Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

In Chapter 2 you saw that people become actualized to accomplish higher motives only after they have fulfilled certain basic needs.

Psychologist Abraham Maslow identified seven categories of basic needs common to all people. Maslow represented these needs as a hierarchy in the shape of a pyramid (Figure 3.1). A **hierarchy** is an arrangement that ranks people or concepts from lowest to highest. According to Maslow, individuals must meet the needs at the lower levels of the pyramid before they can successfully be motivated to tackle the next levels. The lowest four levels represent **deficiency needs**, and the upper three levels represent **growth needs**.

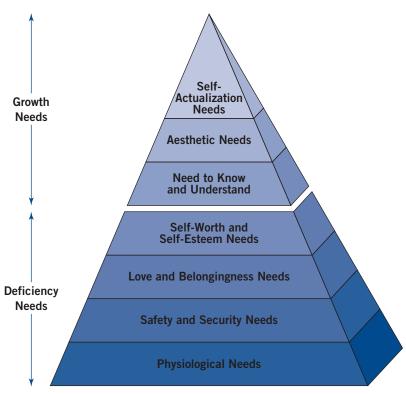
Physiological Needs

Notice that the physiological needs are the foundation of the pyramid. Why do you suppose these needs occupy this position?

Maslow suggested that the first and most basic need people have is the need for survival: their physiological requirements for food, water, and shelter. People must have food to eat, water to drink, and a place to call home before they can think about anything else. If any of these physiological necessities is missing, people are motivated above all else to meet the missing need. Have you ever had a hard time paying attention to what the professor is saying when you are hungry? Some of your future students may not have had breakfast—or even dinner the night before. Free and reduced breakfast and lunch programs have been implemented in schools to help students meet some of their physiological needs.

FIGURE 3.1

Maslow's hierarchy of needs.





Safety and Security Needs

After their physiological needs have been satisfied, people can work to meet their needs for safety and security. (But the physiological needs must be met first.) Safety is the feeling people get when they know no harm will befall them, physically, mentally, or emotionally; security is the feeling people get when their fears and anxieties are low. How does this relate to students in school? What threats to their physical, mental, or emotional security might students perceive in school? (You will investigate safety and security in the classroom more thoroughly in Chapter 8.)

Love and Belongingness Needs

After the physiological needs and the needs for survival and for safety and security have been met, an individual can be motivated to meet the needs represented at higher levels of the pyramid. The third level of the pyramid are needs associated with love and belonging. These needs are met through satisfactory relationships—relationships with family members, friends, peers, classmates, teachers, and other people with whom individuals interact. Satisfactory relationships imply acceptance by others. Having satisfied their physiological and security needs, people can venture out and seek relationships from which their need for love and belonging can be met.

Think about students of the age that you desire to teach. What do they need from their teacher and the people with whom they establish relationships that will assure them they are accepted?

Self-Worth and Self-Esteem Needs

Once individuals have satisfactorily met their need for love and belonging, they can begin to develop positive feelings of self-worth and self-esteem, and act to foster pride in their work and in themselves as people. Before they can work toward self-esteem, however, they must feel safe, secure, and part of a group such as a class in school. In a study by Yamamoto et al. (1996), more than 1,700 children in grades 2 through 9 reported that the most stressful events in their lives were those that threatened their security and those that threatened to embarrass them, thereby challenging their developing sense of love and belonging. As a teacher, you need to find ways you can help students in your classes develop positive feelings about themselves and thus begin to satisfy their needs for self-worth and self-esteem.

The Deficiency Needs

The first four levels of Maslow's hierarchy of needs are essential for a person's well-being and must be satisfied before the person is motivated to seek experiences that pertain to the upper levels. If a student cannot meet any of these needs, that student will not be motivated to pursue any of the needs in the succeeding levels. Because of this, the first four levels of needs are called **deficiency needs**. After a deficiency need has been satisfied, a person's motivation to satisfy it lessens. Fortunately, many students come to school with the deficiency needs of physiology, safety and security, love and belongingness, and self-esteem already met—at home; in peer groups; in church, scouting, athletic, or music groups; in other groups; or in some combination of these. However, some students who come to school are not having these needs met elsewhere and look for ways to satisfy these needs in school. And *all* students must meet these deficiency needs before they can successfully work at learning.

The Need to Know and Understand

The fifth level of Maslow's pyramid represents an individual's need to know and understand. According to Maslow's hierarchy, this motivation cannot occur until the deficiency needs have been met to the individual's satisfaction. As you can



imagine, the need to know and understand is a primary area of focus for education and is a topic on which we will concentrate. One of our primary jobs as educators is to motivate students so they will want to know and understand.

Aesthetic Needs

Aesthetics refers to the quality of being creatively, beautifully, or artistically pleasing; aesthetic needs are the needs to express oneself in pleasing ways. Decorating your living room, wrapping birthday presents attractively, washing and waxing your car, and keeping up with the latest styles in clothing are all ways of expressing your aesthetic sense. People are motivated to meet this need only after the previous five needs have been met. In what (desirable) ways might your students express themselves aesthetically in your classroom? In what ways might you express yourself aesthetically in your classroom?

The Need for Self-Actualization

At the top of the pyramid is the need for **self-actualization**, which is a person's desire to become everything he or she is capable of becoming—to realize and use his or her full potential, capacities, and talents. This need can be addressed only when the previous six have been satisfied. It is rarely met completely; Maslow (1968) estimated that less than 1% of adults achieve total self-actualization.

The Growth Needs

The upper three levels of the pyramid constitute a person's **growth needs**. Growth needs can never be satisfied completely. Contrary to the deficiency needs, for which motivation diminishes when a need is satisfied, as growth needs are met, people's motivation to meet them increases. The more these needs are satisfied, the more people want to pursue them. For example, the more one comes to understand, the more one's motivation to learn more increases. Have you experienced this yourself? In what situation? We hope you are experiencing this increased motivation to learn in your introduction to education course.



