

## 8. A Need or a Want?

*This activity allows students to examine the differences between needs and wants, and introduces the concept of how even basic needs have to be compromised for survival.*



### Materials Needed:

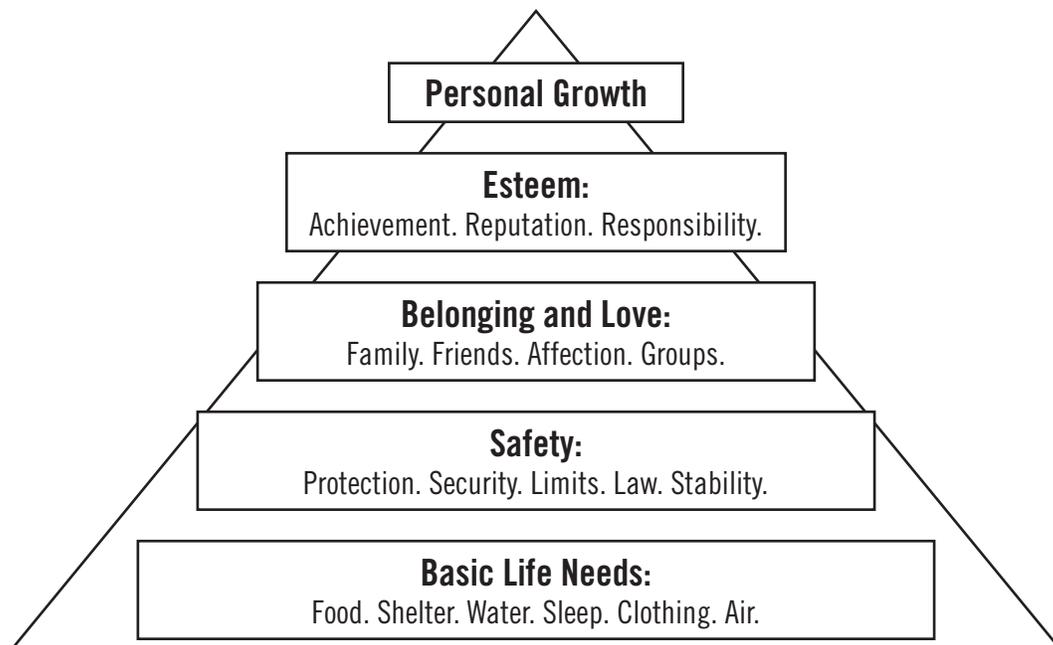
Grade 6 Poster Image

Make a chart of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (below). Follow the discussion outline below, but allow students to question or debate and investigate the concepts of needs versus wants, the ranking of needs and the "trade-off" for survival.

Discuss with students:

Using a pyramid, Maslow developed a "Hierarchy of Needs." The foundation represents Basic Life Needs (shelter, food, water, sleep, clothing and air). These are basic needs to sustain life.

Even in Canada today, basic needs are not always met for citizens. Needs are compromised. Life for some becomes very primitive. Many rely on the kindness and generosity of strangers and support agencies.



*Discuss with students some of the basic needs that they have met every day.*

### **Food**

Food is an obvious basic need. Pizza may be a “want”, but food with elemental nutrition levels is needed to survive.

For students, typically the family provides food. Nutritious food can be expensive. If food was not available at home, where would you get food? How would you eat? What would be compromised in your search for food? Would you care more about “just eating” over nutrition? What would happen to your health?

This experience occurs every day for those who are living in poverty, in Canada and around the world.

### **Water**

The human body is composed of 65% to 75% water. The human body cannot survive more than seven days without water. The body becomes dehydrated, its cells deteriorate and severe damage occurs to internal organs and brain function.

If you were homeless and living on the street homeless, where would you find safe, clean water for drinking? Where would you shower or bathe? How would you brush your teeth or wash your face? Water is a very basic need, yet this is a very real crisis for the homeless in our cities.

*Discuss appropriate behaviour expectations before conducting this part of the activity. It is very effective in illustrating the effects of losing one of the basic needs.*

### **Shelter - consider classroom sensitivities before doing this exercise**

Shelter provides relief from the elements. Can you imagine not having a home to protect you from the weather? Have students form a close circle standing front to back. Count off alternating with the words “food”, “water” and “shelter.”

As students get comfortable, explain that often as moms or dads are running out of money, sacrifices need to be made, and sometimes this includes basic needs. Parents try hard to make sure that their children have shelter and food. When families struggle financially and money is very tight, parents often have to decide what is most important – shelter or food. What do you think they choose? Many families decide that feeding a family is the most important, especially if rent or the mortgage is high and they cannot afford to continue making payments. They lose their shelter.

Everyone who is a “shelter” please carefully step out of the circle.

(Discuss the following questions with your students after the “shelter” people have stepped out of the circle.)

- What happened when the shelter people stepped out of the circle?
- Who was able to remain sitting (or on all fours) and who “fell over” because the shelter was gone?
- How do you think this could be similar to when a family loses their home/shelter?
- How would losing your home affect your family?
- Do you feel differently now about your basic needs and the things you want that you think are “needs?”
- What kinds of things can you do to make sure everyone’s basic needs are met?

Discuss “needs” versus “wants” in the context of the boy in the poster.

Do you expect that his basic needs are being met? What compromises do you think are made by him, his family or his community to survive?

Do you expect that he has much beyond what it takes to survive? Will he ever have anything more than that? What would it take for him to have a future of more than just bare survival?

Discuss the challenges that refugees or new immigrants to Canada might face, in the context of their needs and how they would meet them. What are the special challenges facing people who move to a new country and a new culture? What are the special skills, talents and perspectives they bring, that help improve and build their new country?

How would the boy in the poster adapt to living in Canada? What help might he need if he emigrated here?

**Teacher Notes:**

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***“I have learned that, every three seconds, someone dies in the world because they do not have what I have – food, a roof over my head and love and care.”***

***– Hannah***