

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

Psychologist Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs 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. Needs at the bottom of the pyramid are basic physical requirements including the need for food, water, sleep and warmth. Once these lower level needs have been met, people can move on to the next level of needs, which are for safety and security.

As people progress up the pyramid, needs become increasingly psychological and social. Soon, the need for love, friendship and intimacy become important. Further up the pyramid, the need for personal esteem and feelings of accomplishment take priority. Maslow emphasized the importance of self-actualization, which is a process of growing and developing as a person to achieve individual potential.

Maslow believed that these needs are similar to instincts and play a major role in motivating behavior.

1. Physical (or Physiological) Needs

These include the most basic needs that are vital to survival, such as the need for water, air, food and sleep. Maslow believed that these needs are the most basic and instinctive needs in the hierarchy because all needs become secondary until these physiological needs are met.

2. Security Needs

These include needs for safety and security. Security needs are important for survival, but they are not as demanding as the physiological needs. Examples of security needs include a desire for steady employment, health insurance, safe neighborhoods and shelter from the environment.

3. Social Needs

These include needs for belonging, love and affection. Maslow considered these needs to be less basic than physiological and security needs. Relationships such as friendships, romantic attachments and families help fulfill this need for companionship and acceptance, as does involvement in social, community or religious groups.

4. Esteem Needs

After the first three needs have been satisfied, esteem needs becomes increasingly important. These include the need for things that reflect on self-esteem, personal worth, social recognition and accomplishment.

5. Self-Actualizing Needs

This is the highest level of Maslow's hierarchy of needs. Self-Actualized people are self-aware, concerned with personal growth, less concerned with the opinions of others and interested fulfilling their potential.

