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Human Development

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Maslow's Hierarchy of needs is a diagram followed by most business and social science majors and practitioners. The theory predicts when needs are met, they are no longer motivators. It begins with physical/physiological needs and moves up in a pyramid system to safety and security, love and belonging, esteem then lastly self-actualization (Greene and Burke 2007).

Physical/Physiological needs

The basic needs of life include many factors, these include shelter, air, food, drink and sleep as supported by Maslow's Hierarchy of needs. These are basic, vital needs therefore are the most important needs in life. In Maslow's theory, you should always satisfy the needs of each level before moving onto the next level as supported by Pichere (2015). Poor physical skills can have a negative impact on a child's development, it has been shown to impact readiness for starting school, behaviour, social development and academic achievement. (Preedy et al, 2020). A child who is tired or hungry cannot learn resulting development delays and poor motivation. (Maslow 1908-1970).

Self-Actualization

Maslow (1967) describes self-actualization as realizing your true potential, the desire to self-fulfilment. Becoming the best version of yourself. Every individual will have a different desire, some individuals may thrive to be academic, athletic, economic or to be an ideal parent whereas for other individuals they may express it more creatively with inventions or through arts such as paintings and photographs. Maslow (1999) observed that developmentally self-actualizing individuals show more progress as they strive towards personal growth, creativity and kindness supporting their inner talent. Self-actualization is the last on the Maslow's hierarchy of needs so unfortunately not every individual experiences it. (Perera 2024).

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

Love and Acceptance/Belonging

Maslow (1987) states love needs to be both given and received, without either of these an individual will look for relationships with people in general from a feeling of loneliness and abandonment. A child who is loved and safe will be healthier than a child that is safe but unloved and rejected. Neaum (2016) supports this by stating children will show love to others if they have been shown and given love themselves, they are more aware and able to respond to other's feelings. She goes on to say children who are loved have better physical and emotional self-control. Without these feelings of love and belonging individuals can become isolated; research shows social isolation, and loneliness can affect physical and mental health (Practical Psychology 2023). There are many different types of love and belonging such as physical touch, positive language, praise, feeling welcome and a part of the family/community as supported by Kaufman (2020). It is important for a child to feel welcome for their other needs to be met, such as feeling safe and secure and when they begin to feel safe and secure their confidence and self-esteem can then begin to grow.

Self-Esteem

Self-Esteem is an individual's view or perspective of their own worth as a person. The importance of self-esteem in development is substantial, without self-esteem and self-respect from others negative feelings can begin in a child's mind which can later in life cause many problems. These could include lack of confidence, anxiety, no self-belief and little to no motivation. It is impossible for an individual to move towards self-actualization with such thoughts of worthlessness, lack of worth and need (Beckley, 2012). To support a child's self-esteem, it is important to positively recognise their achievements and help them recognise them too, doing this will encourage them to strive for their goals and boost their esteem while motivating them. (Hughes, Doherty 2014) High self-esteem is evident through confident polite content children, the role of adults in a childcare setting is fundamental to sustain a child's self-worth, interactions are important tools to support a child's sense of value. Praise plays a huge factor in a child's self-esteem, receiving praise is a motivating experience, a simple word of praise and affirmation can make the difference not only to the child's day but to later life building their confidence and belief in themselves (Beckley 2012).



A Visual Representation of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs From Wikipedia (2021).

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The Concept of Holistic Child Development

Holistic Development in Early Years is focusing on a child's development as a whole rather than focusing on sole aspects. A holistic approach as supported by Brodie (2018) underlines the importance of focusing on all of their skills as they all support the children's development in many different ways, every area of learning and development is connected with another. In practise holistic development means right from birth, the learning, growth and development of a child are parallel. The term 'pedagogy of care' is most appropriate for ages birth to three years old, the reasoning for this is care and learning are inseparable in the holistic approach. By having a holistic approach allows the children to grow and learn while building their confidence, it enables practitioners to recognise children learn best when their individual needs are met. Care and affection have been identified as essential to young children's holistic development, Bowlby's attachment theory highlights key worker relationships to pedagogic issues, the relationship between practitioners and children has been acknowledged by many researchers and in early years policies such as EYFS. The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) have three important principles, these include; the unique child, positive relationships and the enabling environment. These three principles ensure the child is treated as an individual and their own person, the importance of positive relationships with the children and their families/carers and lastly the environment in the setting is always safe, nurturing and supportive of the child's development and interests (McMahon and Dyer 2019). This links to Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs as it influences individuals and practitioners to enhance self-awareness, improve relationships, and enrich environments to support children's holistic development and growth (Practical psychology 2023). Bowlby's attachment theory is described by Bowlby as the infant keeping a close connection with a preferred individual to maintain a sense of safety and security, it serves as protection for the child as babies need the care of adults for survival. Over the first year of a child's life this attachment grows stronger as they seek out the preferred care giver for comfort and contact, they may also begin experiencing separation anxiety when the adult is out of sight. Bowlby believes the first two years of a child's life is crucial to the attachment development as it has a lasting impact on their social, emotional and cognitive development. However children who do not form secure attachments during these years may have

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difficulties later in life with social skills, relationships and self-esteem (Davies and Troy 2020).

Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory states that an individual's development can be influenced by many factors, these being environment ranging from the surroundings to family to cultures. Bronfenbrenner divided this into five systems which he organised into order of how much they impact a child these system include the microsystem, mesosytem, exosystem, macrosystem and chronosystem, each representing the different environmental systems that influence one's development, growth and behaviour. The most influential system being the microsystem which consists of the individual's close family and school, the next is the mesosystem which is the family and school supporting one another to support the child to create a environment that is positive and safe allowing the child to develop further academically. Then there is the exosystem which is the other formal and informal social structures that include friends of the family, media and governments, while these do not interact with the child direct it still has an impact of the microsystems for example budget cuts from the governments could negatively impact the child with library closures, less after school clubs and access to educational resources. The macrosystem focuses culturally, including beliefs about gender roles, family structures this could influence parenting styles either negatively or positively. Lastly is the chronosystem, this is the transitions in an individuals life, either predicted or unpredicted changes in a child's life and structure causing stress or anxiety later affecting their social skills, development and mental health (Simply Psychology 2024).

Play is an essential factor in a child's development, it creates opportunities for the children to experience and learn about the world they live in. (Sutton 1997). Play has many benefits emotionally, physically and socially. These benefits include reducing anxiety by creating joy, increases calmness and resilience, increases empathy and compassion from sharing, supports making choices while building confidence, it increases attention and attachment, improves nonverbal skills and it increases range of motion, balance, flexibility along with fine and gross motor exploration and development. There are many types of play including unstructured free play where the child creates it, semi structured play which is guided by an adult, in child led play the child follows their imagination and creativity whereas semi structured is another individual entering the play and suggesting ideas working with the child to integrate them into the child's play (Charles and Bellinson 2019). Play Wales (2016) states

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while children will play with almost anything and anywhere there are resources that should be provided to encourage active play such as sand, water, shells, recyclable objects, loose parts, ropes, and tyres, by having these accessible for children will spark their motivation and curiosity during play. By supplying loose parts supports children's development on different levels by stimulating them and engaging them in their own play. The Welsh Government (2002) states they are dedicated to guaranteeing all children have safe, stimulating environments that are free from danger but also full of challenge, this gives them the opportunity to freely explore the world they and others around them live in.

Moreover, the challenges practitioners and individuals can face when enabling a child's holistic development include attendance of the setting, disadvantaged/deprived areas, neglect, little to no family support, cultural differences, lack of awareness about holistic development (Department for Education 2010).

In conclusion, Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs is informative and useful however there are a few minor problems related to it for example he does not take into account culture or religious differences, another example is Maslow states once a need is met you then proceed with the other levels however basic needs continuously need to be met, they do not disappear once met.

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Maslow's Significance in understanding child development

Maslow created the hierarchy of needs pyramid to help identify children's needs in order from basic physiological needs to higher level development needs (Maslow 1943). The five levels of the pyramid are;

Physiological needs – food, water, air, sleep, clothing.

Safety needs – money, resources, shelter.

Love and belonging needs – family, friends, community.

Esteem needs – self- confidence, respect, self-esteem.

Self-actualization needs – fulfilment, living life to one's full potential.

Maslow states that the lower level needs must be mostly satisfied before higher needs can be met, Maslow's work and research emphasise the importance of creating safe welcoming environments that support children's holistic development (Practical Psychology 2020).

Transitions can be a big factor in a child's life and development, there are many unexpected and expected transitions an individual can go through, a transition is a period of change from one significant stage to another. When transitions are managed positively and with support in early years it lays a positive foundation for transitions children can face later in life, in order to manage transitions sensitively they should be planned in advance, a transition is a process not an event therefor enabling children and families/carers to become familiar with the change and whoever is involved in the change to enable them to build trusting relationships and bonds before the move actually takes place. This will help support the children and families/carers with any anxious feelings, and any questions beforehand (Birth to matters 2021). Brooker (2008) states many of life's transitions are inevitable, and all pose a purpose. Children need transitions and change in order for growth, a well supported transition should result in the child feeling confident and competent with handling new experiences throughout their life. There are many different transitions a child will encounter throughout their early years these include starting nursery, moving schools, toilet training, possibly house moves and even family loss or parent breakup. All children manage transitions in different ways, as Maslow's hierarchy of needs states children need love and belongingness, transitions would be extremely difficult for them if they are lacking this need as they would be lacking in trust, love and the feel of being safe (Simply Psychology 2024).

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Furthermore, in early years, understanding schematic behaviours can help meet children's individual needs and interests and extend their outdoor learning. Chris Athey's work on schemas has been influential in providing early years practitioners and adults with the information regarding the importance of repetition in children's learning (Birth to 5 matters no date). The different types of schemas include; transportation, trajectory, containing, enveloping, connecting and transforming, by recognising the play schemas educators and carers can create nurturing environments that allow the children explore and make connections with the world around them in their own learning style. The schematic approach promotes children's cognitive development while catering for their individual interests and learning styles allowing them to explore their knowledge further (The curiosity approach 2024). Louis et al (2008) states schemas can be observed in a child's exploration and play, however they may not be consistent. A child may abandon an certain schema and then later on revisit it or they can even go some time without displaying any schema behaviour, schemas can change over time and some children may have more than one schema at a given time. Schemas can also be used as a way to display and deal with emotions and feelings, they can also have different schemas at home and at the setting. Schemas have been identified as a very important tool to use for children's learning and development, learning a child's schema can support activities and set ups in the setting while ensuring that each individual child is having the opportunity to further their development with activities suited to their needs and interests.

In addition, a professional key worker relationship is important to a child's growth and development, Birth to 5 matters (no date) states a key person's role is to help the child settle into the setting making them feel welcome, safe and cared about. A early years practitioner's role involves a relationship of trust not only with the children but with their families and carers too. A child who witnesses their close family members building a bond with an adult will be more inclined to trust and welcome that adult into their safe space, early experiences of love and attachment have long lasting benefits to a child later in life. A key persons role has special responsibilities, involving creating close relationships with the parents and families this is important to help parents feel comfortable sharing vital and important information about their child. Ainsworth et al (1978) identified building on Bowlby's attachment theory four main attachment styles through her strange situation procedure, these include

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Secure attachment; the child feels confident exploring knowing they are able to return to their close relative for comfort when needed, they can show distress when separated but are easily distracted.

Anxious-ambivalent attachment; the child shows signs of anxiety even with the caregiver present, they show signs of extreme distress and separation anxiety when separated from caregiver and also have difficulty soothing when reunited.

Avoidant attachment; the child seems unaffected when parted or reunited with caregiver, little to no signs of emotions when they are separated.

Disorganized attachment; the child shows signs of confusion when comforted by the caregiver sometimes pulling away freezing or showing fear or sometimes seeking comfort from them only to later pull away again.

In conclusion, Maslow is significant in early years because it guides practitioners to provide safe, nurturing and welcoming environments for children to support their developmental needs. It ensures all children's needs are met allowing the children to be the best versions of themselves. Understanding Maslow's theory is a valuable tool in promoting curiosity, supporting children's self-expression and encouraging decision making. It helps practitioners recognise various factors that could be affecting the way a child behaves or their motivation in activities. The theory also supports the approach to inclusivity, allowing practitioners to recognise that although all children have the same fundamental needs they may require different support methods to meet them (Brodie 2024).

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