

## Outline for a Character Analysis Using Maslow's Hierarchy of Human Needs

First of all, review the information provided on the web site on Abraham Maslow's theory of human motivation – why people do the things they do – based on the idea that people's behavior is motivated by the desire to meet a series of basic human needs. The needs, according to Maslow, must be met in order, beginning with the needs of the body, to social needs, to needs of the human spirit.

If a person does not successfully meet the needs on a particular level, it will cause pathology – maladaptive or antisocial behavior. More modern interpretations see people working on more than one level at a time, but in order to reach the highest level of human experience, what Maslow called Self-actualization, one must have successfully met the four basic needs below it, and generally in the following order: physiological needs (the needs of the body); safety needs (physical and emotional); belonging needs (unconditional); and esteem needs (needs based on being competent and contributing to society.) See the diagram of the needs supplied on the web site in the familiar pyramid format.

The list below can be used to see how a person might behave if those needs are met, and if those needs are not met. When you analyze your character or characters using Maslow, analyze the person at each level, and provide evidence from the text, or from an educated guess using author and you thinking as to whether or not the character had satisfied that level of need, or not. If not, what evidence of pathology do you have from the text?

### Profiles of Pathology Related to the Hierarchy of Needs

- **Physiological Needs:** Needs for air, water, food, protective shelter.
  - Needs are met: Health
    - **World View:** The world is sufficient, abundant, and will provide for me and for others, as I cooperate and participate in society. I will be able to have enough.
    - **Sample Behaviors:** Will be able to share one's material assets; will know when enough is enough.
  - Needs not met: Pathology
    - **World View:** Enough is not enough. When you can take, take. My needs come before others, the one with the most "toys," wins.
    - **Deprivation:** Sickness (Vitamin D and rickets); starvation;

- **Excess:** I deserve everything I want; “You can never be too rich, or too thin.”
  - **Pathology:** Eat, drink too much. Hoarding (collecting and saving everything) behaviors.
  - **Antisocial Behaviors:** Stealing; Extortion; Exploitation of the weak for personal gain; Unrestrained needs to acquire material possessions and wealth.
  - **Movement:** Moving against
- **Safety Needs:** Crucial for infants; both physical and emotional.
    - Needs are met: Health
      - **World View:** The world is a safe place; has some danger, but it is manageable
      - **Sample Behaviors:** Trust; Reasonable risk taking; outgoing (extroversion) personality; engagement in the things the world has to offer; seeks out and takes on challenges; unafraid to share power with others.
    - Needs are not met: Pathology
      - **World View:** the world is a dangerous place; unsafe; out to hurt me
      - **Deprivation:** neurosis, insecurity, lack of trust, paranoid attitude, withdrawal from the world and society
      - **Excess:** Lack of ambition; Learned helplessness, Dependent personality
      - **Pathology:** Anxiety, Panic Disorder; Phobias, like agoraphobia
      - **Antisocial Behaviors:** Paranoia; Suspicion; Obsession with conspiracies; uncooperative behavior; loner, withdrawal or movement against society
      - **Movement:** Moving away, or moving against
- **Belonging Needs:** Need for unconditional acceptance; learning to be part of a group
    - Needs are met: Health
      - **World View:** The world is an accepting and loving place; I am acceptable; I am likeable; I belong; I am good enough
      - **Sample Behaviors:** Outgoing friendliness, sociable; accepting and understanding of others;
    - Needs are not met: Pathology
      - **World View:** The world does not like me; does not want me; I am not good enough

- **Deprivation:** Loneliness; Isolation; Feelings of neglect and/or rejection
- **Excess:** Lack of self-reliance, Lack of an independent sense of self;
- **Pathology:** Antisocial; Inadequate Ego Strength; Avoidant personality
- **Antisocial Behaviors:** Antisocial personality; lack of empathy and compassion for others; lack of cooperative attitude; treatment of others as objects to meet one's own needs; lack of respect for the rules of society.
- **Movement:** Moving toward (needing to be liked), moving away (feeling neglected); moving against (feeling rejected).

• **Esteem Needs:** These needs come when a person feels comfortable and confident with life because the previous three needs have been met. First comes self-esteem, which is the positive feedback from others about our competence in life tasks, and contribution to society. Next comes self-respect, which is our internalized recognition of our competence and contributions.

- Needs are met: Health

- **World View:** The world is a place for me to contribute and to develop my talents. I am competent, capable, and willing to contribute to society. The world appreciates and needs my talents and contributions. I can make the world a better place.
- **Sample Behaviors:** Curious about life, enjoys developing personal talents and skills for their contributive value to society, for the recognition received for that competence and contribution (financial, social, emotional), and for the joy that developing and contributing gives oneself.

- Needs are not met: Pathology

- **World View:** The world is too difficult; the world is too judgmental; the world doesn't respect me; the world doesn't get me; I have nothing to offer; I am worthless.
- **Deprivation:** Feelings of inferiority; lack of self-esteem, self-advocacy, self-efficacy; inappropriate feelings of superiority (denial of the message the world is giving)
- **Excess:** Over-inflated sense of one's abilities; lack of desire to contribute; lack of self-reflective behavior; inability to accurately assess one's performance; inability to accurately assess the performance of others
- **Pathology:** Anxiety, Depression, Obsessive Compulsive Personality Disorder (to over compensate for feelings of inadequacy by demonstrating "perfection," and the inappropriate belief the world is out of order, not you;) Learned helplessness; apathy; lack of the "joy of life," Feigned and real incompetence; reluctance, inability, or refusal to contribute to society.
  - Note: OCPD is different than OCD (Obsessive Compulsive Disorder). OCD is a clinical disorder caused by very different

situations. A person with OCD knows that something is not right, and wants to get better.

- **Antisocial Behaviors:** Arrogance, Narcissism, Obsession with status; Must be the center of attention (Histrionic); social withdrawal, refusal to cooperate or contribute in social activities.
- **Movement:** Moving away (feeling incompetent, inferior); moving against (feeling superior).

• ***Self-Actualization Needs:*** From here on out, there is no hierarchy. Originally Maslow believed only about 1% of population became self-actualized. Unlike other psychologists and “schools” of psychology, Maslow studied healthy, successful people. His psychological point of view has come to be called Positive Psychology. Today, instead of 1% of the population, it is felt that many more people are capable of achieving a sense of Self-actualization, particularly if they are complex thinkers instead of concrete thinkers, and have an average to above average intelligence, and an above average Emotional Intelligence. Self-actualizers don’t strive, they develop.

• ***Needs are met: Health***

- **World View:** The world is a place of infinite possibilities, the “world is my oyster,” life is a gift and an opportunity, life is good, life is beautiful
- **Sample Behaviors:** Insatiable curiosity about life, the world, the universe; life-long learning, appreciation for, and development of aesthetics; orientation toward the common good, public and human service, artistic and spiritual development; expression of a sense of joy and excitement about life.
- **Movement:** Moving toward transcendence and connection to something bigger than self.

• ***Needs are not met: Pathology (Self-actualizers do not engage in pathological behaviors, but people who otherwise successfully negotiate the physiological, safety, belonging, and esteem needs, but who can’t, or do not move toward self-actualization, may experience pathology.)***

- **World View:** Materialistic; the world is someplace to survive, endure, or conquer; the only things worthwhile in life are those that can be owned, acquired, or observed. Life is about being “better than,” not about excellence for the joy of excellence; focus on the quantity of life, not the quality.
- **Deprivation:** Lack of a purpose and joy in life, lack of meaning in life, boredom, ennui, dissatisfaction, unhappiness, existential anger, existential angst
- **Excess:** Does not apply

- **Pathology:** “Metapathologies” such as boredom, cynicism, alienation, disconnection, exploitive perspective, self-righteousness, limited, constricted, or non-existent aesthetic appreciation
- **Antisocial Behaviors:** Antisocial personality (high functioning, “white collar” criminality,) Narcissism, Intolerance, ethical “Pharisees,” and ethical equivocation
- **Movement:** Moving against something bigger than the self