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Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

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A theory of motivation proposed by well-known psychologist Abraham Maslow in 1943, The Hierarchy of Needs involves the pattern of human motivations by which an individual move through, from the most basic and fundamental drives up to the secondary needs at the top level.

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The Hierarchy

The Hierarchy of Needs is frequently portrayed using a graphical representation of the needs and drives of humans. The pyramid above shows the different levels of the hierarchy, in which the largest level at the bottom includes the physiological needs of a person, while the secondary level at the top represents the need for self-actualization.

Starting from the bottom of the pyramid, the first four layers refer to the “deficiency needs” or “d-needs”. These layers include the physical needs, esteem, love and belongingness and security needs. The “d-needs” as coined by Maslow himself indicates that if the needs in these levels are not met, there would be a physiological effect on a person. For instance, if there is lack of security, the person would feel anxious - his heart rate would increase, he would begin to perspire a lot and other physiological effects of anxiety will appear. The pyramid implies that the needs at the lower levels of the pyramid must be satisfied first before the individual can move on to the higher levels and satisfy those needs. The satisfaction of the needs in the lower levels will result in a stronger motivation to satisfy the needs on the next level.

Physiological Needs

The physiological needs include the requirements a human should satisfy in order to survive. These needs should be met for the human body to function properly. According to this theory, the physiological needs are the most significant of all needs. These include air, water, food, clothing, shelter and sex.

Safety and Security Needs

The safety needs of an individual may include health and well-being, personal security, financial security (job, economic status, etc.) and safety against illness, accidents and their impacts or complications.

Love and Belongingness Needs

The third level of needs, love and belongingness include the need for forming significant relationships such as family, friendship, peer/social relationships and intimacy with another person.

Esteem Needs

Esteem needs include the desire of being accepted, valued and respected by others. These include the need for recognition (through job, profession, etc.), perhaps fame and glory, and a sense of contributing to society.

Need for Self-Actualization

The self-actualization need talks about the full potential of a person and how much he realizes that potential. This level pertains to the desire of a person to achieve everything that he can so he can become the most that he can be. For example, a person wants to be the best teacher or an ideal parent. Mastery of the previous four layers of needs must be met first before one can satisfy the need for self-actualization.

Circumstantial Changes

While the hierarchy of needs seems to be a simple going-up-the-ladder concept, Maslow recognized the complexity of the human brain as he believed that an individual may focus and get motivated to satisfy the needs on the upper layers of the hierarchy before those on the

lower layers.

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