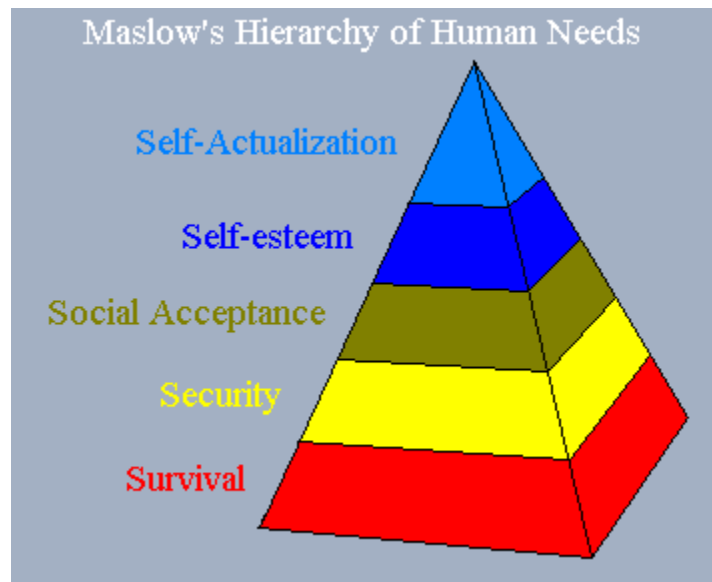


## ABRAHAM MASLOW: HIERARCHY OF NEEDS

### Self-Actualization

Dr. Abraham Maslow coined the term “Self-Actualization” as the pinnacle in the hierarchy of human needs. Dr. Maslow summed up the concept as:

"A musician must make music, an artist must paint, a poet must write, if he is to be at peace with himself. What a man can be, he must be. This is the need we may call self-actualization ... It refers to man's desire for fulfillment, namely to the tendency for him to become actually in what he is potentially: to become everything that one is capable of becoming ..."



As potential models of a self-actualized person, Dr. Maslow identified the following historical figures: Abraham Lincoln (in his last years), Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Franklin, George Washington, Albert Einstein, Aldous Huxley, William James, Spinoza, Goethe, Pablo Casals, Pierre Renoir, Robert Browning, Walt Whitman, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, Eleanor Roosevelt, Jan Addams, Albert Schweitzer, Ralph Waldo Emerson and Joseph Haydn among others. (It is interesting to note that several of these "models" were also identified by Dr. R. M. Bucke, in his book: "Cosmic Consciousness," as individuals that exhibited the behavior of people who had experienced cosmic consciousness.)

## **Characteristics of Self Actualizing People**

### **Realistic**

Realistically oriented, a Self-Actualizing (SA) person has a more efficient perception of reality, and has comfortable relations with it. This is extended to all areas of life. A Self-Actualizing person is unthreatened and unfrightened by the unknown. He/she has a superior ability to reason, to see the truth, and is logical and efficient.

### **Self Acceptance**

Accepts himself/herself, others and the natural world the way they are. Sees human nature as is, has a lack of crippling guilt or shame, enjoys himself/herself without regret or apology, and has no unnecessary inhibitions.

### **Spontaneity, Simplicity, Naturalness**

He/she is spontaneous in his inner life. Thoughts and impulses are unhampered by convention. His/her ethics are autonomous, and Self-actualizing individuals are motivated to continual growth.

### **Focus of Problem Centering**

A Self-actualizing person focuses on problems and people outside of himself/herself. He/she has a mission in life requiring much energy, as it is his/her sole reason for existence. He/she is serene, characterized by a lack of worry, and is devoted to duty.

### **Detachment: The Need for Privacy**

The Self-actualized person can be alone and not be lonely, is unflappable, and retains dignity amid confusion and personal misfortunes, all the while remaining objective. He/she is a self starter, is responsible for himself/herself, and owns his/her behavior.

### **Autonomy: Independent of Culture and Environment**

The SA person has a fresh rather than stereotyped appreciation of people and the basic good in life. Moment to moment living for him/her is thrilling, transcending, and spiritual as he/she lives the present moment to the fullest.

### **Peak experiences**

"Feelings of limitless horizons opening up to the vision, the feeling of being simultaneously more powerful and also more helpless than one ever was before, the feeling of ecstasy and wonder and awe, the loss of placement in time and space with, finally, the conviction that something extremely important and valuable had happened, so that the subject was to some extent transformed and strengthened even in his daily life by such experiences."

### **Interpersonal relations**

Identification, sympathy, affection for mankind, kinship with the good, bad, and ugly are all traits of the SA person. Truth is clear to him as he/she can see things others cannot. He/she has

profound, intimate relationships with few and is capable of greater love than others consider possible as he/she shares his/her benevolence, affection, and friendliness with everyone.

### **Democratic values and attitudes**

The SA person is able to learn from anyone, is humble and friendly with anyone regardless of class, education, political belief, race or color.

### **Discrimination: Means and ends, Good and evil**

The SA does not confuse between means and ends and does no wrong. He/she enjoys the here and now, getting to goal--not just the result. He/she makes the most tedious task an enjoyable game and has his/her own inner moral standards (appearing amoral to others).

### **Philosophical, unhostile sense of humor**

Jokes to the SA person are teaching metaphors, intrinsic to the situation and are spontaneous. He/she can laugh at himself, but he/she never makes jokes that hurt others.

### **Creativity**

The SA person enjoys an inborn uniqueness that carries over into everything he/she does, is original, inventive, uninhibited, and he/she sees the real and true more easily.

### **Resistance to enculturation: Transcendence of any particular culture**

SA people have an inner detachment from culture. Although folkways may be observed, SA people are not controlled by them. Working for long term culture improvement, indignation with injustice, inner autonomy, outer acceptance, and the ability to transcend the environment rather than just cope are intrinsic to SA people.

### **Imperfections**

SA people are painfully aware of their own imperfections and joyfully aware of their own growth process. They are impatient with themselves when stuck and feel real life pain as a result.

### **Values**

The SA person is realistically human due to a philosophical acceptance of self, human nature, social life, physical reality, and nature.

### **Resolution of dichotomies**

Polar opposites merge into a third, higher phenomenon as though the two have united; therefore, opposite forces are no longer felt as conflict. To the SA person work becomes play and desires are in excellent accord with reason. The SA person retains his childlike qualities yet is very wise.

Maslow says there are two processes necessary for self-actualization: self exploration and action. The deeper the self exploration, the closer one comes to self-actualization.

<http://www.performance-unlimited.com/samain.htm>