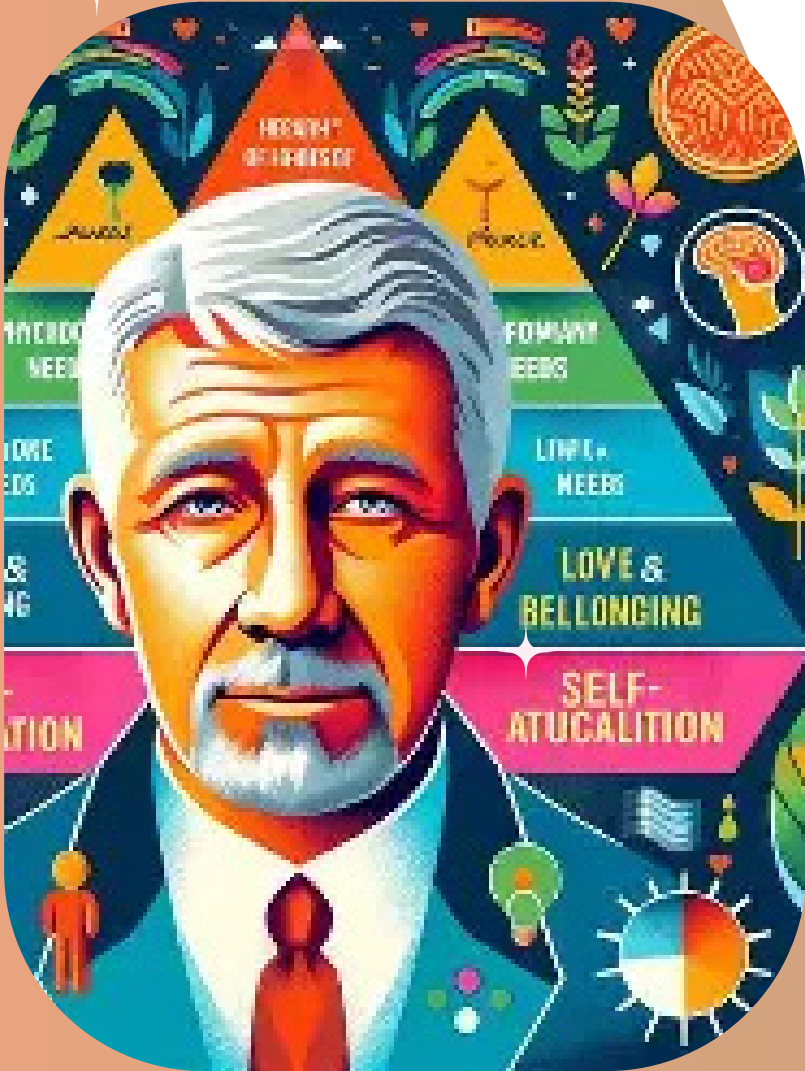


Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs



(Suryavanshi, M. 2025)

Who was Abraham Maslow?

Abraham Maslow was born in Brooklyn New York in 1908. He grew up in a Jewish family with limited means, his challenging childhood shaped his later work on human potential and self actualisation.

Through his profession as a psychologist and philosopher, Maslow developed his key theory work and was best known for his self actualisation theory of psychology (Britannica, n.d).

The Encyclopedia Britannica (n.d) describes Maslow as a humanistic psychologist, and explains that his Hierarchy of needs is a psychological approach that emphasises the uniqueness of each person and advocates for recognising and treating people as distinct, unique individuals.

Maslow's most famous book 'Motivation and Personality' was published in 1954. This book introduced his hierarchy of needs theory, which has become a foundational concept in psychology. The book explores the different levels of human needs and their impact on motivation and behaviour.

The Theory - Hierarchy of Needs

The basis of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs consists of a 5 levels of development arranged into a pyramid structure.

In developing his hierarchy of needs, Stoyanov explains in his 2017 publication of *An Analysis of Abraham H. Maslow's A Theory of Human Motivation* that Maslow aimed to demonstrate that human behaviour is primarily driven by the pursuit of a structured sequence of needs, beginning with the most basic physiological requirements that are essential for sustaining life and progressing to needs related to safety.

Starting at the bottom, Maslow believed that humans needed to successfully satisfy the lower levels of the hierarchy to achieve the higher ones. His theory highlights the essential role of meeting children's basic physiological and emotional needs in early childhood, providing a secure foundation upon which higher level cognitive and social skills can develop.

Maslow's theory has also been explored by Naaz and Khalid (2023). They argued that Maslow's theory emphasises the necessity of fulfilling basic physiological and safety needs before individuals can pursue higher-order aspirations. Within an EY setting, this implies that children's' essential needs such as adequate nutrition, physical security, and a supportive environment should be prioritised to establish an environment conducive to learning and developing. Addressing these foundational conditions enables children to fully engage in cognitive processes and social development.



(Suryavanshi, M. 2025)

According to Maslow's theory (1954), and as explored by Budzyna and Buckley in the publication *The Whole Child: Development in the Early Years*, (2023), human needs are generally classified into five stages:

- The first stage of **physiological needs** is related to survival. These are biological requirements for human sustenance for example, air, food, drink and sleep.
- **Safety needs** appear when physiological needs are met. These include the need for structure and predictability, protection from elements, security both physical and emotional, stability and freedom from fear.
- The third stage of human needs is **social** and involves feelings of love and belongingness. The need for interpersonal relationships motivates behaviour. Examples include friendship, intimacy, trust, acceptance, receiving and giving affection and love, affiliation, or being part of a group such as family, friends and work.
- Maslow classified the next stage, **esteem needs**, into two categories: esteem for yourself (for example, dignity, achievement, mastery, and independence) and the desire for reputation or respect from others (for example, status, and social standing).
- If the previous needs are sufficiently met, a person now has the opportunity to reach **self-actualisation** realising personal potential, self-fulfillment, seeking personal growth and peak experiences (for example reaching personal goals and aspirations such as playing in an orchestra or writing a novel).

Exploring each layer and it’s link to Early Years....

Self Actualisation

Self actualisation in children involves providing meaningful opportunities that enable them to realise their full potential through access to experiences and resources fostering exploration and creativity. This may include achieving a sense of fulfillment by learning to play a musical instrument or engaging in creative pursuits.

The Welsh Curriculum for Non-Maintained Settings (Welsh Government, 2022) emphasises holistic development and creativity, highlighting the importance of enabling learners to reach their full potential and develop as confident, curious, and capable individuals. By fostering ambitious and capable learners, the Curriculum for Wales seeks to nurture a lifelong passion for learning and a commitment to acquiring knowledge, skills, and personal growth within childcare settings and beyond.

Esteem

Young children need to feel valued and capable in the settings they attend as well as in their home environment to develop. The Quality Framework for Early Childhood Play, Learning and Care in Wales (2024, p18) reinforces this by saying children's experiences should be considered and designed to promote play while fostering confidence, independence, and a strong sense of well-being and that these experiences should support children’s holistic development.

When children feel valued and their independence is supported through positive reinforcement and opportunities to succeed- along with recognition of those successes, it strengthens their self esteem and fosters confidence in their ability to thrive.

Love and Belonging

Children require strong meaningful relationships with adults and other children in order to develop a sense of belonging. This is supported by the ECPLC pathways (2023, p.7) who believe that belonging is vital for happiness and wellbeing, it shapes who babies are and who they become and that babies who feel loved and valued are more likely to form positive relationships throughout life.

Implementing policies and practices that foster belonging such as robust keyworker systems and inclusive environments that embrace diversity helps shape children’s sense of identity and reinforces their understanding of who they are.

Safety

Children should feel physically and emotionally safe both at home and within a childcare setting.

The CIW NMS in Wales (2023) has standards in place that ensure that all registered childcare settings must have due regard for the safety of the children they care for, This includes ensuring there is a robust Safeguarding policy and procedures in place, That children have emotional safety through consistent routines and trusted adults, Appropriate risk assessments are in place to ensure the environment is safe and that all adults are responsible for the safety, welfare and development of children in their care.

Physiological

Children require basic survival needs such as food, water, warmth, and rest to support their development. These are a minimum requirement by CIW NMS (2023) and include ensuring that children have access to appropriate nap areas, clean drinking water and that they receive meals and snacks that are safely prepared and nutritionally balanced.

This is further backed up by the UNCRC Article 24 (United Nations,1989) that states that ‘Children have a right to the best possible health, and to be provided with health care, nutritious food, a clean environment and health and well-being education’.



The hierarchy model worked from the bottom up



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