

History of psychology

Week 12

Chapter 14

Essay 9

What did Abraham Maslow mean by self-actualization?

In Maslow's view, each person possesses an innate tendency toward self-actualization. Self-actualization is the full development of one's abilities and the realization of one's potential. This is the highest of human needs involving the active use of all our qualities and abilities. We must first satisfy needs that are lower in an innate hierarchy. Each need must be satisfied in turn before the next need can motivate us. The needs Maslow proposed in order are physiological, safety, belonging and love, esteem, and self-actualization needs. His research sought to identify characteristics of people who satisfied the self-actualization need and therefore could be considered psychologically healthy, free of neuroses.

They are almost always middle-aged or older and account for less than one percent of the population. The self-actualizers share the following tendencies: an objective perception of reality, a full acceptance of their own nature, a commitment and dedication to some kind of work, simplicity and naturalness of behavior, a need for autonomy, privacy, and independence, intense mystical or peak experiences, empathy with and affection for all humanity, resistance to conformity, a democratic character structure, an attitude of creativeness and a high degree of what Adler termed social interest. Maslow believed that the prerequisites for self-actualization are sufficient love in childhood and the satisfaction of the physiological and safety needs within the first two years of life. Without adequate parental love, security, and esteem in childhood, it will be difficult for the adult to attain self-actualization.