



Physiological needs

Physiological needs are the physical requirements for human survival. If these requirements are not met, the human body cannot function properly and will ultimately fail. Physiological needs are thought to be the most important; they should be met first.

Air, water, and food are [metabolic](#) requirements for survival in all animals, including humans. Clothing and shelter provide necessary protection from the [elements](#). While maintaining an adequate birth rate shapes the intensity of the human sexual instinct, [sexual competition](#) may also shape said instinct.^[2]

Safety needs

Once a person's physical safety needs are relatively satisfied, their safety needs take precedence and dominate behavior. In the absence of physical safety – due to war, natural disaster, [family violence](#), [childhood abuse](#), etc. – people may (re-)experience [post-traumatic stress disorder](#) or [transgenerational trauma](#). In the absence of economic safety – due to economic crisis and lack of work opportunities – these safety needs manifest themselves in ways such as a preference for [job security](#), grievance procedures for protecting the individual from unilateral authority, savings accounts, insurance policies, disability accommodations, etc. This level is more likely to be found in children as they generally have a greater need to feel safe.

Safety and Security needs include:

- Personal security
- Financial security
- Health and well-being
- Safety net against accidents/illness and their adverse impacts

Love and belonging

After physiological and safety needs are fulfilled, the third level of human needs is interpersonal and involves feelings of [belongingness](#). This need is especially strong in childhood and can override the need for safety as witnessed in children who cling to abusive parents. Deficiencies within this level of Maslow's hierarchy – due to [hospitalism](#), [neglect](#), [shunning](#), [ostracism](#), etc. – can adversely affect the individual's ability to form and maintain emotionally significant relationships in general, such as:

- Friendship
- Intimacy
- Family

According to Maslow, humans need to feel a sense of belonging and acceptance among their social groups, regardless whether [these groups are large or small](#). For example, some large social groups may include clubs, co-workers, religious groups, professional organizations, sports teams, and gangs. Some examples of small social connections include family members, intimate partners, mentors, colleagues, and confidants. Humans need to love and be loved – both sexually and non-sexually – by others.^[2] Many people become susceptible to [loneliness](#), [social anxiety](#), and [clinical depression](#) in the absence of this love or belonging element. This need for belonging may overcome the physiological and security needs, depending on the strength of the peer pressure.

Esteem

All humans have a need to feel respected; this includes the need to have [self-esteem](#) and self-respect. Esteem presents the typical human desire to be accepted and valued by others. People often engage in a profession or hobby to gain recognition. These activities give the person a sense of contribution or value. Low self-esteem or an [inferiority complex](#) may result from imbalances during this level in the hierarchy. People with low self-esteem often need respect from others; they may feel the need to seek fame or glory. However, fame or glory will not help the person to build their self-esteem until they accept who they are internally. Psychological imbalances such as [depression](#) can hinder the person from obtaining a higher level of self-esteem or self-respect.

Most people have a need for stable self-respect and self-esteem. Maslow noted two versions of esteem needs: a "lower" version and a "higher" version. The "lower" version of esteem is the need for respect from others. This may include a need for status, recognition, fame, prestige, and attention. The "higher" version manifests itself as the need for self-respect. For example, the person may have a need for strength, competence, mastery, [self-confidence](#), independence, and freedom. This "higher" version takes precedence over the "lower" version because it relies on an inner competence established through experience. Deprivation of these needs may lead to an inferiority complex, weakness, and helplessness.

Maslow states that while he originally thought the needs of humans had strict guidelines, the "hierarchies are interrelated rather than sharply separated".^[3] This means that esteem and the subsequent levels are not strictly separated; instead, the levels are closely related.

Self-actualization

Main article: [Self-actualization](#)

"What a man can be, he must be."^{[3]:91} This quotation forms the basis of the perceived need for self-actualization. This level of need refers to what a person's full potential is and the realization of that potential. Maslow describes this level as the desire to accomplish everything that one can, to become the most that one can be.^{[3]:92} Individuals may perceive or focus on this need very specifically. For example, one individual may have the strong desire to become an ideal parent. In another, the desire may be expressed athletically. For others, it may be expressed in paintings, pictures, or inventions.^{[3]:93} As previously mentioned, Maslow believed that to understand this level of need, the person must not only achieve the previous needs, but master them.

Self-transcendence

In his later years, Maslow explored a further dimension of needs, while criticizing his own vision on self-actualization.^[8] The self only finds its actualization in giving itself to some higher goal outside oneself, in altruism and spirituality.^[9]