

The Less-Known Maslow



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Self-Actualization—An Everyday Opportunity

Have we reached our self-actualization? We won't think so if we believed that one must first "be done" with the lower level needs in Maslow's Hierarchy. Actually, Maslow has articulated an additional view, namely, that we experience self-actualization as an episode, an event, a creative moment in which we feel a sense of personal accomplishment, self-worth, extreme joy. Writes Maslow²⁰:

We may define it as an episode, or a spurt in which the powers of the person come together in a particularly efficient and intensely enjoyable way... He becomes in these episodes more truly himself, more perfectly actualizing his potentialities, closer to the core of his Being, more fully human.

We must note that the events of extreme enjoyment are not by themselves episodes of self-actualization. Thus, joys of videogame playing and watching a thriller movie are not self-actualization. Rather, self-actualization is a performance (distinguished from consumption) episode, in which we perform

and create something; and, in creating that thing, we see our true worth, our individual talent and fulfillment.

Some consumption does offer opportunities for self-actualization: When we reach out for a product that appeals to our higher values in life—preserving the environment, supporting local and small business, fair trade, etc., and also when we buy products as investments in honing our capabilities (e.g., learning to play music).

Among acts of performance, all work counts: e.g., cooking, repairing cars, writing a research paper or a book, teaching, studying for a course. Not, of course, when we do these acts as mere chores. Rather, they count only if we perform them to the best of our abilities. This means we may self-actualize in our course work if we engage in every school course with full conscience and dedicate to it the time and energy it warrants. The episodic view is, thus, an invitation to experience self-actualization every day.

Thusly, we have the opportunity to self-actualize everyday!



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