

Trail to the top

Business



Difficult situations are a given. The famous fork in the road may never appear, and a new path may never be an option. Once an individual can grasp the concept that sameness is inevitable, he is free to see his path's full potential.

In this moment restriction will leave the atmosphere, and heavy breathing will take its place. With a cold sweat, and a beating heart he will step into the light. This individual has the power not to choose the paths given, but the direction in which to go. Viktor E. Frankl, author of *Man's Search for Meaning*, once said " Everything can be taken from a man but one thing: the last of human freedoms – to choose one's attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one's own way." Meaning, even if this path is set in stone, perspective is always a freedom.

This willingness to reach one's full potential is the reason that Maslow's hierarchy of needs, the renowned and praised theory of explained human behavior, is undeniably mistaken. The basic needs of man are important, but the order in which they are presented is insignificant. Self-actualization does not come after every need is fulfilled; it comes from will power and finding meaning, and it can arrive at any time. The flaws of Maslow's hierarchy need to be explained, and Frankl's experience and findings must be shared. Events that can disprove the hierarchy of needs must be discovered, and a change to the theory must be made. The ability to reach one's full potential is not based on the fulfillment of needs, but on the will power of man — and man is committed.

In 1943 James Maslow came up with a theory to explain the psychology behind human motivation. This theory, called Maslow's hierarchy of needs lists mans' needs in the shape of a pyramid. Starting at the bottom, the first level is physiological needs. These needs include air, food, drink, shelter, warmth, sex, and sleep. Second is safety; such as protection from elements, security, order, law, stability, and freedom from fear.

Following is the need for love and belongingness; such as friendship, intimacy, affection, love, family, friends, and romantic relationships. Fourth is esteem needs; which include achievement, mastery, independence, status, dominance, prestige, self-respect, and respect from others. Following that, finally, is self-actualization; realizing personal potential, self-fulfillment, and seeking personal growth and peak experiences (Mcleod). John H. Burkitt, an educational director, words the theory nicely when he explains that “ higher groups of needs only get attention once all the needs beneath it are at least mainly satisfied.” (Burkitt) According to Maslow, only after an individual's thirst is quenched and hunger subdued, can he reach true potential or character.

Maslow's theory seems true, but it is after all just that — a theory. Viktor E. Frankl, author of the life-changing book Man's Search for Meaning, has a different view of Man's motivation. His book is a purview into his experiences as a Jew in the Holocaust. Being a psychiatrist, Frankl was able to analyze himself undergoing his noted concentration-camp devastations. Starving, grieving, and aching for salvation, Frankl applied his knowledge and made note of his trials.

He noted the psychological stages prisoners usually go through. Starting with “delusion of reprieve.” This is a psychiatric term used to describe a prisoner’s feeling of impending rescue before death. (BookRags). When a prisoner realizes this isn’t the case, depression ensues.

This depression is followed by an apathy, which is viewed as a way to deal with the circumstances. Those who lose hope of rescue, lose meaning, and therefore a will to live (BookRags). Meaning leads to liberation. Through his experiences, Frankl realized that without meaning, liberation is never reached, and death takes its place. Frankl does not believe that finding meaning and self-actualization is restricted by fulfillment of needs. He suggests that one can find meaning through three ways.

By creating a work or doing a deed, experiencing something or encountering something, or applying a certain attitude towards avoidable suffering.

Maslow would agree that it is possible to reach self-actualization through the first two; but according to the hierarchy of needs, finding purpose while in a sufferable state is not possible. Take Tracy Cyr for example. A fashion designer, with an all-work mindset, and a fast-paced lifestyle. She’s suffered from juvenile rheumatoid arthritis for almost all of her life, and one day she stopped taking her prescribed medication.

The withdrawal effect was overwhelming. Immense pain and terrible suffering spread throughout her body. Even the slightest movement caused unimaginable suffering. She stayed in this condition for months. From this agony came the impatient thought of suicide, and the readily-accepted fate

of death (McGowan). Once Cyr thought it could not get any worse, and the pain reached the body-breaking point of unbearable, it got better.

Although the pain did not stop, she had a change of mind. She felt “ an awesome sense of liberation, combined with an all-encompassing feeling of sympathy and compassion” (McGowan). She had regained her hope. Cyr eventually healed, and with her change of health came a change of heart. She appreciated life more, and held the simpler things more dearly.

She made the most of what she had, and let go of the events that once caused her to panic. The things that used to be important to her, such as time and money no longer were essential. The event that made her pain bearable – her mind changeable – was none other than her perspective. Cyr stopped seeing the situation as a punishment and started looking at it as a lesson. A promise of a better lifestyle after healing; a sense of hope, of rescue. Something psychiatrists like to call delusion of reprieve, and something Frankl likes to call the start of the journey to meaning.

Something I like to call self-actualization. Cyr was able to overcome her seemingly everlasting pain, and torturous existence; although according to Maslow, it should not have been possible. Maslow’s hierarchy of needs is taught in schools. Humans like when things make sense. We have a standard of living to which we have grown accustomed.

Everything fits into neat little boxes and pyramids, and nicely onto a projection screen in a classroom. Maybe the pleasing look and neat lines of this pyramid is what has kept it around so long, but man needs to understand the problems with these assumptions. A man named Ed Diener, <https://assignbuster.com/trail-to-the-top/>

a University of Illinois psychologist and senior scientist for the Gallup organization, and his colleague Louis Tay, a psychology professor, helped create the Gallup World Poll. This experiment was a survey of 123 countries, and 60,865 participants who answered questions about the fulfillment of their needs, and their well-being (Villarica). The resulting data was mixed, and the theory Maslow has presented us with did not quite add up.

The data concluded that all of the needs Maslow had brainstormed were essential, but the order of them was interchangeable. Therefore, lack of food does not essentially prevent someone from feeling safe, loved, accomplished, or even self-actualized (Villarica). Diener and Tay's findings were great news, and although this false theory is still being taught in schools, the research is a start. The next steps are remove the eledgid order that the hierarchical pyramid is presented in, and fulfill the needs that are most commonly unmet. Because of Maslow's hierarchy, so many people believe that physiological needs of every human in every country must be met before advancements can be taken. Meanwhile, there are people suffering from less promoted issues such as trafficking, child labor, eating disorders, depression, and so many more unheard of situations.

Ed Diener was quoted saying " all the needs are important all the time. Our leaders need to think about them from the outset, otherwise they will have no reason to address social and community needs until food and shelter are available to all." (Villarica). According to the Gallup World Poll the needs of the mentally ill and the neglected are as predominant as the needs of the hungry, and should be treated as such. The flaws of Maslow's hierarchy have been explained, and Frankl's experiences have been psychologically

<https://assignbuster.com/trail-to-the-top/>

analyzed and help provide backing for the hierarchy's disproving. Tracy Cyr's life changing event has been documented, and the proof needed to start a change has been discovered! Maslow's research suggests that under conditions of unmet physiological needs, Man acts as heathen.

As barbarians, and savages, and beasts. This hierarchy of needs, of all things, has the ability to tell those suffering from leukemia, anorexia, malnourishment, and hunger that they no longer have the potential to belong anywhere; to fit in. It has the nerve to tell family members of the dying that their loved ones are incapable of returning the feeling. This pyramid has the audacity to tell a dying individual that they do not have the capacity to even comprehend self-actualization because they no longer feel safe at night. This hierarchy does not understand that being sick does not restrict one's ability to be human. " Man has the potentialities within himself; which one is actualized depends on decisions but not on conditions.

" (Frankl 134) Therefore, man can experience self-actualization in any situation. He can be proud of his achievements, even while worrying about where his next meal is coming from. He can love his family, though he sits on a hospital bed awaiting death. Man can discover himself with his last thought, and sometimes it is through that discovery in which salvation is found. As the saying goes, " he who has a why to live for can bear almost any how.

" (Frankl IX) In other words, he who has the motivation to reach self-actualization, can. His path awaits.