

# Theory of self actualization

Psychology



Self Actualization is the highest need that motivates human behavior according to Abraham Maslow (McAdams, 268-9). Maslow's 1943 hierarchy of needs suggests that the most basic needs are the first to be fulfilled, and also the most significant. On the other hand, the highest needs are the last to be fulfilled, and the least likely to be fulfilled by any individual (373).

According to Maslow, the needs that motivate a human may be categorized into physiological needs; Safety needs, need for affiliation, need for Achievement, and need for Self actualization. A traditional understanding of Maslow's theory represents the hierarchy as relatively rigid and step-wise, such that an individual proceeds to a higher needs only on satisfaction of the lower needs.

The need for Self actualization is one that motivates an individual to attempt to attain his / her full potential in as many aspects of life as possible. Maslow spent considerable effort on understanding and describing the self – Actualized individual (McAdams, 269). According to him, such an individual is realistic about self and the world, and accepts things as they are. He / she focuses on problems in an attempt to find solutions, is creative and spontaneous in his/her responses. While these individuals appreciate the world around them, they value their independence and privacy; and are capable of experiencing what Maslow calls ' Peak Experiences'. In spite of the wide success of this theory, Geller (56) criticizes it as being too simplistic and an inadequate explanation of human needs and their origins; and believes the theory to be more ideological than practical.

#### Works Cited

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