

# 129. Maslow Unlocked: Achieving Self-Actualization in the Modern World

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Welcome to the Empowered brain, the only podcast using science, psychology and coaching to help you rewire your brain and create a life you love with your host, Dr. Vanessa Calderon, a Harvard grad physician, master coach and mother of two.

00:21

Hi, welcome back, you are listening to Episode 129, where we will be talking about really the reintroduction of Maslow's hierarchy and how we can achieve the pinnacle and self-actualize. Alright, so a few announcements. Here's a big one, the Business Mastermind we are launching in January, the waitlist is open now. So there's a link in the show notes. So go to the show notes and click on that link if you are interested.

What we are doing is we are taking 10 incredible students and we are supporting them in launching their side gig their program their projects their businesses off the ground. So this is for you if you have been procrastinating on a big project or a business or a side gig that you want to get off the ground, if you need direction if you need support and getting over your mindset blocks. Still, also if you want to know exactly how to do it, how to write your emails, how to create your marketing, how to build your email list, how to create a webinar how to get active on social media how to do all of that, I'm going to be showing you exactly how to do all of that. And at the same time, we are going to be working to unlock all of the blocks that have held you back. So I am super, super excited. When I work with small groups like this, it tends to be incredibly active because the energy and the group are incredibly supportive and compassionate, but also action-oriented and action-minded. So it is going to be a fantastic experience. And it's great for you if you want to get something off the ground at the beginning of 2024. So the program will start in January of 2024. So get on the waitlist so you can be the first person to know when the program opens. Because we are only taking 10 people first come first serve, enrollment will open in December.

All right with friends. So check out that link. It's in the show notes. And of course, doors are always open to my program the Journey which is a program for really smart women who want to be more effective achieve their potential in life, and get more done without stress and burnout. The journey is a really beautiful healing environment where you go on an incredible journey and experience letting go of a lot of the pre-programmed things that our brain has done. We do reprogramming of your subconscious mind on a cellular level so that you can start being more intentional and showing up more authentic as the real you to get more done in the world.

Alright, so let's dive into today's episode. So today's episode is self-actualization. So what we're going to do is I'm going to briefly reintroduce Maslow's hierarchy, we won't spend too much time on the basic

parts of it. And we're gonna dive deep into why we need to continue to move up the ladders of the hierarchy and achieve that pinnacle, which is self-actualization, and then how to do it. Alright, so first, I want to just talk about, you know why we're talking about Maslow's hierarchy of needs.

So, Maslow's hierarchy of needs, as a quick reminder is a theory that was proposed by Abraham Maslow in 1943. And it suggests that humans are motivated to develop a base on this hierarchical structure with you know, basic needs at the very bottom of the rung at the lower levels and higher order needs at the upper levels. And what I will do is, I'm going to talk about each one of those levels. And as I'm talking about them, I want you to start reflecting on which one of these is you start thinking about where you land in some of these. And what you will notice is that you probably ebb and flow between one or two, or maybe sometimes you're at the top, sometimes you're lower down, just depending on who you are, what's going on the circumstances around you. Alright, so we're going to start with each one. And what I want you to do right now is visualize a pyramid. And we're going to start at the very bottom of the pyramid. So at the very bottom of the pyramid are physiological needs. So that's very basic air, water, food, shelter, sleep, clothing, very basic. Once you have those needs met, humans move on to safety needs, that's the second route or their safety needs. What that means is personal security, financial security, health, and well being access to physical and mental well-being

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So once you have physiological and safety needs met, then you move up to rung number three, which is love and belonging. So your needs of love, love, and belonging. This includes friendships, family, intimacy, and romantic relationships. So I'm going to pause here, because my sense is, that all of you listening are likely at number three, or you've you've are moving between two to number three, everyone listening, we're lucky because we have the privilege to have our very basic needs met air, food, water. And again, that's a privilege, there are many humans on this planet that don't have that met. So many of us are at number three, and moving on.

So what is number four? Number four is the last one before the pinnacle. And number four is our esteem the needs of our esteem. So that includes self-esteem, confidence, self-respect, the sense of personal self-worth, respect from others around us, you know, we have the desire to be recognized to be respected to be acknowledged by our peers in society. Esteem also includes achievement, you know, where we're striving for accomplishment, and success and self-confidence where we have belief in our abilities. So if you are not at love and belonging, you're likely at esteem needs, and most of the students I work with are here and before esteem needs, and some are at three and have many aspects of four, but they're moving from three to four, or they're at four. Now, the reason why I bring this to you again is because once you have moved up the ladder, and you're up what I want you to recognize is what a beautiful, privileged position that you're in. You're in this incredible space in the world where you have your basic needs met, you're safe, and you feel secure.

Many of our ancestors didn't have that you have number three met love and belonging. You're in a safe relationship, you feel loved, you feel accepted, and you are at esteem, you are learning how to continue to achieve how to have that self-confidence, how to let go of imposter syndrome, how to let go of insecurity. That's esteem. And the beauty is that once you can create a sense of foundation and esteem needs, you can create your sense of esteem and your confidence. Once you can do that, then the

world is your oyster then you can self-actualize. And that I think is the biggest gap. So what is self-actualization? self-actualization is the sense that we are achieving our purpose and our potential in life. That we can express ourselves creatively that we can be our authentic selves, and that we experience life with these beautiful peaks of intense joy and fulfillment and deep meaning.

That self-actualization and the beauty of self-actualization the more you are in this peak of Maslow's hierarchy, the more you will realize that the purpose is not to just achieve your potential for your sake, it's to achieve your potential for the sake of the entire world around you. Because once you once you live in self-actualization in that space, what you realize is that now your soul is evolving, to be in service to humanity to the greater world around you, for the highest and greatest good of all. And I think that that right there is the purpose of many of our souls in this life. And in this in this humanity, once we become a human body. The purpose for many of us is to self-actualize so that we can be in service to the world around us for the highest and greatest political.

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Now, Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs suggests that before you can continue to evolve, you have to have your lower-level needs met.

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So we know that self-actualization represents that pinnacle of human development, where we are seeking to become the best version of ourselves, again, for the highest and greatest good of all. Now, this often is not perfect. We're not always going to be in one place, or one period forever. For example, I have this incredible student who's just like, killing it in her professional life. She's achieving all her goals. She's doing these big and beautiful things. She's making the world a better place. And she feels like wow, this part of my life is amazing. However, when you look at number three, love and belonging. She feels stuck. She's stuck in a marriage in a relationship where she doesn't feel safe and she doesn't feel happy. And she feels stuck because of cultural and religious expectations. And so I see

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either because it's not often perfect for me, for example, you know, there was a time in my life where I continued to evolve in so many areas of my life, in my esteem. In my career, I was evolving. And I felt like I was doing it to be in service to the world. But I also had an unhealed wound that affected my experience in relationships with others, where I felt unlovable for a very long part of my life. And even though I was married, I am married to the most incredible guy in the world. And he told me over and over again, that he loves me, he accepts me, and he wants me to be the most me possible because I had that unhealed wound. That was a part of me that wasn't being met, I didn't feel whole in terms of love and belonging, because I felt like I didn't love myself enough.

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So I mentioned that to you, because I want you just to notice how first take stock notice where you are in Maslow's hierarchy, notice how it's not perfect, how you're not always going to be in one area or the other, or parts of your life might be in one area, and parts may not be in that area.

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And the last thing I will say before we move on is that this purpose that you know, I've come to understand that our purpose in life is to continue to evolve our soul, wherever our soul is, is to continue to evolve our soul. You know, I've had a lot of conversations with my spiritual mentors, and my father, who is another one of my spiritual mentors, and an incredibly wise man. And what I've come to understand is that our souls come into this human form, so that we can evolve our consciousness, so that we can evolve, evolve the consciousness of the soul, because the consciousness of our soul will go out and contribute to the consciousness of the entire universe of humanity of the world around us. And the reason why we have to come into human form to do that is because we cannot experience growth, without it. After all, growth is experienced through pain and suffering. And that requires a human body. Because when our soul is in the ethereal form, you know when we are not in human form, we can experience pain and suffering the way the human body experiences it.

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So I share that with you because not everybody on this planet is here to self-actualize. We all have different purposes and journeys that we're here for.

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And my you know, this, this episode today is really for those that are number three, and number four, where you feel like you have those basic needs met in your relationships, you're loving and belonging. Or you feel like you're in the middle of numbers of esteem, you feel like you have some confidence in some areas, you're evolving in other areas, that maybe you feel stuck. And maybe you don't know that for you, it's possible to self-actualize.

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That's where this episode is for today. Because what I want you to realize is I want you to open your eyes to the beautiful light that you have created around you to the privilege that you now have to continue to evolve your soul, to continue to go out and achieve your purpose in your potential in life. So that you can be in service to the highest and greatest good of all. And as you do that, you will also evolve your mind and your consciousness, which is one of the most beautiful things on this planet. And I will also say that self-actualization is not a destination by any means. I feel like I feel so fortunate and so grateful that I can now continue to experience self-actualization.

And the way I do it is by continuing to evolve my soul. I do that by setting really big, audacious goals in my business because the entire reason that I created my coaching practice and my coaching business is so that I could be of service to the highest and greatest good of all so that I can heal and help others heal some internalized trauma and internalized systems of oppression and generational trauma so that they could continue to evolve their soul so that they could reach their potential, and they can be in service to the world. And what I've realized is when I set really big, audacious goals that are scary, that makes me a little nervous you know makes me feel like I can fail. That's when I know that my soul will also evolve because for me to achieve those goals, I have to continue to evolve and to self actualize and I have to be in service more and love more and love myself more. And by doing that I don't just achieve my goals. I also evolve my consciousness again, for the greatest good of all. And that my friends is why

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We're all here. So if this resonates with you, if you are at you know that level of belonging or the level of esteem, I want you to know that self-actualization is also possible for you. It is not a destination, but it is a beautiful journey that you get to be on for the rest of your life.

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Okay, so let's go on and talk about what self-actualization means I talked a little bit about it, and how we could start to develop it for ourselves. So again, self-actualization is that concept in Maslow's hierarchy that states that we are all here to evolve to realize, and you know, fulfill our talents are potential our capability. For us to do that we have to have the bottom rungs of the hierarchy met, many of you listening are lucky, we're privileged, we have those needs met. So when we become self-actualized, and become that best version of ourselves, what happens, it evolves a few really important characteristics. The first is we feel safe to be authentic, we feel safe to be our authentic selves, and not in a place of anger, or like, you know, a lot of I see a lot of young people show up authentically, but from a place of anger, like, Yes, I can take up space here or Yes, like, and there's an I think it's like a journey for them to the right, it's a journey for all of us.

Once you acknowledge the beauty in your authenticity, you can show up in that space with peace and love for yourself. You know, I'm a five foot, you know, light-skinned Latina. And I find myself in a lot of white spaces, because of the careers that I've chosen in medicine and leadership and other things. And I can now show up in those spaces, you know, being my authentic self, with love, not with any sort of chip on my shoulder or anger. So that is authenticity, feeling safe to be yourself. And that's what's available for you when you continue to self-actualize. The second is autonomy. And what I want to say here, is it's not just autonomy in making your own decisions, it's real, really, its sovereignty. It's knowing that you are the creator of the future of your life of the world around you that sovereignty that no one else is responsible for that just you

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next is creativity. And this is a really big one. And what I tell a lot of my students who asked me, you know, how do I continue to evolve? I ask them, What are you doing that kind of like, you know, piques that creative interest in you? Sometimes it's re-engaging in an artistic habit that we used to have making music or dancing. Maybe it's just plain like, what is it that you do for fun, really fun that has no attachment to productivity? What is it that you do for fun because that's how you can think of creativity? And the reason why that's important is humans, we are meant to be creative, we are meant to reconnect with our hearts, with our souls. And that's where creativity comes in.

For many of us, you know, in our society, it is celebrated to have a lot of strong masculine energy, masculine energy is very committed to achieving, and I have really strong masculine energy. And I am learning to balance my masculine energy with my beautiful divine feminine energy. But the masculine energy is celebrated for being productive and achieving and being head heavy, as opposed to heart heavy leaning into your heart. And what creativity allows you to do is it allows you to lean back into creativity to your feminine energy. And that's beautiful because we need the balance of both in our lives. The next is acceptance of reality. I think that this is one of the most important things. I mentioned that episode last week, also the radical acceptance episode. So I'm gonna link in the show notes here

also. So the beauty of this is that once you can accept reality for what it is, from that point, instead of arguing with reality and using your energy to argue with reality, you accept reality for what it is. And from there, you go out to achieve to make a difference to be in service to the world. And that is just so much more of a powerful place to be instead of arguing with reality. That's the difference.

Okay, so how can you move if you are at esteem? How can you move from esteem to self-actualization? So we're gonna go through a few things that you can do. Number one, of course, it's self-awareness. So you get to understand where you are right now, at different points of your life. When you think about your relationships. Where's your relationship? Is it still that love and belonging or is it has your relationship moved up? Where are you with your career? Where are you with your you know, your self-identity, the way you see yourself? Do you see yourself as beautiful and confident or do you see yourself as meek, and insecure?

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or maybe you see yourself as not beautiful enough because you haven't met some sort of Wacoal yet. So how is it that you identify and see yourself? So when you have that self-awareness, and you can notice where you are, from that point, that is your PowerPoint, that's your Leap, leaping off point, once you see yourself there, then you can move on to the next point. So what needs are not being met? So once you have that self-awareness, why should I have for you what need isn't being met? We stay stuck on specific rungs of Maslow's hierarchy when we feel like something isn't being met, for example, the very basic things food, water, shelter, safety, or security. But when it comes to like the third rung, which is love and belonging, for me, what wasn't being met is I didn't feel safe in a relationship with others. I had this toxic sense of independence because I was so afraid to rely on other people. And I was so afraid to let myself be loved. Because that would mean that I could then get hurt. And so for me, what I needed to do is I needed to heal that wound that I had there. So my question to you is, what needs are not being met for you,

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However, like if you are at a steam, for example, but you're still experiencing impostor syndrome or insecurity, maybe the need is not being met, there is self-trust, but maybe you don't have that that self-trust that you need to evolve into the next version of yourself. So really ask yourself what need isn't being met. Once you notice what need is being met. From there, you can move on. If for example, like a lot of my students who are at a steam, what they need to do is they need to trust themselves. And they need to understand that they have the answers within themselves. That's a lot of the work that we do inside the journey when we're healing and letting go of imposter syndrome, procrastination and insecurity. It's right there, because so many of us waste our time, right in that space, because we're being driven by fear of the need that has not yet been met.

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So once you're able to do that, then you can go on to think about like, how would I self actualize? What does that mean? The first thing you need to do is you need to define what that mean for you. What does it mean for me? Does it mean pursuing a passion? Because again, self-actualization is when you are in this beautiful flow state, pursuing something that's there for the highest and greatest good of all. But I want you to start with something small if this is new for you. So I want you to reconnect with a

passion of yours, your artistic calling of yours. You know, I remember, I don't know, when was this maybe seven or eight years ago, maybe 10 years ago, when I was starting to reconnect with myself again, after being completely disconnected, and in this total masculine energy of achievement and productivity. And I remember asking myself, like, gosh, when was the last time I felt passionate about something?

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And I realized, for me, it was like, over 20 years ago, back during my activist days, when I was a social justice activist, I felt passionate about what I was doing and bringing out in the world. And, you know, I lost that part of myself, when I decided that I thought I needed to be this other person to be defined as successful and to prove myself. So the question for you is, what does that mean for you? Like, when was the last time you felt passionate about something that you felt driven by something inside of you where you felt good, or you felt like you were at your best? Maybe again, it's, I say, engaging in creative pursuits, because sometimes that's the easiest way to reconnect with our inner self with our sense of self.

So, again, define what self-actualization means to you, and how can you start small, maybe it's reconnecting with playing music dancing with an artistic calling, maybe making a piece of art, when I was reconnecting with myself, I would take an hour out of my week, and I would go sit by the water. I lived by the bay at the time. And I would take my journal and colored pencils, and I would sit there listening to music, and I would just sketch whatever I saw around me. And I will tell you right now I am by no means a sketch artist. I was just doing it for fun because that was the easiest and simplest way that I thought I could reconnect with my creativity. I called it my artist date. So my invitation to you is how can you create that time for yourself to reconnect with yourself?

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So once you're on this journey towards self-actualization, one of the things that you get to be prepared for is the need for resilience. You get to be prepared for setbacks and challenges. Because once you start on this journey, it's not going to necessarily be easy, but again, remember the whole point of us coming into human form is to evolve and we can't evolve without growth, without pain without suffering with

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have challenges. And so just know that once you choose to go on this journey, there are going to be challenges and setbacks and failures.

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And just be ready for that and know that you are strong enough, you are capable enough to deal with that. And remember the episode I did last week about impermanence, that nothing is forever. So you get to learn from those opportunities from those failures and get to keep moving forward. Because you are never starting back at the beginning, again, you were always starting back exactly from where you left off. So a failure is just an opportunity to get another strength, I think failure now is kind of like a workshop and skills building. It's like, that's all it is. It's just skills building, like everything you do in life is like skills building. So when you fail, it's just like another experience in building a skill. And you get to

like, use that skill and start again, and go again. So just be ready for resilience. And the last thing I will say, and again, another invitation to you is, as you're on this journey of self-actualization. I invite you to cultivate a growth mindset. So let go of, you know, the way you used to talk to yourself, maybe used to say things to yourself, like, that's impossible, or I can't do that, or that doesn't even matter. And instead say to yourself, oh, I can't wait. I'm so excited. I can't do that yet. But I can't wait to learn. Notice how the language matters.

The way you talk to yourself matters. Your words matter, your thoughts matter, and they create your reality. So really replace the way you're thinking and speaking to yourself with a growth mindset. And pay via either practice a lot of patience, and of course, my favorite self-compassion. The more compassionate you can be about yourself on this journey, the faster your growth will be. I know for me, the moment I leaned into self-compassion because I've always been disciplined. So you know, Thank you universe for blessing me with discipline. And once I learned how to combine discipline with intention, I was like, holy smokes, I'm unstoppable. Look at all this stuff that I'm doing. And I was doing a ton of stuff I was achieving and creating and doing all these things.

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But the secret sauce for me came when I also added self-compassion into the mix. Because I was being so hard on myself and pushing myself to the limit and I wasn't practicing resilience. I was practicing endurance, which is like a rigid mindset, go, go, go push, push, very masculine energy. Once I added self-compassion to the mix, I was able to still achieve and create and do it with kindness and love in a flow in way that served me and the people around me. Alright, so friends, I hope you found this episode helpful. And you can now go out and start just taking stock of where you are in life and how you can continue to move up and eventually reach the pinnacle of Maslow's hierarchy, self-actualization. Alright, sweet friends have a wonderful week of yours

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Hey, sweet friends, if you love what you're learning, then you've got to join us on the journey. It's my all-inclusive program and the best community out there giving you the education you never knew you needed to help you create a life you love. Join us at [VanessaCalderonmd.com/join](https://VanessaCalderonmd.com/join). I'll see you there.