

Abraham Maslow

Abraham Maslow was born April 1, 1908 in Brooklyn, New York. As the son of uneducated Jewish Russian immigrants, Abraham was pushed towards academic success. In order to please his parents, Maslow first started off studying law at the City College of New York. After three semesters, however, Maslow decided that law was not for him. After marrying his first cousin, Bertha, they moved to Wisconsin where he decided to study psychology. By 1934 Maslow had received a PhD in psychology and from then on he was a professor at various universities. In 1951 he began his crusade for a humanistic psychology.

Maslow developed a theory that certain needs take precedence over others. His theory developed into the famous idea of hierarchy of needs. These needs form a basic pyramid shape, starting at the bottom with *deficit* needs and coming to a point with *being* needs. The base layer is the physiological needs, which includes the need for things such as oxygen, water, protein, and to perform basic human functions.

After the physiological needs comes the safety and security needs. These needs, simply, are the need for safe circumstances, stability and protection. For a typical American, these would be the need to have a home in a safe environment, job security, insurance, et cetera. Once the first two levels are taken care of, a third level appears, the need for love and belonging. The needs include the need to have friends, a partner,

children, and a sense of community. With this need, can also come loneliness and other anxieties, though.

The fourth level is known as the esteem needs. After all the preceding needs have been met, Maslow says that we begin to look for a sense of self-esteem. According to Maslow, there are two versions of esteem, a low and a high. The lower is the need for the respect of others, status, recognition and attention. The higher involves self-respect, such as confidence, competence and independence. Without these needs, is to have a low self-esteem and inferiority complexes.

The first four levels are what Maslow calls deficit needs, because if you don't get enough of something, you have a deficit, you feel a need. The last level is set apart from the rest. Commonly referred to as Self-Actualization, Maslow also denotes it as growth motivation and the being needs. Basically, self-actualization has to do with fulfilling your full potential in life. Maslow studied groups of people in order to determine a standard of self-actualization.

Maslow was inspired to develop his theories by many great theorists and psychologists. While attending the University of Wisconsin, he worked with Harry Harlow, who is famous for his experiments with baby rhesus monkeys and attachment behavior. In 1935 he worked with E. L. Thorndike at Columbia, where he first became interested in research on human sexuality. While teaching at Brooklyn College, he came into contact with many European intellectuals, like Adler, Fromm, Horney, along with

Gestalt and Freudian psychologists. At Brandeis, he met Kurt Goldstein, the person who introduced him to the idea of self-actualization, and he thus began his own theoretical work, on the crusade for humanistic psychology.

Maslow ultimately was an inspirational figure in personality theories. Particularly in the 1960s, people who were sick of physiological and behaviorist psychologists, and sought for meaning and purpose through Maslow's ideas. Maslow became known as a pioneer in bringing the human being back into psychology, and the person back into personality. Maslow also wrote several books, some are Toward a Psychology of Being (1968), Motivation and Personality (1970), and The Further Reaches of Human Nature (1971).