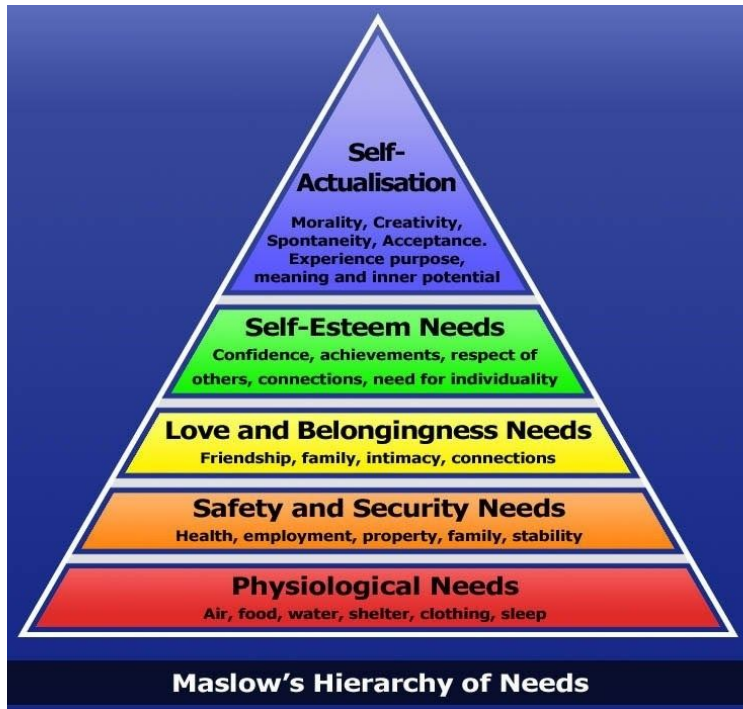


## Dear Parents:

Are we doing enough? This is the question that I ask myself every day. Am I doing enough for my job, my family, my children's education, myself? I *feel* like the answer is often, "no" --but is that true?

If you haven't heard of Abraham Maslow's *Hierarchy of Needs*, it is essentially a map of caring for ourselves and each other.

- **Physiological Needs** – includes our basic human needs for survival like food, clean water, and air (and toilet paper apparently).
- **Safety Needs** – includes the elements required for humans to feel safe and secure including physical shelter or financial stability.
- **Love and Belonging Needs** – includes our human need to be loved and to belong to a family or community.
- **Esteem Needs** – includes the desire to be respected and to respect others in the community or family (i.e. appreciation for others accomplishments and our own desire to feel successful).
- **Self-Actualization Needs** – includes needs at the highest level of the hierarchy--personal development, growth, and achieving our full potential.



**These are our needs in order of necessity —we need to fill the lower order needs before we can attempt to fill our higher order needs.**

## Maslow's Hierarchy During COVID-19:

Many parents and their children are faced with new schedules, less resources (especially school), frightening news stories, and uncertain futures. Now more than ever, it's essential for parents to regroup and focus on the basics. *By using the hierarchy as a decision-making guide, parents can take control of a difficult situation and focus on what's most likely to help a child succeed.*

### Focus on basic physiological needs first.

- *Are we able to stay physically safe from contracting COVID-19?*
- *Are we able to meet the basic needs of food, water, and daily living supplies?*
  - *Where can I find help now or down the road to meet these needs?*
- *Is there a plan in place to continue meeting my child's physiological needs if I become ill?*

Once these priority needs are met, you can move on to the next level.

## **Second, review safety needs.**

- *Are you able to understand/practice safety procedures like proper handwashing, wearing protective equipment, and practicing social/physical distancing?*
- *Am I able to meet my family's need for financial security at this time?*
- *Has my employment or my child's employment been affected?*
- *Do I need help in meeting these needs? Now or in the future?*

Modeling good hygiene and social/physical distancing for you children is very important. Financial security is a stressor that many families are facing right now. It's okay to access government programs to support you and/or your family.

## **Next, review love and belonging needs.**

After your basic needs are met, you may want to examine the need for love and belonging. These needs become even more critical when practicing social/physical distancing and isolation during the pandemic. Parents should consider these types of questions for their child:

- *In what ways can I protect my child's emotional health? How can I provide structure and routine in this challenging time?*
- *How can I help my child stay connected to others while practicing social/physical distancing?*
- *Do I need extra help from family members, friends, or the community because of self-isolation or quarantine restrictions? Where can I find help now or down the road?*

It can be especially difficult for families who rely on broader supports like social groups, faith communities, or schools for a sense of community. Without those options, parents may need to strategize other ways to create a sense of community for their child.

## **A note about esteem needs and self-actualization during COVID-19:**

If you are fortunate to have your family's basic needs met, then working on esteem can become a focus by practicing kindness and giving back to others. Helping your child focus on others for a bit can help alleviate some of the negative internal emotions they may be experiencing. *Just remember that we are in a unique time in history and these struggles won't last forever. Be kind to yourself!*

## **Taking Care of Yourself = Taking Care of Your Kids**

Your children will notice if you feel anxious, depressed, hopeless, and/or chronically fatigued. It is common to experience these feelings, especially during such an uncertain time. Remember that in order to take good care of your children and be a positive role model, you must take care of yourself. This is not an ordinary snow day or spring break. Taking care of yourself is crucial because we do not know how long this will last.

## Supporting Children's Emotional Resilience Development at Home

Social-emotional learning typically takes shape in school, as children learn to appropriately interact with their peers, learn to understand group dynamics, and become socialized to interact with authoritative figures. With children being abruptly pulled from their school environment, unable to see friends, it is now up to parents and caregivers to help children build this emotional resilience --the ability to bounce back from challenges. Below are some simple ways to help provide a nurturing environment for children and grow their emotional resilience.

**Reassurance** – School closures can shake children and make them feel like life has become unpredictable. When kids sense this unpredictability, they feel anxious. They may express this anxiety by acting out in a way that can gain your attention.

- *Share how you feel, "I'm really sad that school is closed and you won't be able to see all of your friends. How do you feel about it?"*
- *Show optimism, "People are working really hard to get you back to school as soon as possible." or "Your teachers miss you so much. How can we show that we miss them too?"*

**Routine** – Routines or schedules are a great way to build structure, which can provide children a sense of safety and normalcy, allow you and your kids to internalize constructive habits, keep you focused on the present, and increase productivity. Maintain or create a daily routine and try to stick to it as much as possible.

- *Invite your child(ren) to help you create the routines.*
- *The schedule doesn't have to be perfect or regimented. It functions as a roadmap for you and your child(ren), gives both of you structure, and keeps you on track.*

**Regulation** – Parents can support children's development of self-regulation (i.e., how children manage/express emotions). Children experience many of the same emotions as adults, but may lack the self-control and language skills to express their feelings.

- *How to help children manage these reactions:*
  - *Validate their feelings. "I understand your frustration. I miss seeing my friends too."*
  - *Teach them words for talking about feelings and share strategies they can use to deal with feelings by involving them in discussion.*
  - *Engage in activities that help them self-regulate and limit screen time as able.*
- *Some strategies children can use to handle their feelings include:*
  - *Taking a deep breath when frustrated or angry or finding a quiet/calm space*
  - *Physical activity to alleviate physical symptoms of anxiety*
  - *Getting an adult to help resolve a conflict with siblings*
  - *Offering physical comfort (i.e. hugs)*

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**Inspired by:** [Maslow's Hierarchy During COVID-19](#) + [Emotional Resilience during Coronavirus](#)