

Using Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs to Identify and Fulfil Personal Needs

by Sarah Haté (France)



Before training to become a coach, one of my jobs had been working in a French business school for around 10 years. Needless to say, as an English-language trainer to young business undergraduates, part of my job was to teach them business English and organisational concepts. This is when I first became aware of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, and it's a tool I now use in my coaching business, and as part of my 121 coaching program. Here is an introduction to that, together with a list of needs compiled by Marshall Rosenberg, to show you my approach to empowering my clients to identify, accept and fulfil their personal needs.

More and more people are leaving jobs and relationships, feeling trapped in the life they have created for themselves or struggling to find a balance, because their needs are not met. But how many of us actually know exactly what those needs are? One of the main questions to keep in mind is WHY we need something. There can be several answers to this, including:

- It's something we have been told we should have
- It's something that keeps us loyal to our family history
- It's something that 'people like us' are expected to have.

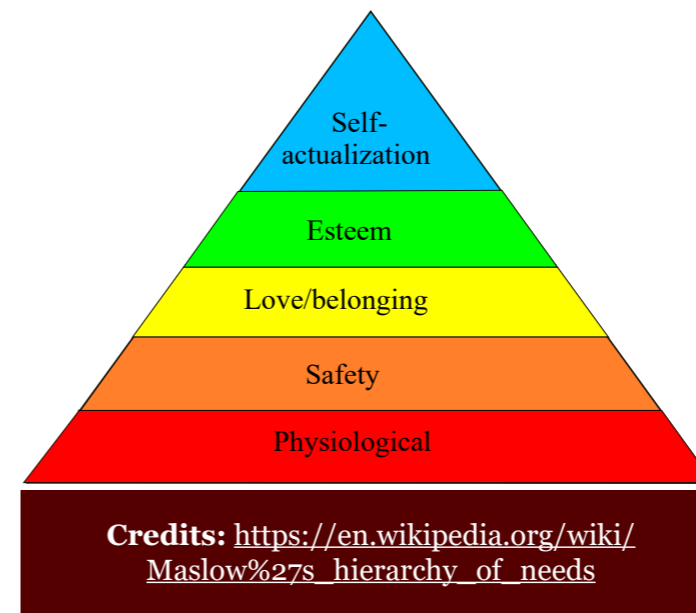
Being able to identify what we actually need can be complicated, especially when we have spent most or all of our life pleasing others and putting them before us.

It is a common pattern I find in the people who come to me for coaching, and this is why it was important for me to find a tool that really helps them to start putting themselves first and making those changes to create the life they really desire.

I had tried a few things before remembering Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, and that is when I decided to combine it with a list of needs to be found at the end of Marshall Rosenberg's book 'Non Violent Communication: A Language of Life'. The results that my clients have obtained from working with what follows, are amazing and form the basis of the transformation that they are so desperately seeking.

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

Abraham Maslow was an American psychologist who is known in business circles for his hierarchy of needs, a pyramid-shaped model suggesting that humans have **5 kinds of needs that are interdependent**.



He broke the mould in the 1950s, by studying mature, complete, successful and fulfilled people and concluding that we could all be that way. In his opinion, all we had to do was to **overcome our inner blocks** to development and maturity.

Maslow's model suggests that our most basic needs are **food** and **water**, and that once we have secured such supply, we begin to look for shelter, clothing and **safety**. Once we have started to meet these needs, we turn our focus to our **social needs**, our need to belong to a group. These needs are partly met with our family, but are also completed by friends, colleagues and team players, for example.

After that, we seek to satisfy our desire for **esteem** from others. This refers to our emotional needs which are dependent on the presence of others, and are eventually replaced by a need for self-esteem, which is when we demand more of ourselves and measure ourselves by our own criteria.



The highest state is that of **self-actualisation**, when we are no longer driven by the need to prove ourselves, whether to ourselves or others. This need is associated with meaning and purpose, our life's calling: we want our work and life to contribute to society in some way or another.

Rosenberg's List of Needs

Here is a fairly exhaustive list of needs, taken from 'Non Violent Communication: A Language of Life'.



SURVIVAL

- Shelter
- Air
- Water
- Movement, exercise
- Food
- Rest, permanence
- Safety, protection



AUTONOMY

- Self-affirmation
- Empowerment
- Making own choices
- Independence
- Freedom
- Solitude, calm
- Time/space for self



FOOD (in a broad sense)

- Affection
- Warmth
- Comfort
- Softness
- Relaxation, pleasure, leisure
- Sensitivity
- Care, attention, presence
- Tenderness
- Touch

INTEGRITY

- Authenticity, honesty
- Aim, direction
- Self-knowledge
- Know own values, dreams, vision
- Balance
- Self-esteem
- Self-respect
- Rhythm, time to integrate things
- Know own worth, place in society

SELF-EXPRESSION

- Accomplishment, realisation
- Action
- Learning
- Creativity
- Growth, development, healing
- Participation, creation
- Self-control

RELATED TO MIND

- Clarity, understanding
- Consistency, appropriateness
- Conciseness
- Conscience
- Exploration, discovery
- Information, recognition
- Accuracy
- Simplicity
- Stimulation

CELEBRATION OF LIFE

- Communion
- Grief, loss
- Celebration
- Taste for experimenting life
- Humour
- Play
- Birth
- Showing grace
- Rituals

RELATED TO SPIRITUALITY

- Love
- Beauty, aesthetics
- Trust, letting go
- Hope
- Being
- Outcome
- Harmony
- Inspiration
- Joy
- Order
- Peace
- Sacredness
- Serenity
- Silence
- Transcendence



RELATED TO SOCIETY

- Acceptance
- Friendship
- Love, affection
- Belonging
- Appreciation
- Communication
- Company
- Discussion
- Trust
- Connection
- Contact
- Giving, serving, contribution
- Tolerance, accepting differences, openness
- Honesty, transparency
- Interdependency
- Intimacy
- Sharing, cooperation
- Presence
- Being close
- Receiving
- Recognition (peer feedback)
- Respect, consideration
- Fairness, justice
- Support, assistance, help
- Expression
- Security (reliability, confidentiality, discretion, stability, loyalty, permanence, structure, bearings, etc.)

The way I use these tools is to invite my clients to read through the above list, highlighting all the needs that are essential for them. The best results are obtained when they do not over-think things, and are sitting somewhere quiet and relaxed. They then put the list aside for a few days, before doing the exercise again, to see if anything has changed. They may find that some of the identified needs are not as important as they were first time round, or they may find themselves changing or adding other needs. The aim of doing this a second time is to identify what is really important – if it is on their list twice, then it is probably essential for them.

Once they have identified their essential needs, i.e. all those that they highlighted twice, I ask them what they are currently doing to satisfy these needs. This is the first step to seeing how well their essential needs are met. If they are doing nothing, they then go on to ask themselves what they can do in the future, to make sure that these needs are being met (future actions). The last step is to decide if they are able to implement the actions on their own or if they need help from outside (and if so, who can help them).

As you can see, this exercise leads perfectly into sessions focused on goal setting, how to take effective action, time management and decision making, which is why I tend to use this early on in our coaching relationship.

I hope you find this interesting and useful for both yourself and your coaching clients!



ABOUT SARAH HATÉ

Sarah Haté is a trainer, public speaker and certified professional life coach. She has a passion for giving her clients the space they need to reconnect with themselves and rediscover their authentic self, in order to transform their lives. She is the creator of a private, online community, *Harnessing Your Potential*, to empower coaches, therapists, teachers and small-business owners to heal their past and reach their full potential.

Sarah created *So Free Coaching*, to offer one-to-one sessions, group sessions and workshops. As she lives in the south of France, her clients are both French and English-speaking. She trained in Development Coaching with NLP (Neuro Linguistic Programming) with *Simply Changing Limited*, and is also a qualified EFT practitioner. During lockdown, she recorded several guided meditations to help her clients who were struggling with negative emotions, needing to calm their mind and get grounded. They can be accessed on her YouTube channel (see link below).

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