Maslow: Biography And Theory

“If you deliberately plan on being less than you are capable of being, then I warn you that you'll be unhappy for the rest of your life”.

Abraham Harold Maslow, born on 1st April 1908, son of Samuel and Rose Maslow who were Jewish immigrants from Russia. He was born and raised in Brooklyn, New York in a multi-ethnic neighbourhood. His family was poverty- stricken which was one of the reasons his parents were indifferent and had no concern for their children whatsoever. Maslow was the eldest of seven siblings. His mother was an egocentric and cruel woman who never cared or bothered with her children whereas his father abused and degraded him to an extent where it made Maslow feel undeserving, useless and disgusting. Being the only Jewish in his community he was victimized to hostility, prejudice and discrimination against Jews which made him miserable and lonely.

The various difficulties he faced forced him to go to the library where he discovered his love for reading. At the age of seventeen he enrolled at The City College of New York, while registering for evening classes at Brooklyn Law School to impress and satisfy his father, later realizing its not suitable for him and in 1927 he transferred to Cornell University and attended the Introductory psychology course but became unmotivated and discouraged as the scientific introspection didn’t appeal to him. He then attended the University of Wisconsin where he achieved his bachelors, masters and doctorate in psychology between 1930 and 1934. Thereafter he went onto teaching, chairman of the phycology department at Brandeis University and then elected the president of the American Psychology Association.

The purpose for Maslow’s hierarchy of needs is for us to decipher what we are after, what we long for and how is our priorities are arranged. We all start with utterly important physiological needs such as food, warmth, water and rest. In addition, we require urgent safety needs such as security and protection. Thereafter the basic needs are belonging and love such as relationships with friends and family, then esteem needs such as respect and status. Last, we are driven by an urge what Abraham Maslow describes and self-actualization which refers to living according to one’s full potential and reaching fulfilment by becoming who we really are.

Maslow reminds us that we cannot live by spiritual calling alone neither on materialistic things. For a human to be whole and live an ideal life, we need both to be attended to because the one offers support while the other offers direction.

The pyramid can be split into two categories namely the deficiency needs and the growth needs. The deficiency needs consist of psychological, safety, love and belonging and esteem. These needs re top priority and needs to be attended to first as motivation decreases if these needs are not met as they are of utmost importance and very essential to one’s wellbeing. Thereafter comes the growth needs which consists of self -actualization. This need is also important in one’s life as it is the motivation and desire one needs to reach their life fulfilment and every person can move towards a level of self-actualization. Everyone has their own life experiences with lots of obstacles and unfortunately because of this reaching that level of self-actualization varies between individuals. Therefore, everyone will alternate between the needs according to their life and needs.

Maslow’s theory has a huge impact on employees in a workplace. It helps employers motivate their employees to ensure maximum output when it comes to production. This depends on how the employees is treated through the type of leadership the employers utilizes to give direction and make the goals and mission of the company transparent (Carroll, 2018).

Therefore, as studies shows the order of the hierarchy varies between people and it is understandable that people are encouraged by multiple desires at the same time. He in no way referred to the desires identical for all as everybody specializes in distinctive elements in their lives at special times.