**What Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs Tells Us About Human Accomplishment and Motivation**

What is success?

What does it take to become an accomplished individual?

How do you ‘win’ at this game called life?

There are many answers to these questions but one of the most compelling is the theory put forward by the psychologist Maslow. Maslow stated that humans have a number of needs that they have to fulfil in order to be truly happy and accomplished and that the most successful people in the world are those who reach the top of the pyramid.

Those needs are:

* Physiological – Food, water, warmth
* Safety – Shelter, lack of danger
* Belonging and love – Relationships, community and love
* Esteem – Pride, status, feelings of accomplishment
* Self-actualization - Sense of growth, purpose, meaning and creativity

In other words, the most pertinent and pressing needs that humans must account for are those most basic ones. Without food and water we will die.

But having food and water does not make you *happy* or fulfilled.

Also important is community. This is why some of the most unhappy people in the world are those who feel alone. There are few things worse that being isolated and alone at Christmas.

But even if you have the family, you have the friends and you have the love, you still won’t reach your full potential if you have no sense of meaning, growth or purpose.

This is why so many people are depressed even when they seem to ‘have it all’. You can be happily married, in a good job and with a sense of family and community. You can even like yourself.

But if you don’t feel like your life has meaning – if it isn’t *going anywhere* then you won’t be truly content.

This is the big problem for a lot of us because growing is painful. The only way to grow is to challenge ourselves and get outside of our comfort zones. And this is what too many of us are reluctant to do. When you have a nice warm bed and loving family, why would you quit your job? Why would you hit the gym? Why would you go on a long expedition?

Too often, self-actualization appears to run counter to our physiological needs. But until you learn that self-actualization should trump all of your other needs, you won’t be truly fulfilled and happy and you won’t have met your true potential.