

Basic Human Needs: An Introduction to Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

INTRODUCTION

Most people do not spend time each day thinking about where their next breath of oxygen or glass of water is going to come. In fact, many humans spend very little time each day trying to obtain the basic necessities of life: oxygen, water, food and sleep. However, there are places in the world where people's entire existence is focused on meeting these basic needs. In this activity, students will consider the things necessary for meeting basic human needs and consider the results of failure to meet basic physiological and psychological needs.

TIME:

One class period

OBJECTIVES:

- Students will understand the concept of "basic human needs"
- Students will analyze the physiological, emotional and material requirements necessary for human prosperity and well-being
- Students will understand that without the basic needs being satisfied, human beings will fail to progress emotionally and intellectually
- Students will be introduced to Abraham Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

MATERIALS:

- 3x5 index cards
- masking tape or magnets (rolls of magnetic strip which can be cut can be purchased at local craft stores)

PREPARATION:

Prepare the activity by writing words on the index cards which reflect physical, emotional and psychological needs. Examples: books, self-esteem, shelter, heat, electricity, tools, stereo, bed, education, food, hot water, pets, shampoo, oxygen, health, air-conditioning, bike, meat, car, friends, compassion, computer, knowledge, medicine, toilet, sleep etc. Cards can be laminated and small magnets attached to the back for reuse if you have a magnetic white board. Make sure there are needs that fit into all categories of Maslow's Hierarchy.

Distribute cards among student cooperative groups with a roll of tape if you don't have a magnetic white board. Have students arrange the cards in priority order from the most important to least important in their groups and then have one student place the cards across the top of the chalkboard. The list should begin with the basics, oxygen, food, water, health. They could also prioritize the list based on the necessities in their community.

After the cards are in order, go around the room, allowing one student from each group the opportunity to re-arrange a maximum of three cards. Students must have a reason for changing cards. There will likely be debate during this portion.

After the last student group makes changes, discuss the process as a whole class, and through mutual agreement and trial and error, re-arrange any disputed words into the continuum, (being sure that students understand that the continuum ranges from the most basic biological need to luxury items that are not essential to basic human life.)

As students look at the continuum, I ask them to come up with five categories in which to place the cards. Steer students towards, Physiological, Safety, Belonging, Self-Esteem, and Personal Growth or Self actualization (they probably don't know this term). Hand out copy of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. Discuss with students that, according to Maslow, the basic needs must be satisfied in order to proceed up to the next level. Ask for examples from the class. For example, if you don't feel safe in a classroom, then you cannot possibly learn, or 130,00 students who are bullied stay home from school each and every day.

Assignment: Given Abraham Maslow's theory, in a journal entry, explain why it is difficult for children born into poverty, war torn areas, etc. to "pull themselves up by their boot straps" and be successful.

Next Day: Show students a clip from Nova's The Eye of the Storm- Jane Elliot's blue eyed, brown eyed experiment, which shows how quickly students respond to discrimination. A question sheet has been included for classroom use.

The complete program and study guide for this are available at

<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/divided/>