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Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

by [Saul McLeod](#)  published 2007, updated 2014

Maslow wanted to understand what motivates people. He believed that people possess a set of motivation systems unrelated to [rewards](#) or [unconscious desires](#).

Maslow (1943) stated that people are motivated to achieve certain needs. When one need is fulfilled a person seeks to fulfill the next one, and so on.

The earliest and most widespread version of Maslow's (1943, 1954) *hierarchy of needs* includes five motivational needs, often depicted as hierarchical levels within a pyramid.



This five-stage model can be divided into basic (or deficiency) needs (e.g. physiological, safety, love, and esteem) and growth needs (self-actualization).

The deficiency, or basic needs are said to motivate people when they are unmet. Also, the need to fulfill such needs will become stronger the longer the duration they are denied. For example, the longer a person goes without food the more hungry they will become.

One must satisfy lower level basic needs before progressing on to meet higher level growth needs. Once these needs have been reasonably satisfied, one may be able to reach the highest level called self-actualization.

Every person is capable and has the desire to move up the hierarchy toward a level of self-actualization. Unfortunately, progress is often disrupted by failure to meet lower level needs. Life experiences including divorce and loss of job may cause an individual to fluctuate between levels of the hierarchy.

Maslow noted only one in a hundred people become fully self-actualized because our society rewards motivation primarily based on esteem, love and other social needs.

The original hierarchy of needs five-stage model includes:

- 1. Biological and Physiological needs - air, food, drink, shelter, warmth, sleep.*
- 2. Safety needs - protection from elements, security, order, law, stability, freedom from fear.*
- 3. Love and belongingness needs - friendship, intimacy, affection and love, - from work group, family, friends, romantic relationships.*
- 4. Esteem needs - achievement, mastery, independence, status, dominance, prestige, self-respect, respect from others.*
- 5. Self-Actualization needs - realizing personal potential, self-fulfillment, seeking personal growth and peak experiences.*



Maslow posited that human needs are arranged in a hierarchy:

'It is quite true that man lives by bread alone — when there is no bread. But what happens to man's desires when there is plenty of bread and when his belly is chronically filled?

At once other (and “higher”) needs emerge and these, rather than physiological hungers, dominate the organism. And when these in turn are satisfied, again new (and still “higher”) needs emerge and so on. This is what we mean by saying that the basic human needs are organized into a hierarchy of relative prepotency' (Maslow, 1943, p. 375).

The expanded hierarchy of needs:

It is important to note that Maslow's (1943, 1954) five stage model has been expanded to include cognitive and aesthetic needs (Maslow, 1970a) and later transcendence needs (Maslow, 1970b).

Changes to the original five-stage model are highlighted and include a seven-stage model and a eight-stage model, both developed during the 1960's and 1970s.

1. Biological and Physiological needs - air, food, drink, shelter, warmth, sex, sleep, etc.

2. Safety needs - protection from elements, security, order, law, stability, etc.

3. Love and belongingness needs - friendship, intimacy, affection and love, - from work group, family, friends, romantic relationships.

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 - realizing personal potential, self-fulfillment, seeking personal growth and peak experiences.

8. Transcendence needs - helping others to achieve self-actualization.

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