

# PREFACE

This program was developed after exploring the theories and research of twelve different "schools" of personality theory. The aim was to discover how the Unconscious Mind influenced self-esteem. The resulting self-esteem program was tested under university research conditions to see how effective it would be in increasing the overall levels of self-esteem in adults and teenagers. The program **WORKED**.

In fact it was found to significantly improve the overall levels of self-esteem in 92 percent of those who took part.. It also enabled participants to have a more realistic view of themselves in a helpful yet non-threatening manner.

The chapters that follow lead you to develop additional skills in dealing with yourself and those around you. They deal with topics and concepts that arise in your everyday life. This program is designed as a tool for furthering insight into yourself, and offering constructive, practical ways in which you can develop your self-esteem and your choices in life.

## **How this Program Works:**

This Self-Esteem program is unique in that it builds your self-esteem in two different ways. It combines background **INFORMATION** with related **SELF DISCOVERY EXERCISES** for you to complete which develop your own ideas and skills.

These two integrated approaches correspond broadly to the ways in which we learn information through the right and left brain hemispheres. This self-esteem program has been used successfully by the author in his psychotherapy practice with a broad spectrum of people whose ages range from 17 to 60 years.

## **An Overview Of How Self-Esteem is Improved:**

1. For you to function adequately, you must fulfil many of your individual needs and wants.
2. When you are able to satisfy your needs and wants, an increase in your self-esteem results. You feel more confident because you are not so dependant upon others and you have more influence and control over your life.
3. People are different. So your needs and wants may vary from someone else and you will need to **COMMUNICATE** this if you are to get what you want.
4. You have to know which are your **OWN** particular needs and wants, if you are to have the type of life that best suits you.

The 8-Day Self Esteem Programme

5. We discover what YOUR OWN needs and wants are, you need to know more about yourself, especially about what your FEELINGS tell you. We have all learned to hide parts of ourselves, by manipulating our feelings in an attempt to be more acceptable to our self-image to other people.
7. Discovering your needs and wants requires you to look at yourself from a different perspective. When you do this, self-acceptance increases, and you will automatically change, resulting in greater feelings of confidence.
8. Hence, the path to higher self-esteem requires self-discovery, and the practice and awareness of communication and thinking skills.

### **In Addition:**

This program is also a **Life-Coach and Mentor**.

It teaches you how to get on with your Self as well as other people in a no-nonsense style.

It is a Life-Coach because it gives you the information you need to put your self and your life into perspective.

And like a Life-Coach it guides you through exercises that give you import key insights and provide you with the tools to help you make the right decisions for your self.

# CHAPTER 1

## Needs, Wants And Feelings

An eminent psychologist, by the name of Abraham Maslow, noted that the self-esteem and personal growth of people followed a path that related to what they need and want in order to survive. It is, therefore, helpful to examine our "**Needs**" and "**Wants**".

A **NEED** is something that is necessary to have if you are to exist, or to function adequately; e.g. Food and Shelter are needs. If you do not have these things in sufficient quantities, you will die or become ill.

A **WANT** is something that you desire. It may be something to make you feel good. It may be something that you think is going to be useful.

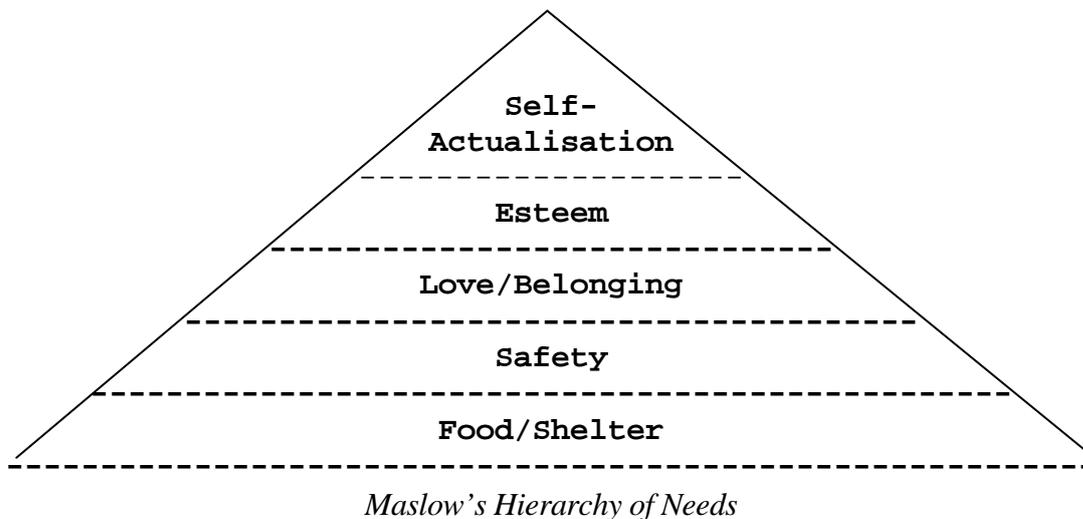
What you need will vary depending upon your age, your culture and climate in which you live. For example, when a baby is born into the world, it has a need for physical contact. It needs to be rocked, or cuddled, or stroked. If a new-born baby is deprived of this kind of contact, it may die, even if it is well-fed and kept warm and dry. This fact was observed in orphanages during the first half of this century. Newborn babies that were left alone for very long periods of time without any physical stimulation often died.

As a baby grows older and stronger, it depends less and less upon physical stimulation as a need for its survival. However, the emotional development of a young child is largely nourished by physical contact. This is true for adults as well. For some adults to function most effectively, physical contact will be a want. For others, it may be a need. This will depend very much upon how you the individual were treated in the family in which you grew up, the surrounding culture, and your level of self-awareness.

Maslow organised human needs and wants into a progressive order. These range from the essential physical needs, through to the needs for maximum human emotional and spiritual development. This order became known as Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. (See Diagram following).

Maslow observed that for each new level of **need** to be completely met, the one preceding it had to be mostly satisfied. Hence, for you to satisfy your need for love, you must first be able

to feel safe. And before you can feel really good about yourself (i.e. having a higher level of Self-Esteem), you must first have experienced enough love to feel emotionally secure.



Generally, people feel good about themselves if they manage to get their physical, emotional, and spiritual needs met. In a world where people, things, and situations are very structured, it becomes increasingly difficult for individuals to satisfy their individual needs, especially without the co-operation of others. For example, think of all the steps necessary to have a house built in our bureaucratic society.

First plans need to be drawn. Then many different departments within the local governments have to certify the plans as being good enough. Legal details have to be checked. The building site has to be surveyed. A number of different trades people are required to work together, including builders, electricians, plumbers, painters, and more. The construction is checked by inspectors at different stages of erection to make sure that the building complies with regulations. The whole building process takes months and sometimes even more than a year to complete.

It is all part of a complex process being the result of a highly structured society. Regulations are used to control and organise people, while technical knowledge is divided into specialist groups. This is a far cry from the relatively simple way our tribal ancestors built their shelters.

We are more dependent upon other people in our society than we have ever been before. Consequently, there is a tendency for us in our society to experience others in the world around as having a lot of control and influence over our lives. Frequently, this control exerted by the outside world is experienced by us as greater than our own ability to satisfy our needs. This can result in feeling helpless and feeling that we have little or no control over our own lives. If this occurs, our self-esteem is reduced. Sometimes this produces fear, which in turn tends to further hinder us from trying to satisfy our own needs. (i.e. *We won't try to do something for ourselves because we fear failure. N.B. Our goal orientated society is materialistic and rewards "winners" and not losers*).

In the above situation, a person of low self-esteem may become very dependent upon someone else who is seen to have the ability to satisfy needs and wants effectively.

The following exercise is designed to show you that many needs and wants are satisfied in a structured way, by each person having certain roles.

### **Exercise 1: Roles and Identities**

Draw four equal sized columns on the sheet of paper. List in the first column the **roles and identities** that you have; e.g. Father, Friend, etc. Next, beside each role, write a word describing your needs or wants that are satisfied by that role. Beside that, write what needs and wants you would like satisfied by each role, and which are not satisfied. Underline the needs/wants not satisfied. In the last column where appropriate, write a word that describes how each role meets someone else's needs or wants.

When you have completed the above, examine your answers with the help of the following questions:

**Question:** Are there any roles that you haven't listed that could help you meet your own needs and wants?

**Question:** Do you do anything that might stop you from having these new roles?

**Question:** Did you actively choose your roles with the aim of satisfying your needs and wants? Or did you just grow up with them?

**Comments:** If you are not having your needs and wants satisfied, then it can be useful to reduce the effort spent in some roles, and/or become involved in a new role that will help meet your needs. These changes may require more effective communication and the co-operation of other people around you. It is possible to take charge of your life by actively choosing roles and practicing letting go of roles you do not want.

*(Future chapters in this book teach you how to communicate effectively, and how to deal with the issues of selfishness and self-fulfilment.)*

Many people try to control their internal environment in an attempt to satisfy their needs. (The "Internal" environment consists of our thoughts, emotions, and physical feelings.) One way is to try to deny our true feelings when these feelings become uncomfortable. This is a strategy designed to protect our need for love, self-esteem, and emotional safety. Such strategies may give us the illusion of being in control and feeling secure because they are controlling our feelings. This is discussed in more detail at a later stage. It is enough to state here that by denying feelings, you are reducing your ability to recognise what you need to change in your life for the better.

## **What Do We Mean By ‘Feelings’ And How Do They Affect Our Self Esteem?**

Feelings are sensations which occur in your body. They are often emotional responses to the things that we experience. Feelings are one way in which we can get a lot of useful information about ourselves. At a very basic level the feelings that we experience help us to protect our bodies from damage. For example, if we walk upon broken glass with bare feet we will feel sharp pain. This pain, although unpleasant, is a helpful message that tells us that walking upon broken glass is dangerous to our safety. If we ignore this pain, our feet are likely to be cut about - causing bleeding and possibly infection. Finally, if we continue to ignore the pain and keep walking upon broken glass we may not be able to walk at all.

In the above example, **the feelings of pain are not bad** for they are helpful to our survival. Feelings vary in their intensity and we tend to regard them as either pleasant or unpleasant. Pleasant feelings help the body to relax, to repair itself, and to encourage us to get the things that we need in order that we may live and continue our species. The pleasure of eating food and having sex are obvious examples of this. Unpleasant feelings grab our attention to make us tense and alert, ready for action. This enables us to change something that we are doing or to get out of a situation which is not good for us. Therefore, both pleasant and unpleasant feelings are useful and necessary for our well being.

Unfortunately, many people tend to accept the feelings that they experience as pleasant and to reject the feelings that they experience as unpleasant; and label their feelings as "good" and "bad" respectively. In fact, feelings are neither good nor bad. The entrance to our feelings is a bit like a doorway which lets in both the pleasant and unpleasant feelings, without distinguishing between either of them.

It is common for people to try to control the flow of their feelings without even realising what they are doing. It seems natural to avoid what we don't like, but it can be harmful to ignore what we don't like. As human beings we have a highly developed level of intelligence, and so are able to manipulate our own thoughts, feelings, and perceptions. It is relatively difficult for us to ignore a direct cause of pain like a pin sticking into our finger, although it can be done. But it is relatively easy for us to trick ourselves into ignoring emotional pain. Western society teaches us many ways of doing this. For example, if your pet cat or dog is killed by a car, many people will say, "*It was only a cat*" or "*it was only a dog*". They are, in effect, reducing the importance of the loss to you and to themselves, and so you are encouraged to reduce the intensity of your emotions about that loss. In this way others don't have to deal with how we really feel, so they don't feel so bad.

Statements like: "*It will be O.K.*", "*Calm down*", "*Everyone has their load to bear*", etc, all have the effect of encouraging people to avoid their feelings. This is because we are generally not taught to accept our feelings, or how to deal with them. Another example is that anger is often labelled as "Bad", so we are taught to avoid it. Yet anger is a frequent part of human existence which can provide us with the force and motivation to change a situation that we don't like. (*Anger is discussed at the end of Chapter 8.*)

A more beneficial way to deal with feelings is to let others experience what they are feeling and to be accepting of them without trying to "make them better". We will also benefit by allowing ourselves to experience whatever feelings we have and to accept them as an

indication of how our life is for us now. Feelings are a bit like an earthworm. There is a beginning and an end yet it is not always easy to know which is which, and there is not much variation in between. But the worm creeps along, if you let it, even though it doesn't appear to be making much progress and one day you will notice it has gone.

In an attempt to avoid unpleasant feelings, some people close the feelings door until it is almost shut. Unfortunately, in the process they block out and don't see a lot of helpful information about themselves. Consequently, they unwittingly distort their own perceptions. After doing this for many years, it is not surprising that many people find that there is a lot about themselves that they do not know. They are not content and yet do not know what they need to be happier. Many people around middle age discover that after spending years doing what they thought they should do, they are now feeling vague or numb or unexcited about their life and their achievements. This is the result of having shut off or ignored important feelings for many years.



*Denying Our Feelings*

There are a number of ways in which we may have closed the door on our feelings. One popular way was mentioned earlier. It is called **denial**. The method used in denial relies upon a person's logical thinking ability to give all the reasons why certain feelings are either unimportant or invalid, or we may even ignore what is happening. Our process of denial is largely unconscious and we use real facts and situations to create a lop-sided reality. Considering that thinking is done in our head (i.e. from the neck up), and that most feelings occur from the neck down, denial is a kind of mental/emotional strangulation which separates our feelings from our thinking.

Despite the fact that we deny much of what we feel, our feelings keep bubbling away, usually in our stomach accompanied by increased muscle tension throughout our body. This process produces what is known as **stress overload**. It is sufficient to note here that emotional pressure will build up inside of us if we don't express our feelings from time to time and take notice of what the feelings are trying to tell us about the way we are living our life.

In general, any method that we have of interfering with our perceptions including distractions, can be used to avoid the influence of the outside world. (i.e. *"If I'm not aware of it, then it doesn't hurt."*) Thus, for us to increase our effectiveness in our own life, we must first increase our awareness of how we function and feel.

It should be stated that not everything a person does that distracts or alters their perceptions are used as methods for denying the world's influence upon them all of the time. (e.g. *A drunk may be denying or avoiding some recently experienced emotional pain, or conversely may be simply celebrating a birthday over-enthusiastically.*)

There is another way of closing the feelings door which is quite popular. This is called **avoidance**. Avoidance can take many forms. It may simply be done by focusing all of your attention upon a physical or mental activity, like your job or in gardening. Avoidance may involve talking about anything **except** how you really feel. For example:

**John:** *"How are you today?"*

**Bill:** *"Fine, how are you?"*

**John:** *"Did you hear the news today?"*

**Bill:** *"Yes, terrible wasn't it", etc.*

In the above example we see a common interaction between two people. Essentially they are acknowledging each others existence, which is an important social need. However, they avoid any disclosure of their own feelings. This is one way we avoid intimacy. It would be difficult and cumbersome to relate to everyone we met by disclosing our true feelings. We would spend a lot of time caught up in discussing feelings and not getting work done. So some types of avoidance are constructive. Yet most of us get into a habit of limiting our talking to each other in a similar way to the above example; even with our family and friends.

Yet again, some people avoid feelings by getting as far away as they can from the person or object that they believe is causing them their problems. Hence, a husband or wife may desert their partner either by physically leaving or by shutting off emotionally, or a person may avoid visiting relatives, etc. As mentioned earlier with denial, a final method of avoidance can be achieved by the use of drugs. These include legal drugs like alcohol and tobacco; prescribed drugs like tranquillisers; and illegal drugs.

**Be Aware:** All of the examples given above under the heading of avoidance, **can** be used as tools for avoidance. This does not mean that we should not go on a holiday, or have a drink of alcohol, or indulge in small talk, or become involved in our work. Like most things in life, a balance is required if we are to remain healthy. We need a balanced diet; a balance of physical exercise and rest; and a balance between being involved with our environment and expressing and acknowledging our feelings as a consequence of living in that environment. The environment includes the air we breathe, the people with whom we live and work, and anything of which we are aware.

Try this next exercise and see what you can learn about your **feelings, avoidance** and **stress**.

## Exercise 2: Self Assessment

Consider the following situations and see if you fit any of them. Be aware of your own possible denial when doing this exercise.

- a. When I make or receive an important phone call, I often light a cigarette.  
(Yes or No)?
- b. I get drunk once or more a fortnight, at least my friends say I do.  
(Yes or No)?
- c. I regularly take medications prescribed by the doctor which are either tranquillisers, sleeping tablets or for high blood pressure. (Yes or No)?
- d. I smoke more when I feel alone. (Yes or No)?
- e. When I have an argument with someone I usually stay angry afterwards.  
(Yes or No)?
- f. It is not nice to fight or express anger, so rather than say something I might regret, I would more likely go and do something else. (Yes or No)?
- g. When I feel bad about something I tell myself not to worry, and I can think about it another day. (Yes or No)?
- h. I believe in the saying that, "*There's no use crying over spilt milk*", so I ignore what has happened. (Yes or No)?
- i. If I have a major argument with my husband/wife or girlfriend/boyfriend, I often finish by not talking to them, OR by drinking alcohol or having a cigarette, OR an illegal drug, OR by eating my favourite food. (Yes or No)?
- j. I usually get headaches twice a week or more. (Yes or No)?
- k. I have trouble sleeping, or frequently wake in the middle of the night.  
(Yes or No)?
- l. I often tell close friends how angry I am about other people who are rude and inconsiderate. (Yes or No)?
- m. Finally, write down the names of people whom you trust or to whom you feel emotionally close. Now place a number next to their name from 1 to 3, if you tell them the following:
  1. Tell them something about others; e.g.  
*"Mary is having an affair with Fred"*.
  2. State your own opinions, ideas and decisions and judgements; e.g.  
*"I believe that all Prime Ministers are good, honest people otherwise, they wouldn't be elected to the job."*
  3. Sharing your innermost feelings and emotions; e.g.  
*"I feel hurt, sad, overjoyed, angry"*, etc.... about what is happening now.

### Comments:

The above exercise is not a precise psychological measuring tool. However, it can be useful as a way to identify methods that you use to deny, avoid, or ignore some of your feelings. Statements "b", "c", "d", "i", "j" and "k" relate particularly to stress. They reveal different levels of stress. If you answered "Yes" to three or more of these statements, it may be wise to check your lifestyle with a psychologist or counsellor.

The avoidance techniques used in "j", "k", "l" and "m" may not be as obvious as in the other statements so I'll elaborate a little.

Statements "j" and "k" illustrate symptoms indicating that problems, and more importantly, the feelings associated with some problems are uncomfortable and have not yet been resolved. Statement "m" may indicate feelings are not expressed at the time those feelings occur. If you do this your ability to have intimacy with others and to change the situation will be reduced. Part "m" gives a general indication of the depth of intimacy shared with others. The more people with whom you share number "3"s, the more verbal expression you give to your feelings, and the greater the intimacy you allow yourself with other people. If you have no number "3"s, then you are psychologically locking yourself away, and greatly restrict your ability to enrich and satisfy the emotional and psychological needs of yourself and those around you

## SUMMARY

1. It is our ability to have our **needs** and **wants** met that make us satisfied and confident with our **self** which creates Self-Esteem.
2. High Self-Esteem requires us to know our **needs** and **wants**.
3. To know your needs and wants you can:
  - a. Accept the wide range of feelings that you have;
  - b. Listen to what your feelings are telling you about your life at any given point of time;
  - c. Tell (write or draw) your feelings to the appropriate people in your life;
  - d. Notice how you relate to other people;
  - e. Notice how you function in different situations;
  - f. Be open to seeing your **avoidance** and **denial**.
4. Know that by living in a society we are dependant upon other people for the satisfaction of our needs and wants, so we need their trust and co-operation to varying degrees.
5. Express your feelings, including your loves and fears with people to whom you feel close. This is also a way of gaining trust and co-operation from those people. This is a step toward the true closeness of intimacy.