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Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

- **Self actualization**

The need for reaching your full potential

'Even if all these needs are satisfied, we may still often expect that a new discontent and restfulness will soon develop' This is the highest of all needs and Maslow believed that this was the ultimate goal of self fulfilment and to be the best version of yourself and reach your fullest potential. He stated that unless you are developing all the abilities you possess, you may still be wanting more.

- **Esteem**

The need for acceptance by others

'All people in our society have a need or desire for a stable, firmly based, high evaluation of themselves, for self respect or self esteem' With the emergence of the self esteem needs comes the desire for respect from others self respect and esteem.

- **Social**

The need for love, affection and belongingness

'Now the person will feel keenly, as never before, the absence of friends, or a sweetheart, or a wife or children' Without the need for food, water, safety and stability Maslow suggested that man would now feel the need for love and also giving love. A person who is safe and well fed will now start to have feelings of loneliness and will yearn for friendships, a partner and children of their own.

- **Safety needs**

The needs for safety, shelter and stability

'The child's need for safety is his preference for some kind of undistruptive routine or rhythm' Maslow believed that by observing children we can understand how man has the need for safety. He states that young children are more likely to succeed when they have structure and solid routines in place. Man will set his life out to limit the chances of any dangers happening.

- **Physiological needs**

The need for food, water, air, health

'Undoubtedly these physiological needs are the most pre-potent of all needs' Maslow believed that these are the most basic, vital needs. They are the most important of all needs and they are needed for survival. They take precedence over everything else. For someone who is lacking any other need, it is quite possible that a physiological need would be the one need that they would feel more strongly and yearn for over any other need. For example, a person that has low self esteem, may feel unsafe, be lonely or hungry will more than likely have a want for food over finding shelter, boosting their confidence or finding company. "for the man who is extremely and dangerously hungry, no other interests exist but food"

In 1943 psychologist Abraham Maslow published his essay 'A Theory of Human Motivation' where he first presented his theory on the Hierarchy of needs. Maslow believed that human needs are structured and rank themselves in order of importance from basic needs to higher level needs and he alleged that only when a lower need is satisfied can the next need present itself. He states that 'humans are perpetually wanting animals' which means that humans continually seek more, consequently when a lower need is fulfilled, another need emerges and will take its place. Once the new need that has taken the place of the previous need is eventually satisfied, it too is replaced by a new need and the cycle continues, until you reach self actualisation. However, unless you are ultimately engaged in work you are suited or destined for then you will start to feel uneasy or dissatisfied. 'Even if all these needs are satisfied, we may still often expect that a new discontent and restfulness will soon develop, unless the individual is doing what he is fitted for'



(Maslow, 1943)

Maslow's Significance in Understanding Child Development: Three Examples from Early Years Practice

Abraham Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs theory is highly relevant in early years as children are completely reliant on the adult to have their needs met, so it is up to the practitioner to ensure that they provide for the children to enable their development. By ensuring children feel safe, secure, and valued, early years practitioners create environments where children can develop emotionally, socially, and cognitively, enabling them to reach their full potential. Looking at child development through Maslow's Hierarchy we can support children's learning and development by supporting each element of the hierarchy.

Physiological needs – providing healthy snacks and having sufficient sleep routines ensure that children's basic needs are met.

Safety needs – having consistent routines and schedules provides security for children which makes them feel safe and secure.

Social needs – practitioners that are caring and welcoming to children, helps them to feel loved and valued, giving them a sense of belonging.

Esteem – planning realistic goals for children with their learning which results in success along with praise and encouragement boosts children confidence and self esteem.

Self actualization – practitioners help children to reach their full potential by providing them with rich, engaging experiences.

(Gould, 2024)

Breakfast Clubs

Breakfast has long been recognised as the most important meal of the day and research suggests that children who have the opportunity to eat a healthy and nutritious breakfast prior to the start of the school day are more likely to achieve their full

educational potential. (Welsh Government, 2014) In 2004 the Welsh Government rolled out the free breakfast initiative for all primary school pupils, and this led to it being put into legislation in the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013. The introduction of this act supports Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs as Maslow proposed that children must have their basic physiological and safety needs met before they can progress toward higher-level needs, meaning children will not be able to concentrate on their learning and development during the school day if they haven't eaten breakfast.

Transitions

Part of the curriculum for Wales, Supporting learner progression: assessment guidance states effective transition is about supporting all learners along the learning continuum, as they move between different groups, different classes, different years and different settings. Farrelly and Hennessey (2013) highlight that transitions should take place gradually through visiting periods and with familiar people. 'A lack of appropriate support through the transition process can lead to negative long-term effects on children, for example low self-esteem and confidence, an inability to form meaningful relationships, and a reduced capacity to cope with change in the short and longer term' (Welsh Government, 2022) With this in mind we can see where other tiers in Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs is relevant. Social, where the need for love and building relationships is developed and Esteem, where the need for acceptance by others. Practitioners should fully support children through transitions whether it be, Horizontal – moving around in the setting or from inside to outside during the day. Vertical – moving from home to setting or setting to primary school. Multiple – multiple times throughout the day, home to setting, setting to grandparents, grandparents to home. This will help them to reduce anxiety, build resilience and help them feel safe. (Welsh Government, 2022)

Observations

'Observation plays a key role in our practice. It should be grounded in our thorough knowledge of child development and the child should be at the center of the process'

(Welsh Government, 2022) Practitioners carry out observations on children to be able to plan for children's learning and development. They should highlight the opportunities available in our environments, ensuring that babies and young children are engaged in experiences that support their play, learning, and development (Welsh Government 2024) Through observation we can see children's progression and plan appropriate, meaningful experiences in engaging environments that support children's learning and development. Using observations, planning should involve children's interests, and their competency to help get an understanding of each child's development level. Observations should be meaningful and relevant to the child and the recording of observations should be consistent and manageable for all.

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