

Each level of the pyramid is built upon the one below. Therefore, the bottom row consists of the fundamental needs of all people. Once the majority of the items in that lowest level are met, then a person can secure or develop the items on the next level. This process continues up the pyramid. Maslow believed that ONLY when a person has the items on one level can they even attempt to obtain items on the next higher level. So long as an item remains missing in a person's life or development, it makes the pyramid less stable and harder to make higher.

In this exercise, circle all the items on every level that you feel exist in your life. Now look which you are lacking. Starting with the lowest level, consider how you might seek to gain or regain those items into your life. Maslow believed there is little use in shooting for the higher-level items, if you are missing lower-level fundamental needs in your life.

Please note that sometimes items are missing because of temporary circumstances (like a pandemic). You may now understand why you suddenly have anxiety or feel unsure of the higher items, it is because of the lack or instability of a lower item(s). The act of understanding why, is very beneficial to relieving this anxiety. If there is a lower item missing, then see if you can address it. If you can't do anything about it, or it's temporary; at least recognize that and allow yourself to move forward up the pyramid, making sure you revisit those lower items at a later date.

