
Abraham Maslow: Five Faces Of The Happiness Pyramid

While human beings have been casing the illusory path to happiness since ages, it was only in 1943 that psychologist Abraham Maslow proposed a theory about achieving happiness. In his paper, A Theory of Human Motivation, Maslow proposed a pyramid of human needs that need to be satisfied for a person to be happy. His theory has been largely used in various fields and it can also be used by parents to help their child progress up the pyramid with the right amount of love and companionship.

In case the pyramid model does not work for the parents, it is evident that it will not be beneficial for their children. A child needs the basic needs fulfilled along with those of safety, security and a loving family to grow up as a healthy human being with strong emotional foundations.

The criticisms

Maslow's ideas have been often criticized for its hierarchical structure and also for focussing primarily on Western societies. One major point was the critics is that the theory is not based on a solid scientific foundation. It was also argued that even though a majority of the population through history were without the basic needs, it does not establish that individuals among them were not self-actualised.

The significance

In spite of being criticized, Maslow's theory can be of practical use in various scenarios of life.

- When a person feels disoriented or rudderless in life, taking a look through the needs can help to point out what exactly is missing in his or her life. This may range from a basic need to a need for some companionship.
- It can be of great help to managers and leaders who are in charge of a diverse group of people. The pyramid can help a manager to assess the needs of these people and how to motivate them.
- The pyramid also serves a guidelines for parents to handle the kids, especially teenagers. The widespread levels of depression and anxiety among the children can be analysed and handled by looking at the basic needs as stated by Maslow.

In his pyramid, Maslow provided five levels and the lower levels indicate the basic needs which are to be fulfilled for going to the higher levels. The needs are categorised in the following types.

Physiological needs

These are the basic needs that all humans need in order to survive and these include air, food, drink, warmth, sleep and shelter. These are at the lowest level of the pyramid and are also termed as "deficiency needs". The basic needs are more important for a child as he or she is totally dependent on the parents for these needs. It is also important to help a child realise the importance of these needs through love and care.

Safety needs

The need to feel safe and secure arises when the basic needs are met. Safety in body and safety for the family and belongings are very important to keep an individual free from anxiety. These also include financial security and health security. From a safe place to sleep at night to living in a secure environment, parents need to make sure that the children do not have to live in fear or unease.

Social belonging

It has always been mentioned that human beings are social creatures and this level of the pyramid includes that aspect. We need emotional intimacies and long to connect with other human beings that can be gained through various types of relationships. While some individuals seek romantic relationships, others seek friendship or the sense of belonging in an extended family or community. In today's society, loneliness is a major issue for children and the sense of social belonging can help to work out a solution. For any children, a family can be the first stop in providing companionship and the parents can play the role of an effective friend.

Esteem

The fourth tier of the pyramid involves the need to be liked and respected by others. This need has been classified into two forms. The lower form is about being respected from the external world. This includes the appreciation of an individual's contribution and work, both in the professional and personal arena. The other form is about self-respect and is considered higher in terms of importance. For parents, it is important to encourage and value the efforts of the child along with helping in developing the sense of self-esteem.

Through the years, another two levels were added to the pyramid by Maslow which can be treated as the extensions of the 4th level.

Cognitive needs

This includes the spirit of knowing in a human being that fuels our curiosity and keeps us eager for more knowledge. The knowledge here does not include academic knowledge but can vary from one individual to another,

Aesthetic needs

This need comes in the form of seeking and appreciation of beauty in various forms. From exploring the wonders of nature to admiring a beautiful painting, this need can be expressed in various forms. This need is not materialistic in nature but connects with the deep human desire to seek something sublime.

Self-actualisation

This concept lies at the top tier of Maslow's pyramid and is considered as the final step towards human happiness. It involves reaching your full potential as a human being and finding a

purpose that can bring about fulfilment. This also involves in finding the right direction in life that really matters to a person. By satisfying the other needs listed in the pyramid, parents can direct the children in the path of self-actualization.

In his subsequent analysis, Maslow brought about the concept of self-transcendence. This, according to him this involves providing assistance to other to achieve self-actualisation. Maslow wrote that, " Transcendence refers to the very highest and most inclusive or holistic levels of human consciousness, behaving and relating, as ends rather than means, to oneself, to significant others, to human beings in general, to other species, to nature, and to the cosmos". This concept seems to be in line with many spiritual concepts of major religions.

In the end the happiness pyramid prods us to look deep, analyse and take charge of our own lives. As parents we can deal with our children's behavioural issues through these pointers and help them in finding the key to their happiness.