

Your Needs, Your Personality

Have you ever been so thirsty for a drink of water that nothing else seemed to matter? Like all people, you usually try to get your most basic needs met first. This is true not only for physical needs, but also for emotional and social needs. Getting your needs met in positive ways is essential for your total health.

HEALTH TERMS

hierarchy of needs

aesthetic

self-actualization

personality

psychologists

modeling

HEALTH CONCEPTS

- All human beings have basic needs.
- When basic needs are continuously not met, physical and mental illness may occur.
- Personality is shaped by three main factors: heredity, environment, and behavior.
- The factor over which you have the most control is your personal behavior.



A Pyramid of Needs

There are many theories that try to explain or describe human behavior and development in terms of needs. One famous theory is that of Abraham Maslow, who organized human needs into the form of a pyramid. Maslow maintained that although everyone has needs, some are more basic than others. These lower needs must be satisfied before higher-level needs can be met. Maslow's **hierarchy of needs** is a ranked list of those needs essential to human growth and development presented in ascending order from the most basic to the most fulfilling or satisfying.

People who do not have their needs met in healthful ways may be motivated to get them met in unhealthy or inappropriate ways. Think of the child who is constantly being scolded for misbehaving. That child has probably learned that one sure way to get attention is

HEALTH Online

Your emotional needs are an important part of your good mental health. Follow the Web Links at health.glencoe.com to the National Institute of Mental Health and learn how mental health professionals study mental disorders.

to act up. How do you think this child might act as an adolescent or as an adult in order to meet the need to be recognized? At any time such people can be shown more healthful ways to get their needs met. With help, they can often overcome some of the damage that may have resulted from being neglected or deprived earlier in life.

Physical Needs

At the bottom of Maslow's pyramid are physical needs. Among these are the need to satisfy hunger, thirst, sleep, and so on. People who are denied these become physically weak. A lack of essential nutrients the body needs also interferes with the normal functioning of the brain, which in turn affects a person mentally. Many people in our society take for granted that these needs are easily satisfied for everyone. They may overlook the fact that there are great numbers of people for whom food, clean water, and shelter are scarce or unavailable.

Emotional Needs

Emotional needs include the need to be loved, to belong, and to be valued and recognized. After we meet our physical needs, most of our behavior is an attempt to meet emotional needs.

- **The need to be loved.** Everyone needs to give love and to feel that he or she is valued and loved in return. Babies who are denied both physical and emotional attention may be stunted physically and mentally. They may fail to thrive. Some even die.
- **The need to belong.** Everyone has the need to belong. Human beings are social beings; that is, they need to be with and interact with people. We need to feel like we belong to and are a valued member of a group. When we are mentally healthy, we meet these needs in positive ways that benefit ourselves and those to whom we are connected. When we are not mentally healthy, we may isolate ourselves from others.

- **The need to be valued and recognized.** Another emotional need that all human beings have is feeling that they have personal value or worth. We have a need to achieve—to have ourselves and others recognize that we are competent at something and that we can make a positive contribution to the world. We must have something we can do well, and we need recognition from others.

Aesthetic Needs

At the next level of Maslow's pyramid are aesthetic, or artistic, needs. The word *aesthetic* means artistic; it applies to our response to or appreciation of

Every human being feels need to belong.

ACTIVITY Name three places or things where you feel that belong.



MASLOW'S HIERARCHY OF NEEDS

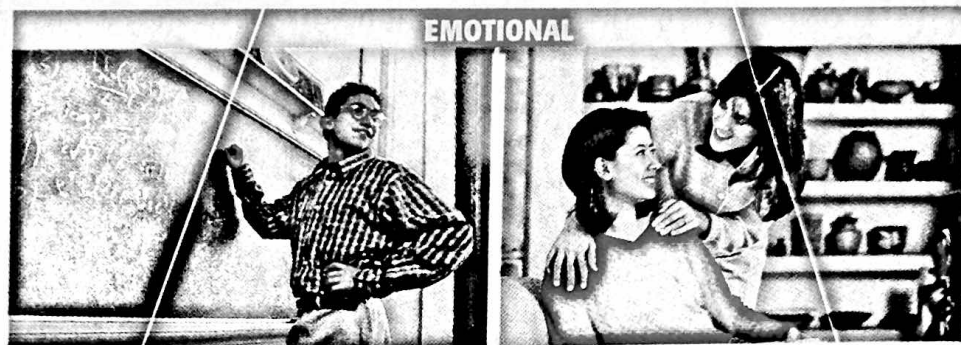
Need for self-actualization



Need to know, to explore, to understand

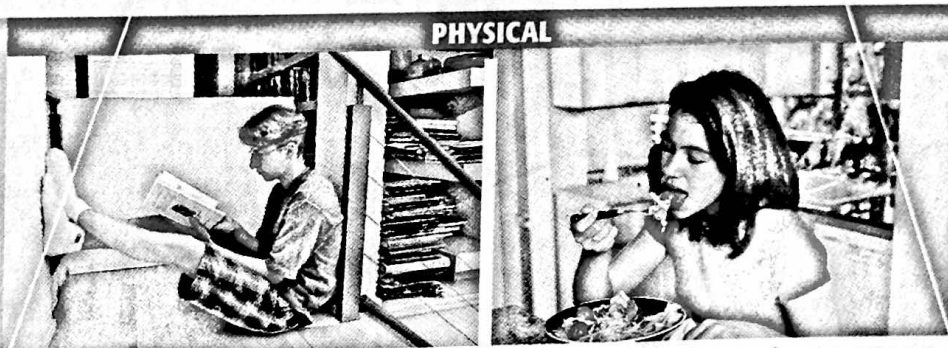


Need to achieve, to be recognized



Need to belong, to love and be loved

Need to be secure and safe, out of danger



Need to satisfy hunger, thirst, sleep, etc.

that which is beautiful. We feel the need to appreciate beauty in its many forms, and we also feel the desire for order and balance in our lives. Our senses are constantly stimulated by the rhythms, forms, and colors around us, which can, in turn, affect our behavior and mental health.

Self-Fulfilling Needs

At the top of Maslow's pyramid is the need to reach one's full potential as a person. This quest for **self-actualization**—the striving to become the best that you can be—includes having goals that motivate and inspire you. Self-actualization is a lifelong process.

▲ **Basic needs speak the loudest.**

ACTIVITY Describe a time when you needed food, water, or sleep, and this need overshadowed everything else.

During the teen years, working toward self-actualization may involve volunteering to help others, making specific education and career goals, and beginning to work toward these goals. What goals have you begun to work toward?

It is important to note that not all of your needs can be met all of the time. You may have some needs met only partly and still strive to satisfy the higher ones. Even people raised in extreme conditions can create lives for themselves that reach toward self-actualization.

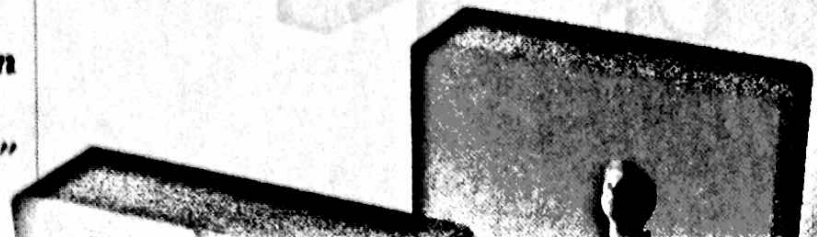
Understanding Your Personality

Think about words you have heard to describe other people—for example, “quiet,” “pushy,” or “outgoing.” Words like these may describe some characteristics of a person’s personality. **Personality** is, in fact, *a complex set of characteristics that makes you unique and sets you apart from everyone else*. It includes your emotional makeup, attitudes, thoughts, behaviors, and more.

Psychologists, professionals with doctoral degrees who diagnose and treat emotional and behavioral disorders, view personality as one window on a person’s mental health. Over the years, they have isolated a

▼ Just as one domino can knock into another, making all three fall, one positive thought, feeling, or behavior can have a positive “domino effect” on the other two.

ACTIVITY Think of a time when a positive feeling or thought had a positive “domino effect” on your behavior.



number of different personality traits and investigated these in depth. Maslow's hierarchy, explained earlier in this lesson, is one model of personality.

Foundations of Personality

Your personality began taking shape before you were actually born. **Heredity**, the biological passing along of traits and characteristics from your parents, is one of the three major factors in molding personality. The other two—environment and behavior—are also important.

Personality and Heredity

Heredity is the first influence on your personality. You inherit obvious physical traits such as your hair and eye color, the shape of your nose and ears, and your body type and height. You also inherit basic intellectual abilities as well as temperament, or emotional tendencies. Studies of twins separated at birth suggest that even such characteristics as preferences for foods, colors, and scents may, in fact, have inherited components. There is also increasing evidence that heredity may play a role in behaviors such as risk-taking and in talents such as the ability to draw or sing well.

hot link

heredity For more information on heredity and its effect on the total person you are, see Chapter 20, page 461.



Skip the "Victim Mentality"

Many people play "victim." They may blame their genes, their environment, or other people's behavior for whatever is going "wrong" in their lives at the moment. To avoid the "victim mentality":

- Take responsibility for your behavior.
- Know your own strengths and weaknesses, and don't let others tell you what they are.
- Get your needs met in healthful ways.
- Set clear boundaries in your relationships.
- Don't assume that everything that isn't working in your life is someone else's fault.

Personality and Environment

The second factor affecting personality is your environment beginning at your birth. Your environment includes all of your surroundings, your family, your friends at school, your neighborhood, and all of the places, people, and activities you have experienced up to this point in your life. These influences can have positive or negative effects on your developing personality.

People who come from unhealthful environments may experience neglect, abuse, rejection, or other negative treatment. These experiences and actions can leave a person with emotional scars that can lead to poor mental health. People who live in healthful environments, however, feel supported, safe, loved, and valued and, therefore, often develop higher levels of mental health.

One way in which environmental "traits" are stamped on the developing personality is through modeling. **Modeling** means *copying the behaviors of those you are exposed to*. A caring adult who gives positive messages to a small child provides a positive pattern of behavior for that child to "model" or follow. That child is more likely to grow up into a trusting adult unafraid to meet life's experiences head-on.

Personality and Personal Behavior

The influence on your personality over which you have the most control is your personal behavior. How you make decisions, what decisions you make, and what actions you take can make all the difference in the world in the quality of your life and your levels of physical and mental health. In some situations, it can even mark the difference between life and death.