

# Self - Actualisation

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# Principles and Practice of Youth in Development Work

## Unit 5 : Self-Actualisation

### Introduction

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You have already studied the phenomenological perspective on personality by Rogers in session 1 as well as in session 3. In session 3, we introduced you to Maslow's Need Hierarchy. Therefore the term Self-Actualisation is familiar to you. It means the achievement of self fulfilment or the full potential of what one can be. In this session, we shall look at Maslow's Needs Hierarchy in detail and learn of methods to assess the level of self-actualisation we ourselves have reached. Treat this activity as a mere guideline to help us improve ourselves. As you would realise from this session, self-actualisation is no easy task.

### Learning objectives for this unit

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As you work through this unit, you will learn to

- draw Maslow's hierarchy
- describe the different levels of needs
- explain the concept of self actualisation
- use the Inventory of Self-Actualisation Characteristics (ISAC)
- develop an ISAC profile for yourself

### Maslow's Needs Hierarchy

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To begin the path to self-actualization one must initially satisfy basic needs for survival or what are called the **physiological needs** such as food, sleep, clothing, shelter etc. Our bodies demand the satisfaction of these needs. Otherwise our bodies do not function optimally.

Then come the **needs for safety and security**. Instincts for self-preservation are strong in any person. A normally passive mild-mannered person will transform himself/herself into a fighter when life is threatened. When people's livelihoods are endangered, their personalities change.

Once the physiological and security needs are satisfied, a person seeks gratification of **loving others and being loved**. All humans need to feel loved and wanted. We learned earlier how personality could be affected when deprived of the feeling of being loved during childhood. Giving and receiving love and care is essential for good human relationships. To people who feel that no one cares whether they exist or not, life becomes meaningless. Even suicide may appear an attractive alternative to them.

Once these three levels of needs are satisfied, a person begins to seek **recognition**. People crave recognition in varying degrees. Some strive for graduation from a university, bestowing of national honours, or applause from crowds. Others are happy with a warm friendship. Everyone appreciates recognition.

The fifth level of needs focuses on **self-actualization**. Sometimes it is also called the 'peak experience'. Some people never reach this level. The peak experience is said to be an almost mystical union of mind and body that can occur at a totally unpredictable time. The sensation occurs as a result of reaching one's fullest performance. A ballerina, after years of practice, may achieve this state at the end of a perfect performance. Maslow's Needs Hierarchy presents a pyramid of needs with self-actualisation at its peak.

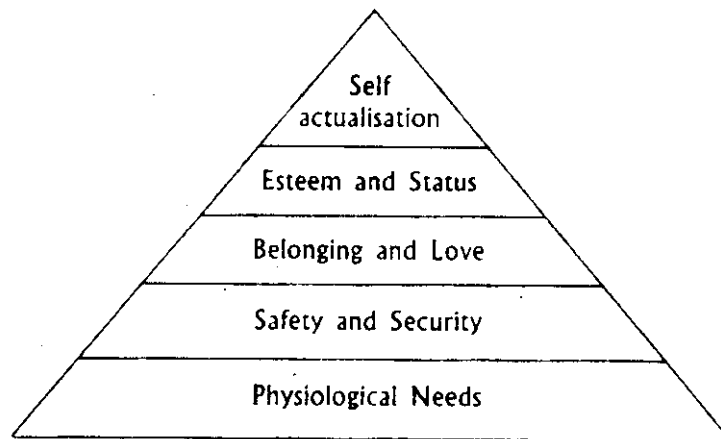


Figure 5.1 Maslow's Needs Hierarchy

Maslow believed that people who aspire for self-actualisation have some special personality traits which distinguish them from others. In 1954, he identified and studied a group of historical figures which included people such as Abraham Lincoln, Thomas Jefferson, Beethoven, Albert Einstein and so on and listed fifteen traits to represent a self-actualised personality. These are given below

- Perceive reality accurately
- Demonstrate self acceptance, acceptance of others and nature
- Exhibit spontaneity and simplicity
- Concerned with problems rather than themselves
- Exhibit a quality of detachment and a need for privacy
- Independent of their environment and culture

- Exhibit freshness of appreciation
- Undergo periodic peak experiences
- Identify with all mankind
- Develop deep relationships only with a few
- Accept democratic values
- Posses strong ethical sense
- Show well developed sense of humour
- Are creative
- Resist enculturation

Studying these traits, it will become clear to you, that reaching a state of self-actualisation needs development of many positive attitudes, values and behaviour patterns.

There have been attempts to devise means to enable the self exploration and the building of a self-actualising profile of a person. The results of such exercises may reveal how much potential there would be to improve one's personality. They must be viewed in this spirit and should not lead to disappointment with oneself.

## **Inventory of Self-Actualising Characteristics (ISAC)**

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The inventory is designed to give you information about your personal characteristics. Some of these reflect concrete behaviour while others are traits or descriptions of beliefs and values. The inventory must be used to show what you are and not to construct a profile of what you want to be.

There are 75 personal characteristics (items) you are expected to study. Five letters stand against each characteristic. They are given below with explanations as to what they stand for.

- N - Not at all/definitely untrue for me
- O - Occasionally this is true of me (25% of the time)
- F - Frequently this is an accurate description of me (50% of the time)
- M - Most of the time true of me (75% of the time)
- H - Highly characteristic of me

For each characteristic, one is expected to circle the correct letter. The letters are given values so that a total score can be added up after completing the selection of appropriate letters. The scores are as follows.

- N = - 2
- O = - 1
- F = 0
- M = + 1
- H = + 2

The characteristics (items) are clustered into the fifteen traits identified by Maslow and the individual scores for characters in a cluster add up to reveal where you stand in relation to each of the fifteen traits. The scores are then transferred to the ISAC profile sheet for easy analysis. This will provide you a picture of yourself, a profile of self-actualization.

Let us now look at samples of the following.

- I. The ISAC Sheet
- II. The ISAC Score Sheet
- III. The ISAC Profile Sheet

While we study these samples carefully, let us attempt the acts to which we are directed under each sample sheet. The activity at the end of this session will be based on these attempts.

## The ISAC Sheet

*Directions :* As you read each item, decide whether the sentence is true or descriptive of you. Circle one of the letter to the right of the sentence that must accurately reflect your decision: There are 75 items in this sheet. Do not be hasty in reading through these long list. For example, if you think that the 1st stence is true of your nature most of the time, then encircle 'M' and if it is occasionally true, encircle 'O'.

- |  |   |   |   |   |   |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. I meet the needs of other people.                   | N | O | F | M | H |
| 2. I have fun.   | N | O | F | M | H |
| 3. Respecting others is important to me.               | N | O | F | M | H |
| 4. My perception of people and situations is accurate. | N | O | F | M | H |
| 5. I know what my biases are.                          | N | O | F | M | H |
| 6. I like to be a playful child.                       | N | O | F | M | H |
| 7. Loyalty to my friends is important to me.           | N | O | F | M | H |
| 8. My daily life is full of surprises.                 | N | O | F | M | H |
| 9. I do not need other people.                         | N | O | F | M | H |
| 10. Class distinctions are unimportant to me.          | N | O | F | M | H |
| 11. I am a responsible person.                         | N | O | F | M | H |
| 12. I like to share things with myself and others.     | N | O | F | M | H |
| 13. I can see the humorous side of serious matters.    | N | O | F | M | H |
| 14. I express my anger clearly and directly.           | N | O | F | M | H |
| 15. I accept my strengths.                             | N | O | F | M | H |
| 16. I avoid doing what I believe is wrong.             | N | O | F | M | H |
| 17. I strive to keep my life simple and natural.       | N | O | F | M | H |
| 18. I am rarely lonely.                                | N | O | F | M | H |
| 19. I enjoy my own absurdity.                          | N | O | F | M | H |
| 20. Racial and national differences interest me.       | N | O | F | M | H |
| 21. Every day is different for me.                     | N | O | F | M | H |
| 22. I take delight in learning new things.             | N | O | F | M | H |

23. I can give to others and expect no return.	N	O	F	M	H
24. Nothing is routine for me.	N	O	F	M	H
25. I think clearly.	N	O	F	M	H
26. I believe the end never justifies the means.	N	O	F	M	H
27. I can tolerate chaos and disorder.	N	O	F	M	H
28. Working toward a goal is more enjoyable than attaining it.	N	O	F	M	H
29. I am amused by much of what I experience.	N	O	F	M	H
30. I like to be myself.	N	O	F	M	H
31. I am untroubled by problems with authority.	N	O	F	M	H
32. I experience no pressure to conform to social norms.	N	O	F	M	H
33. I accept my limitations.	N	O	F	M	H
34. The meaning of my life is clear to me.	N	O	F	M	H
35. I enjoy discussing philosophical issues.	N	O	F	M	H
36. I know the difference between what I want and what I need.	N	O	F	M	H
37. I tolerate other people's faults and shortcomings.	N	O	F	M	H
38. My life has a definite purpose.	N	O	F	M	H
39. My major satisfactions come from within.	N	O	F	M	H
40. I can let go of my own interests.	N	O	F	M	H
41. Art, music, and beautiful things strengthen and enrich me.	N	O	F	M	H
42. I believe that supernatural phenomena occur.	N	O	F	M	H
43. I see the positive side of things.	N	O	F	M	H
44. I can make myself at home anywhere.	N	O	F	M	H
45. I have experienced losing my sense of space and time.	N	O	F	M	H
46. I am my own person.	N	O	F	M	H
47. I am aware of the mysterious aspect of life.	N	O	F	M	H
48. Achievement is less important to me than contentment.	N	O	F	M	H
49. I am rarely self-conscious.	N	O	F	M	H
50. Empathy comes easy for me.	N	O	F	M	H
51. I can let things happen without planning.	N	O	F	M	H
52. I do original work.	N	O	F	M	H
53. I know the pain and joy of closeness.	N	O	F	M	H
54. I prize the dignity of all persons.	N	O	F	M	H

55. I am patient with others.	N	O	F	M	H
56. I like to be sexually close to others.	N	O	F	M	H
57. I am an uninhibited person.	N	O	F	M	H
58. Dress and style are unimportant to me.	N	O	F	M	H
59. I have definite moral standards.	N	O	F	M	H
60. I take good care of myself.	N	O	F	M	H
61. I learn something new every day.	N	O	F	M	H
62. I am excited by experimentation and risk taking.	N	O	F	M	H
63. I believe all human beings are members of one big family.	N	O	F	M	H
64. My actions are based on my choices, not needs.	N	O	F	M	H,
65. I rarely censor my thoughts.	N	O	F	M	H
66. I can disengage my self from petty concerns.	N	O	F	M	H
67. I am a spiritual person (though not necessarily religious).	N	O	F	M	H
68. I am rarely defensive.	N	O	F	M	H
69. I learn from many different places and persons.	N	O	F	M	H
70. I am never bored.	N	O	F	M	H
71. I am at ease with cultural traditions different from my own.	N	O	F	M	H
72. I have intense inner experiences.	N	O	F	M	H
73. Determining what is real and what is phony is easy for me.	N	O	F	M	H
74. I am objective about most things.	N	O	F	M	H
75. I feel kinship with most people I meet.	N	O	F	M	H

## ISAC Score Sheet

*Directions :* Transfer your letter responses from the ISAC Sheet to each of the fifteen scales below and write in the value for each response where relevant. The value of each letter/alphabet you have encircled is given below :

N = -2

O = -1

F = 0

M = +1

H = +2

Sum the values of the items in each scale for a score

# The fifteen Scales

## 1. Efficient Reality Perception

Items	4	25	27	36	73
Letter					
Value					
Score					

## 5. Spontaneity, Simplicity, Naturalness

Items	17	24	48	51	65
Letter					
Value					
Score					

## 2. Acceptance of Self, Others, Human nature

Items	15	33	37	60	68
Letter					
Value					
Score					

## 6. Problem Centeredness

Items	1	35	38	40	49
Letter					
Value					
Score					

## 3. Detachment and Privacy

Items	9	18	30	66	74
Letter					
Value					
Score					

## 7. Autonomy and Independence of Culture and Environments

Items	32	39	44	46	64
Letter					
Value					
Score					

## 4. Freshness of Appreciation

Items	21	41	43	61	70
Letter					
Value					
Score					

## 8. Capacity for Peak Experiences

Items	42	45	47	67	72
Letter					
Value					
Score					



9. Identify with all human beings

Items	23	50	54	63	75
Letter					
Value					
Score					

13. Interpersonal Relations

Items	7	12	53	55	56
Letter					
Value					
Score					

10. Democratic

Items	3	5	10	11	14
Letter					
Value					
Score					

14. Ethical Standards

Items	16	26	28	34	59
Letter					
Value					
Score					

11. Unhostile Sense of Humour

Items	2	6	13	19	29
Letter					
Value					
Score					

15. Creativeness

Items	8	22	52	57	62
Letter					
Value					
Score					

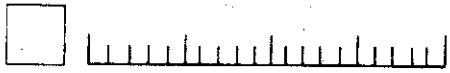

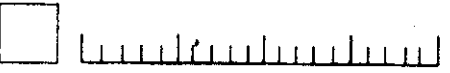

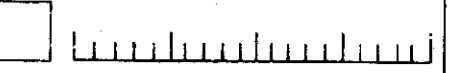
12. Resistance to Enculturation

Items	20	31	58	69	71
Letter					
Value					
Score					

# ISAC Profile Sheet

*Directions:* Enter your score for each ISAC scale in the box provided and then chart each score at the appropriate point on the graph.

SCALE		SCORE	
1.	<p><b>Efficient Reality Perception</b> Perceiving the real world accurately, making correct discriminations between the real and the spurious; capacity to deal with facts rather than opinions and wishes; appreciation of the unknown as a source for new learning; willingness to let go of the familiar; lack of obsessiveness.</p>	Score -10 -5 0 +5 +10	<input type="text"/>
2.	<p><b>Acceptance of Self, Others, Human Nature</b> Acceptance of body and body functions; prizing personal strengths; tolerating inadequacies in self and others; lack of defensiveness; a relative lack of overriding guilt, shame, or anxiety; dislike of pretense in self and others; uncritical understanding view of self and others.</p>	Score -10 -5 0 +5 +10	<input type="text"/>
3.	<p><b>Spontaneity, Simplicity, Naturalness</b> Motivated by choice rather than need; in touch with inner feelings and an ability to communicate those feelings effectively to others; an ethical code that is individualized rather than conventional; interest in personal growth and development; appreciation of the simple and unpretentious.</p>	Score -10 -5 0 +5 +10	<input type="text"/>
4.	<p><b>Problem Centeredness</b> Ability to focus on problems than the self; task oriented; lack of self-consciousness; ability to attend to the needs of others; lack of obsessive introspection; concern with basic question and philosophical issues.</p>	Score -10 -5 0 +5 +10	<input type="text"/>

SCALE		SCORE
5.	<p><b>Detachment and Privacy</b></p> <p>Liking solitude more than the average person; reliance on personal judgements; self-determined; objective; power of focusing and concentration; relationship based on choice rather than need.</p>	<p>Score -10 -5 0 +5 +10</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> </p>
6.	<p><b>Autonomy and Independence of Culture and Environments</b></p> <p>Independent of material things or others' opinions; self-motivated; disregard of social rewards or prestige; stability in the face of frustrations and adversity; maintaining an inner serenity.</p>	<p>Score -10 -5 0 +5 +10</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> </p>
7.	<p><b>Freshness of Appreciation</b></p> <p>Capacity for wonder and awe; richness of inner experience; perceiving familiar things as fresh and new; lack of boredom or jadedness; focus on the positive aspects of experience; "original mind"; responsive to beauty.</p>	<p>Score -10 -5 0 +5 +10</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> </p>
8.	<p><b>Capacity for Peak Experiences</b></p> <p>Capable of intense, transcendent experiences; ability to experience ecstasy, to move beyond space and time; ability to live in a realm of being and beauty; loss of sense of self; experience of opening up to reality and beyond; capacity to be strengthened and enriched by such experiences.</p>	<p>Score -10 -5 0 +5 +10</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> </p>
9.	<p><b>Identify with all human beings</b></p> <p>Feelings of identification, sympathy and affection for all human beings; desire to be of help to mankind; a posture of forgiveness; a belief that humanity is a large family.</p>	<p>Score -10 -5 0 +5 +10</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> </p>

SCALE		SCORE					
10.	<p><b>Interpersonal Relations</b></p> <p>Capacity for intimacy and closeness; capable of great love for others; benevolence, affection toward many people; choice of a small circle of true, loyal friends; concern for the welfare of others; appropriate anger.</p>	Score	-10	-5	0	+5	+10
		<input type="checkbox"/>					
11.	<p><b>Democratic Character Structure</b></p> <p>Belief in the dignity of all persons; relatively free from biases of class, education, political or religious beliefs, race or color; focus on character rather than physical aspects of other persons; avoidance of scapegoating; clarity about personal anger and its target.</p>	Score	-10	-5	0	+5	+10
		<input type="checkbox"/>					
12.	<p><b>Ethical Standards</b></p> <p>Strong ethical sense, definite moral standards; clear notion of right and wrong: seeking to do right and avoiding wrong-doing; fixed on ends rather than means.</p>	Score	-10	-5	0	+5	+10
		<input type="checkbox"/>					
13.	<p><b>Unhostile Sense of Humor</b></p> <p>Sense of humor devoid of hostility rebellion, or patronizing manner, capacity to laugh at oneself appreciation of the ridiculous and the absurd; capacity for playfulness.</p>	Score	-10	-5	0	+5	+10
		<input type="checkbox"/>					
14.	<p><b>Creativeness</b></p> <p>Creativity in everyday life, rather than in artistic endeavors; ability to perceive the true and the real more so than others.</p>	Score	-10	-5	0	+5	+10
		<input type="checkbox"/>					
15.	<p><b>Resistance to Enculturation</b></p> <p>Detachment from the conventional; lack of distortion around authority and authority figures; transcending racial or national distinctions; unconcerned about what is fashionable or chic; ability to live with and to learn from many cultural influences.</p>	Score	-10	-5	0	+5	+10
		<input type="checkbox"/>					



## Activity

This activity on self-actualisation can be attempted individually. However, it is better to discuss your results with a tutor. You must not be disappointed if you end up with a negative score. Most of us would probably end up with a negative score. Use the score as a guide to improving yourself.

- Step 1. Use the ISAC Sheet and circle the most appropriate letter against each characteristic as it relates to you.
- Step 2. Score the selected letters using the ISAC Score Sheet.
- Step 3. Transfer the score for each cluster of items to the ISAC Profile Sheet.
- Step 4. Discuss with your tutor the score for each trait and how you could improve yourself in this area.

## References

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- Maslow, A.H. (1970) *Motivation and Personality (2nd ed)*. New York: Harper Row.
- Maslow, A. H. (1971) *The farther reaches of human nature*. New York. The Viking Press.