maslow's hierarchy of needs essay sample

Psychology, Motivation

' What motivates people?'—Maslow's hierarchy of needs, a theory of psychology, helps understand and answer this question. Maslow's theory of human motivation is based on the premise that a set of motivation systems, quite independent of rewards and unconscious desires, drives people. Maslow organized people's needs into a hierarchy and said that people feel motivated to achieve these needs. The largest and lowest-level needs are at the bottom. From the bottom up, the levels in the hierarchy are Physiological needs, Safety needs, Social needs, Esteem needs, and Self-actualization. While the former four are referred to as basic or deficiency needs or d-needs, the last one is termed growth needs. When people's lower level needs are met, they move on to achieve the next level of needs. When the basic needs are not satisfied, people feel the urge to fulfill them, and the longer the needs are denied, the stronger the urge becomes.

After the growth needs are satisfied to a reasonable extent, people achieve self-actualization—though Maslow noted that only one in a hundred achieve complete self-actualization. (McLeod). Out of the four levels of d-needs, namely esteem and respect, love and friendship, safety, and physical needs, when the top three are not met for people, they feel a sense of anxiety and tension, though there are no physical indications. This means, once a level of needs is met, there is no full stop; instead, people begin to feel the dearth of the next level of needs and reach out to get them. Expanded Maslow's Hierarchy, developed in the sixties and seventies, includes Cognitive and Aesthetic needs after Esteem needs and before Self-actualization, and Transcendence needs after Self-actualization needs.

Physiological or physical needs encompass the needs for human survival— from breathing, eating and drinking to maintaining homeostasis, indulging in sex and sleeping. Air, food and water satisfy metabolic requirements; garments and shelter offer protection from the elements. Sexual competition and need for species propagation drive sexual instincts. Maslow believed physiological needs to be fundamental and instinctive, because all other needs become secondary till these are satisfied. (Cherry).

When people's physical needs are satisfied to a reasonable extent, their safety needs come to the fore and begin to dominate their behavior. Individuals desire a predictable and orderly world, where perceived unfairness and inconsistency are limited, the familiar things are usual and unfamiliar happenings are rare. In the work environment, safety needs translate into the need for job security, protection from unilateral authority, grievance redressal mechanisms, facilities for savings, insurance policies, disability pay and similar policies. Safety needs include personal safety, financial security, health and wellness, and a safety net against unforeseen mishaps like accidents and illnesses, and related effects. Though safety needs are important for survival, they are not as crucial as Physiological needs.

Once Physiological and Safety needs are fulfilled, people begin to yearn for fulfillment of Social needs, that is, the need for love, intimacy, friendship, and family. Human beings seek belonging, companionship and acceptance from large social groups like religious groups, clubs, office groups, gangs, sports clubs and/ or small social connections like family, mentors, confidants

and the like. Individuals also feel the need for loving and being loved (sexually/ non-sexually). When Social needs are not met adequately, people feel lonely, depressed and anxious. In some cases, Social needs overtake Physiological and Security needs. For instance, anorexia patients ignore their need for food and heath, but are happy with the feeling of control and belonging they derive.

Social needs met reasonably instigate people to entertain Esteem needs. Humans need to feel respected by others; they also seek feelings of self-esteem and self-respect, all of which stem from a desire to be valued and accepted by others. Whether it is profession or hobby, people try to engage in activities that give them a sense of contribution and self-worth and help them obtain recognition and acceptance. Any imbalances between needs and satisfaction at this level can result in low self-esteem and inferiority complex. People with low self-esteem seek respect and recognition from others. Depression could also prevent people from experiencing self-esteem. Most individuals have the need for stable self-respect and self-esteem. As per Maslow, there is a lower esteem need and a higher esteem need. The lower one includes the need for respect from others, fame, glory, and attention.

The higher esteem need encompasses the need for self-respect, strength, competence, self-confidence, and independence—these needs rank higher because they are dependent on inner competence that stems from experience, and people deprived of these feel weak and helpless. From a broad perspective, Self-actualization needs emanate from the need to realize

a person's full potential. Maslow terms this the desire to become everything one is capable of becoming;.(" Maslow's Hierarchy"). At an individual level, the Self-actualization need is specific.

For instance, an individual may want to become an ideal parent, another a top athlete and another a famous artist or inventor. Though Maslow assumed that to reach this level, one must achieve and master the other needs, there have been instances of self-actualized individuals whose d-needs have not been or only imperfectly been fulfilled. (McLeod). Self-actualizers are self-aware and focus on personal growth to utilize their potential; they are less concerned about others' opinions. (Cherry). Maslow did not equate self-actualization with perfection. Maslow's hierarchy of needs gives an insight into the needs that motivate people. His theory has broad applicability, but workplace and education are two areas where Maslow's hierarchy of needs find valuable application. Employers and educators can improve their effectiveness by understanding and meeting the needs of their employees and students, respectively.

References

Cherry, Kendra. " Hierarchy of Needs." Psychology About. Web. 14 Mar. 2015. . " Maslow's Hierarchy." College of the Redwoods. Web. 14 Mar. 2015. < http://www. redwoods. edu/Departments/Distance/Tutorials/MaslowsHierarchy/maslows_print. html>. McLeod, Saul." Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs." Simply Psychology. 2007. Web. 14 Mar. 2015.