

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

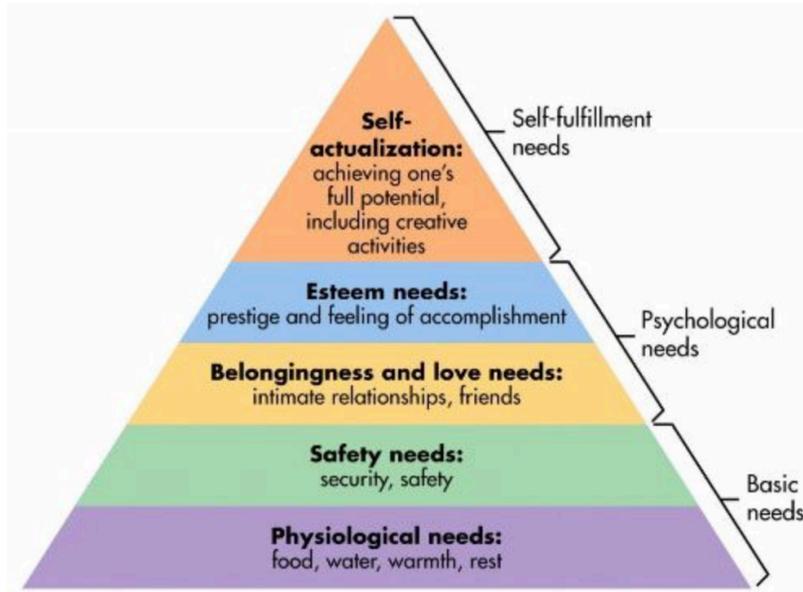
EHC Medical Patient Education Module

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

Maslow's hierarchy of needs is a motivational theory in psychology comprising a five-tier model of human needs, often depicted as hierarchical levels within a pyramid.

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

Maslow stated that people are motivated to achieve certain needs, and that some needs take precedence over others. Our most basic need is for physical survival, and this will be the first thing that motivates our behavior. Once that level is fulfilled the next level up is what motivates us, and so on.



This five-stage model can be divided into deficiency needs and growth needs. The first four levels are often referred to as deficiency needs (*D-needs*) and the top level is known as growth or being needs (*B-needs*).

The deficiency needs are said to motivate people when they are unmet. Also, the need to fulfil 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 deficit needs before progressing on to meet higher level growth needs. When a deficit need has been satisfied, it will go away. Our activities become habitually directed towards meeting the next set of needs that we have yet to satisfy. These then become our salient needs. However, growth needs continue to be felt and may even become stronger once they have been engaged. Once these growth 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. Therefore, not everyone will move through the hierarchy in a uni-directional manner but may move back and forth between the different types of needs.

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