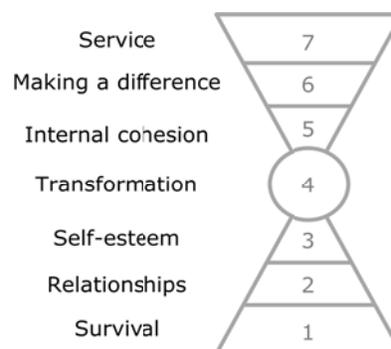


The Seven Levels of Human Motivation

By Richard Barrett

Every human being on the planet evolves and grows in consciousness in seven well-defined stages. Each stage focuses on a particular existential need that is common to the human condition. These seven existential needs are the principal motivating forces in all human affairs. The level of growth and development of an individual depends on their ability to satisfy their needs.

Each of the seven levels of motivation focuses on a particular existential need that is inherent to the human condition—an ego need or a soul need. These are the principal motivating forces in all human affairs. Individuals grow in consciousness by learning to master the satisfaction of these needs. Individuals who learn how to master all seven needs without harming or hurting others operate from full spectrum consciousness. They are self-actualized individuals who have the ability to respond appropriately to all life's challenges. The seven needs that constitute the seven levels of human motivation are shown in the following table.



Levels of Consciousness		Motivation		
7	Service	Devoting your life to self-less service in pursuit of your passion or purpose and your vision.		Unfoldment of the Soul
6	Making a difference	Actualizing your sense of purpose by cooperating with others for mutual benefit and fulfillment.		
5	Internal cohesion	Finding meaning for your life by uncovering your passion or purpose and creating a vision for the future you want to create.		
4	Transformation	Becoming more of who you really are by uncovering your authentic self and aligning your ego with your soul.	Emergence, development and transcendence of the Ego	
3	Self-esteem	Satisfying your need to feel good about yourself, your ability to manage your life, and building pride in your performance.		
2	Relationships	Satisfying your need for belonging, and feeling loved and accepted by those with whom you interact daily.		
1	Survival	Satisfying your physiological needs and creating a safe and secure environment for yourself to grow.		

The “lower” needs, levels 1 to 3, focus on the needs of the ego in a physical body—our physiological need for survival, and our emotional needs for belonging and self-esteem.

The focus of the fourth level is personal transformation. This is where we apply our intellect to our personal development by pursuing the inquiry into “Who am I?” “Why am I here?” and, “What is my purpose”.

The “higher” needs, levels 5 to 7, focus on the needs of the soul to live out its purpose—the need to find meaning in our lives, the need to make a difference in the world, and the need to be of service.

We progress in our personal development by aligning the motivations of the ego with the motivations of the soul. As the ego merges with the soul we become a soul infused personality. The degree and extent of this fusion depends on our ability to manage, master or release the fears of the ego (personal mastery), align the beliefs of the ego with the values of the soul (individuation), and uncover, and align the ego with the purpose of the soul (self-actualization).

Level 1: Survival motivation

The first level of human motivation is concerned with physiological survival. We need clean air, food and water to keep our bodies alive and healthy. We also need to keep ourselves safe from harm and injury. The motivation of our ego at this level of consciousness is self-preservation. Whenever we feel threatened or insecure physically or economically, we shift into survival consciousness. How we deal with survival situations as an adult depends on our conditioning as a child. If our parents did not stress or display anxiety about survival issues, then the chances are that our egos developed a healthy relationship to survival consciousness. In this case, we would approach survival situations later on in life from a rational perspective rather than an emotional perspective. We would simply get on with what we had to do in order to survive without creating an emotional holocaust.

If on the other hand our parents were constantly stressed or anxious about survival during our early childhood, and we were influenced by these emotions, then whenever we encounter a survival situation our repressed fears will be triggered causing us to “react” emotionally to a situation rather than “respond” rationally by staying cool.

When an individual holds deep insecurities about survival, anxiety becomes pervasive in their life. Such individuals easily get upset or angry. Whenever something goes wrong they see it as a personal threat. They believe they live in a hostile and brutal world. They are always on guard, and feel that if they don't look out for themselves no one else will. Consequently, to feel safe they must control everything around them. They micro manage their lives and have great difficulty in trusting anyone.

For these people time is of the essence. They are driven. They need to be super efficient, so if they think they have the answer they will stop listening. They are not good at giving other people the time they need to process. They are very focused on their own needs and find it difficult to put themselves in somebody else's shoes. The anxieties they hold keeps them focused in survival consciousness.

Level 2: Relationship motivation

The second level of human motivation is concerned with relationships that engender a sense of emotional belonging. We learn very quickly as young children that if we don't belong we cannot survive. We also learn that in order to belong we need to be loved.

When we are loved unconditionally, we develop a healthy sense of relationship consciousness. We like ourselves because we grew up feeling loved for who we are.

When the love we receive from our parents is conditional on our behavior, we learn that love has to be earned. This conditioning gets hard-wired into our young minds as beliefs about how to fit in, how to get love, and how to be accepted. When this happens we grow up with the subconscious belief that we are not liked or not worthy of love, or that we do not belong, and we learn to conform to the wills and desires of our parents and the culture we were brought up in. Consequently, our consciousness is constantly focused on looking for signs of affection, acceptance or inclusion, and we want to be liked.

People who suffer in this way will avoid telling the truth if they think it will prevent them from getting the love or acceptance they want. They may even put up with verbal or physical abuse as long as they feel that they have a place in the world where they belong.

The most frequent manifestation of fear-based relationship issues shows up in conflict avoidance and excessive harmony seeking. Conflicts are hard to deal with when we believe that speaking up could cause the other person to be angry and hold back their love. So we learn to avoid conflicts or diffuse potentially upsetting situations by changing the subject, being humorous or behaving as if we are walking on egg shells. The last thing we want to do is ruffle any feathers. Sometimes we will use humor simply as a way of getting the attention we crave.

If we are holding onto a fear-based belief that we are not loved or lovable, or that we don't belong or are not accepted, our consciousness will stay focused at the relationship level of consciousness.

Level 3: Self-esteem motivation

The third level of human motivation is concerned with self-esteem and self-worth. We need to feel good about ourselves and respected by others; not just our immediate family, but also by our peers. We build a healthy sense of self-esteem when we are young by spending quality time with our parents, and receiving praise and acknowledgement from them—praise for trying, not just for winning. People with a healthy sense of self-esteem take pride in themselves and in their performance. They excel at what they do. They are reliable and responsible. Because they don't need to stand out from the crowd, they are good team players. They don't need to prove anything to themselves or others. They just feel good about who they are.

When we don't receive enough praise, are ignored by our parents, or acknowledgement is held back or conditional on winning, we grow up believing that we need to prove to others that we are worthy of their love or attention. Such

individuals seek the respect they need through wealth, status, power, or authority. They can be highly competitive and extremely focused on winning. Their self-esteem is built around who they are in the world and their achievements. They need to look good and project a positive image. They want to stand out from the crowd and be noticed. They want to be the best, so they can receive the respect or recognition they did not receive as children. Taken to an extreme, they want fame and glory. They want to bask in the adulation of the crowds.

People with a poor sense of self-esteem often mask their feelings of inferiority by name dropping or arrogance. The purpose of these behaviors is to make you think they are well connected or to feel good about themselves by appearing superior. If we are holding onto a fear-based belief about our self-worth, our consciousness will stay focused at the self-esteem level. We will continually be seeking opportunities to get the attention we crave.

Mastering your deficiency needs

What keeps us locked into the first three levels of motivation are the sub-conscious fears we hold about not being able to satisfy our basic human (deficiency) needs, and the belief that we are a victim of our circumstances. The only way out of this situation is to become responsible and accountable for every aspect of our lives, including our emotions. We must learn how to manage, master or release our survival, relationship, and self-esteem fears if we are to fulfill our soul potential.

Level 4: Transformation motivation

The fourth level of human motivation is concerned with the search for your true authentic self, and managing, mastering or releasing the subconscious fears that keep us focused on the first three levels of consciousness. It is about understanding who you are as a separate unique individual without your parental and cultural conditioning. It is a time for expressing yourself without fear. Those that grew up in safe, loving and respectful environments already have a head start in this regard. To others they appear to be courageous. In reality, they simply have a healthy relationship with fear.

The most important task at this level of consciousness is to ask yourself the questions: “Who am I?”; “Who is the “I” that lies beyond my parental and cultural conditioning?”, and “Who is the “I” that is waiting to get out into the world?” You are beginning to uncover your authentic self and your reason for being in the world. As you progress with this inquiry you will find the beliefs of your ego gradually aligning with the values of your soul. As you let go of your fears, you become a soul-infused personality and a truly authentic individual.

Once you embark on this journey you will need to seek feedback from others about how you are coming across. Find out what people think are your strengths. Ask others how you can improve. Find out how what situations trigger your sub-conscious fears. Understand the origin of these fears and work on managing, mastering or releasing them. If necessary, find a coach who can support you in this process. Learn how to respond rather than react when your fears are triggered. This all requires courage, self-examination, and a willingness to deal with unpleasant emotions. Unless you understand, and either manage or release the pain of the past, it will keep you anchored in the first three levels of consciousness. Regular bouts of anger, emotional upset, and rage are sure signs that the ego is out of alignment with the soul. Also watch out for signs that you are being aggressive towards others, in both the written and spoken word.

Fully expressing who you are without fear of what others think, particularly our parents and peers, gives you the opportunity to make choices that are more authentic and affirming of who you are—choices that allow you to express your true self. The work of transformation is never ending. It is a life-long process of personal work, self-discovery, and the fine tuning of values and beliefs.

Level 5: Internal cohesion motivation

The fifth level of human motivation is concerned with finding your meaning in existence by uncovering your soul purpose. What we focus on at this level of conscious is finding an answer to the question, “Why am I here—in this life, in this body and in this situation?” For some, this may appear to be a daunting inquiry. For others, those who were gifted with a particular talent, it may be obvious. If you are not sure or don’t know your soul purpose, simply focus on what you love to do, follow your joy, develop your talents and pursue your passion. This will eventually lead you to where you need to be to fulfill your destiny.

The road to your destiny may have many twists and turns. You need to recognize that it is a journey. Many people do not uncover their mission until much later in life. When they look back they realize that all the twists and turns had a purpose—to prepare them through their experiences to be able to fully give their gift. What is important is to pay attention to what is immediately in front of you. Do not judge it. Give it all your attention and energy and create a vision for the outcome you want to achieve.

There is an important relationship between this level of consciousness and the previous level. If you are not able to manage, master or release your fears you will not be able to align with your soul. Your fears will hold you back. To fully step into your soul’s purpose you will need to become fearless.

Your purpose may seem like something small or it may seem like something large. Whatever it is, you need to recognize it is what you came to do, and you need to follow

your inspiration. Once you embark on this journey, you will gradually learn how to separate the thoughts generated by the ego from the inspirational promptings of the soul. When you stay open to the influence of your soul rather than influence of the ego, you will find that you are guided along the path that you need to take. When you are fully in your flow you will find that your needs are met even before you know you have them. Life becomes a journey of synchronicity. It just unfolds in front of you. Be assured that the moment you commit your energy to your soul purpose all manner of events will unfold in front of you to support you on that journey.

When the needs of the soul are ignored over long periods of time, depression and physical sickness result. You begin to feel uncomfortable with your life. You feel lost. You may even feel bored. You can't exactly explain what is wrong. You just know you are not fulfilling your potential.

Level 6: Making a difference motivation

The sixth level of human motivation is to make a difference in the world that surrounds you. It is pointless having a purpose that gives your life meaning if you don't do anything about it. You quickly learn that the difference you can make is much bigger if you collaborate with others who share a similar purpose or are aligned with your cause. This is where all the work you have done in learning how to manage, master or release the emotions associated with your subconscious fear-based beliefs pays off. The more easily you are able to connect and empathize with others, the easier it is to collaborate.

At this level of consciousness you become a servant-leader. You realize that your ability to fulfill your soul purpose is conditioned by your ability to facilitate the work of those that are supporting you in your purpose or cause. It is through others that you leverage your impact on the world.

If you are stuck in control, blame or an exaggerated sense of your own importance people will not be drawn towards you. They will keep their distance and you will lose opportunities to fulfill your soul potential. This is why transformation is so important. As you uncover deeper and deeper levels of your own insecurities, you will need to return to this level of consciousness to manage, master or release your fears.

The focus at this level is on action. Finding the right avenue to express your purpose may not be straightforward. It may mean giving up a way of life that brings you comfort, stability, and certainty. It may mean moving location, giving up friends, and letting go of financial stability. Will this be scary? Yes. Is it something you can avoid? No. You will never be at ease with yourself if you do not follow your passion. There is no real alternative. You either follow your soul purpose or you spend the rest of your life in the churchyard of regret.

Level 7: Service motivation

The seventh level of human motivation is selfless service to the cause that is the object of your soul purpose. This occurs when making a difference becomes a way of life. You are now fully imbued with your soul purpose and are living as a soul-infused personality. You are at ease with uncertainty. You will need time for quiet and reflection. You embrace humility and compassion, and you live and breathe your purpose every moment of your day. You know that there is nothing else for you to do with your life. Your ego and your soul are completely merged.

The only dangers you now face are getting carried away with the exhilaration of the flow of your life and just plain caring too much about your mission. You must never forget that you have physical, emotional, mental and spiritual needs, and they all need to be met. Caring for yourself is just as important as caring for others, because if you do not exercise, eat healthy regular meals, have deep friendships, feel good about yourself, and maintain what disciplines are necessary for your spiritual life, then you will not be able to sustain working on your soul purpose over a long period of time. It is all about maintaining a sense of balance. You need to decide if you want to find balance daily, weekly, monthly, quarterly or yearly. Finding out what works for you in this regard is important.

It is also important to stay focused on your core mission and vision. It is so easy to spread yourself too thin or get involved in too much detail. You must resist these temptations if you want to be effective and fulfill your destiny.