and sleeping.

The fourth level is **esteem**, which represents the normal human desire to be valued and validated by others, through, for example, the recognition of success or status. This level also includes self-esteem, which refers to the regard and acceptance one has for

oneself. Imbalances at this level can result in low self-esteem or an inferiority complex. People suffering from low self-esteem may find that external validation by others—through fame, glory, accolades, etc.—only partially or temporarily fulfills their needs at this level.

The fifth level of the pyramid is **self-actualization**. At this stage, people feel that they have reached their full potential and are doing everything they're capable of. Self-actualization is rarely a permanent feeling or state. Rather, it refers to the ongoing need for personal growth and discovery that people have throughout their lives. Self-actualization may occur after reaching an important goal or overcoming a particular challenge, and it may be marked by a new sense of self-confidence or contentment.

? Practice Question

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Hierarchy of Needs and Organizational Theory

Maslow's hierarchy of needs is relevant to organizational theory because both are concerned with human motivation. Understanding what people need—and how people's needs differ—is an important part of effective management. For example, some people work primarily for money, but they also like to go to work because they enjoy feeling respected by others and appreciated for their good work.

Maslow's hierarchy of needs suggests that if a lower need is not met, then the higher ones will be ignored. For example, if employees lack job security and are worried that they will be fired, they will be far more concerned about their financial well-being and meeting lower needs such as paying rent, bills, etc. However, if employees receive adequate financial compensation and have job security, meaningful group relationships and praise for good work may be more important motivators.

Can you think of recent examples of how Maslow's hierarchy of needs might have affected your behavior at work in some way?

? Practice Question

<https://assessments.lumenlearning.co...essments/14431>

When needs aren't met, employees can become very frustrated. For example, if individuals work hard for a promotion and don't get the recognition it represents, they may lose motivation and put in less effort. Also, when a need *is* met, it will no longer serve a motivating function—the next level up in the needs hierarchy will become more important. From a management point of view, keeping one's employees motivated can seem like something of a moving target. People seldom fit neatly into pyramids or diagrams, and their needs are complicated and often change over time.

✓ Maria at Work

Maria is an award-winning long-time employee. In the ten years that she worked for her company, she has always been punctual, does high-quality work, and is well liked by her coworkers. Maria has always been engaged with her coworkers and helped mentor new employees. Over the last six months, Jorge noticed that Maria has made a lot mistakes with on-boarding new employees with a mentoring program she helped design. He concludes that Maria is bored with her job and wants to leave, so he decides to use her semiannual performance appraisal, to bring up these matters.

To his surprise, Jorge learns that Maria's husband lost his job six months ago and, unable to keep up with mortgage payments, the two have been rotating living in their car and at a local hotel. In Jorge's office, Maria shares that she really needs this job, and promises she will improve, but she could use some help mentoring new employees. She asks him if she can train somebody else to do that job for the next six months while she and her husband figure out a new living situation. Jorge listens to her with compassion and helps redefine her priorities with the company.

Jorge notes Maria has moved down on Maslow's needs pyramid and because he wants to be an effective manager, he promises to adapt his motivational approaches he uses with his team. In short, he know a manager's best strategy is to recognize this complexity and try to remain attuned to what employees say they need.

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