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Infographic to explore Maslow's model

Maslows hierarchy of needs

Maslow's hierarchy of needs is a theory of motivation. (cherry 2024). Ocean (2023) states that Maslow's hierarchy of needs entails of five levels of needs which are crucial for children to grow and develop. Maslow's theory is shaped like a triangle. in order for a child to be self-actualised they must start at the bottom level and work their way up.

Self-esteem

once physiology, safety and belonging needs have been met, the child will then need to have a sense of self-esteem which must also be maintained. Addressing a child's self-esteem during the growth process creates a link to a child's awareness. (Poston 2009). Burleson *et al* (2014) states that confidence, accomplishment, respect for others, and the desire to be unique are all components of self-esteem. Burleson also adds that self-esteem is separated into two groups. The first thing that a child will want is to be strong, adequate, confident, and successful. Secondly, a child will want to be recognized, valued, and appreciated. When people's needs are met in both categories, children will feel strong, capable, adequate, and valuable. However, if these needs are not met then a child will feel inferior, vulnerable and incapable. Likewise, Simons *et al* (1987) implies that if a child does not meet the needs to feel accepted, valued and feel self-confident then a child may feel worthless and helpless. This is because children need to have stability and a high level of respect. Maslow argues that low self-esteem is the underlying cause of most children's psychological issues.

Safety needs

Burleson *et al* (2014) suggests that safety needs are much like physiological needs. Both safety and physiological needs are crucial for child development. Depending on where a child is in life, each child may have different safety needs. Likewise, Hopper (2020) indicates that once all physiological needs are met, the crucial need is safety. Children's need for a safe and consistent environment is evident from an early age, and when these needs are not provided, children frequently react with fear or anxiety. Poston (2009) also states that if a child does not have a routine, then it can make a child feel anxious and unsafe. Stability in a child's life is the aim for continuously satisfying the need for safety.

Physiological needs

According to Simone *et al.* (1987) the physiological needs of children are the necessities of life. They include the need for food, water and oxygen. These needs are vital for a child to grow and develop. Pichere (2015) also states that the need for food, water and oxygen are all needs related to survival. As these are basic needs that children need, they are the most important. Similarly, Burleson *et al* (2014) indicates that the physiological needs are the most crucial. If these needs are not met children will struggle to keep motivated. If hunger is an issue, then all other needs and desires will be repressed to help satisfy hunger. A child may act out and disrupt class. In the same way, children who lack sleep might act out in the same way. This is because due to not obtaining their basic needs, It has an impact on a Childs' everyday life.



Source: (google 2024)

Love and belonging

Stoyanov (2017) implies that once physiological needs are met then the next requirement is that children need love, affection and belongingness. Stoyanov also adds that love is a vital need because children tend to contribute more effectively to society if they are loved. According to Maslow a healthy relationship and affection between two people, along with trust is classed as love. Once the need for security has been sufficiently met, the need for love and a place may become essential. This need is evident since children and young people need to have positive relationships with their family and surroundings in order and to live their lives. (Ruth 2020). Lastly, Hopper (2010) states that reducing any fear or anxiety and focusing more on social development will result in a healthier self esteem.

Self-actualisation

According to Maslow (1964) self-actualisation can be a tool to help children find a purpose in life that matters to them. This can help children become healthier and achieve a higher quality of life. Maslow identifies self-actualisation as the most important need and a crucial role behind a child reaching their full potential. According to Maslow, most mentally healthy people follow a course known as growth motivation, which enables them to reach their full potential as they age and mature. Poston (2009) implies that Self-actualizers concentrate on the most important aspects of their identity. After achieving self-respect, the child can be more proactive in improving themselves and stay focused on finding solutions to any problems.

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The concept of holistic development

According to Tudsbury (2022) an approach to early and late childhood development that emphasizes the whole child is known as holistic development. Holistic development is an approach that focuses on a child's physical, emotional, social and intellectual growth. This frequently happens through play, which is how young children learn. (ICAHT UK 2024). Every child develops differently, in a variety of ways, and at varying rates. Mcilroy (2021) states that holistic development is important to children because it focusses on the whole child, and it helps children achieve their full potential. Similarly, Brodie (2018) implies that holistic development is important as one of the three primary areas of the Early Years, personal, social, and emotional development is the cornerstone of child development and is essential to fostering all other learning and development domains.

Children use play to practice and solidify what they have learned, experiment, take chances, solve problems, and make decisions both individually and in large groups. (Welsh Government, 2015). According to Welsh government (2022) every child has the fundamental right to play. They are naturally driven to play. Children discover ways to explore a variety of emotions and gain knowledge about the world they live in alongside others through play and playful experiences. Similarly, Play can be anything a person wants it to be, whether it's to express a feeling, solve a problem, or satisfy a need. (Smidt, 2011).

Positive relationships are crucial to understanding the idea of holistic child development. According to Johnson (2010) Interactive behaviours are typically used to illustrate positive relationships (e.g., mirroring a child's behaviours or emotions). Neurological research provides evidence of how these "mirror moments" affect cognitive, social, emotional, and physical performance. Johnson also adds that a positive relationship is when a child feels safe with early years practitioners. This links to Maslow's theory as Maslow states that safety needs are crucial to child development along with other needs.

Attachment links with positive relationships. GOV.UK (2022) states that a child will develop attachment feelings if an adult regularly considers their needs. The child may feel unlovable, unworthy, or flawed if they are rejected. All aspects of a child's development can benefit from safe and trustworthy relationships. A child raised in a secure and nurturing environment will grow up to have a healthy emotional well-being, which will benefit other aspects of their development. These nurturing connections can serve as the cornerstones for a child's self-esteem and sense of identity development. Children can express themselves and learn how to control and deal with their emotions through positive relationships. (Kelly 2015). Attachment has a massive impact on Maslow's theory because it links to self-esteem. A child will need to develop their emotions in order for them to be self-reliant and resilient. (Team 2024).

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Bronfenbrenner's theory of development is that a child's development is influenced by the various environments they come into contact with throughout their life, including social, cultural, biological, and interpersonal elements. Bronfenbrenner's model takes an holistic approach which indicates that child development involves interaction between these elements. (Cherry 2023)

Bailey (2023) states that Maslow's theory is a format to looking at a child holistically. Maslow believes that in order for children to grow and develop in all areas they must work their way up the triangle starting with physiological needs. once all the needs on the triangle have been met and a child is self-actualised, Maslow believes that this is when a child is fully developed.

According to Anon (no date) Bullying and harassment have a significant social impact on a child's overall development along with racial and religious harassment. Racial and religious harassment has also emerged as a social and cultural problem in child development because of the rise in immigration and asylum seeking. Bullying and harassment can have a negative impact on a child's self-esteem causing self-harm, eating disorders, academic performance, social isolation, and the increasingly prevalent suicide. This can link to emotional development. Children with not very good social skills can impact on their emotional development.

Strong emotional development in children makes them more capable of resolving conflicts, forming wholesome relationships, and working with others. Children need a nurturing environment where they feel loved and valued. Without this, their emotional and social skills may not fully develop. Which could lead onto stress and anxiety. Having stress or anxiety can negatively impact children's mental health and will have an impact on a child's development. (Sartika *et al* 2021)

Although Maslow's theory looks at children holistically, there are a few issues that Maslow didn't take into account when creating his hierarchy of needs. According to West (2022) Maslow states that a person can only reach self-actualization after their basic needs have been satisfied. However, there are instances when being unable to provide for one's basic needs aids in the identification of one's self-actualization objectives. Likewise, Cherry (2020) states that many argue that the theory might need to be updated to better meet the demands of contemporary society. This is because the original theory was based on people who lived in middle class. Cherry (2020) also states that Maslow's theory doesn't consider that depending on the situation, children's needs will change. If a child is living in poverty, then they may lack the basic physiological needs meaning they wouldn't be able to move to the next need until basic needs are met.

Kenrick *et al* (2010) implies that cultural differences are not considered by Maslow's theory, according to other researchers. Those in Maslow's own social and cultural

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group—white, Western, and male—were also the main subjects of his observations.

People in collectivist and individualist cultures have different needs and motivations, which the theory excludes.

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Maslow's significance in understanding child development

Maslow plays a significant part of child development. It is crucial to incorporate Maslow's theory into everyday practice. Maslow's theory helps understand child development but equally how a child would feel if they don't meet the needs. (Pichere 2015). Ocean (2023) states that the five levels of Maslow's hierarchy of needs are essential to children's growth and development. In this essay I will be discussing three examples from early years practice to highlight Maslow's significance in understanding child development. The three examples I am going to discuss are transitions, poverty and relationships. All of these examples link to Maslow theory and looking at a child holistically.

In some settings, there are children with additional learning needs. These children may struggle with transitions. Some children may use a visual timetable or now and next cards to support them through transitions. This helps children visually see what is going to be happening throughout the day. By sticking to a strict routine each day, this will help a child get used to day-to-day transitions. Transitions involve more than just moving sequentially from one environment to another; they also involve moving "horizontally" from one room to another within the same environment, going to a more structured time of day. Such as moving from classroom to the dinner hall, moving from home and into the setting. (Birth to 5 Matters (2021). This links to Maslow because transitions are a key to establishing a sense of security and safety. Hopper (2020) indicates that children's need for a safe and consistent environment is evident from an early age, and when these needs are not provided, children frequently react with fear or anxiety. Poston (2009) also states that if a child does not have a routine, then it can make a child feel anxious and unsafe. Stability in a child's life is the aim for continuously satisfying the need for safety.

Most settings have children that live in poorer conditions to others. Some families may not have the best jobs or have come from a background where they didn't have much money. Some settings offer food banks, help towards Christmas with the children's Christmas appeal and offer uniform and clothes to families that are in need of the basic necessities. In the UK, millions of people live in poverty. Being unable to pay your rent, heat your house, or purchase necessities for your children is what it means to be in poverty. It entails having to deal with uncertainty, insecurity, and making difficult financial decisions every day. (Britannica 2018). This links to Maslow because when children are in poverty they may lack a sense of warmth, love and also security. Stoyanov (2017) states that love is a vital need because children tend to contribute more effectively to society if they are loved. Ruth (2020) implies that once the need for security has been sufficiently met, the need for love and a place may become essential. This need is evident since children and young people need to have positive relationships with their family and surroundings in order and to live their lives.

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In Many settings, there are children that don't know how to play or don't know how to interact with others. This has a huge impact on social development. Cognitive and emotional development are closely related to social development, and these developmental milestones and markers collectively lay the groundwork for forming relationships with both adults and other children. (Sciences 2017). According to the Welsh government (2015) children practice and solidify their learning through play; they experiment, take chances, solve problems, and make decisions both individually and in large and small groups. Moreover, the Welsh government (2022) states that Every child has the fundamental right to play. They are naturally driven to play. Children discover ways to explore a variety of emotions and gain knowledge about the world they live in alongside others through play and playful experiences. This links to Maslow because children who don't know how to play may get upset if they can't be like other children. This may then cause a low self-esteem. Simons *et al* (1987) implies that if a child does not meet the needs to feel accepted, valued and feel self-confident then a child may feel worthless and helpless. Similarly, Hopper (2020) states that reducing any fear or anxiety and focusing more on social development will result in a healthier self-esteem. Simons *et al* also states that Maslow claims that the root cause of the psychological problems that most children face is due to low self-esteem.

To conclude, it is evident that Maslow's theory plays a big impact on child development throughout early years practices. Maslow is significant to Early Years practice because it encourages a holistic approach to child development, addressing not just academic skills but also physical, emotional, and social needs. This ensures that children grow up self-actualised. Maslow's theory helps understand the importance of love and belonging and helps practitioners foster strong relationships and a sense of community in early years settings. This contributes to a child's emotional security and self-esteem. Maslow's theory is also significant in early years practices because by recognizing which level of needs a child is struggling with, practitioners can provide targeted support. By setting targets, it shows children what they can work on to get better which will in turn boost their self-confidence and their self-esteem. Finally, by encouraging self-expression and creativity in early years helps children reach their full potential, which is the ultimate goal in Maslow's hierarchy.

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