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Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Pyramid

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by Toni Gilbert

Using Tarot to map your developmental journey

Like all of Nature, humans develop according to universal patterns or archetypal forces. We know this as the “urge” toward growth. As complex material and spiritual beings, that urge takes place, not only at the material level as we grow into adulthood, but also at the mental and spiritual levels. To say it another way, the growth of the mind, body, and spirit is a natural unfolding of our potential.

There are many ways that our nature unfolds. Two cosmic forces that help us grow are the large archetypes of Chaos and Grace. The Grace archetype dominates when one commits to higher values in their living. The archetype of Grace gives us feelings of peace and harmony with our surroundings. If you are in a state of Grace, good things happen to you and you feel blessed. You notice that the flow of your life is easier and you may experience lucky events. Grace in our personality expresses itself with an easy style because we are comfortable with ourselves and we enjoy life. The Grace-filled life is healthy and satisfying.

When you are out of sync with your natural growth pattern, you start noticing symptoms of one sort or another in your body and/or your environment. One symptom that shows up when the urge to grow is not heeded is chaos. The archetype of chaos happens when one doesn't stay on the upper path or upper levels of the archetypal expression operating through you. The energy of chaos expresses itself as random events that are unpredictable and uncontrollable and people have difficulty navigating through this mixed up energy. Chaos in a personality may express itself with behaviors that are out of line with a higher code of behavior; confusion and depression may accompany it. How many times have we witnessed primitive acts (i.e. cheating, stealing and negative thinking and behaviors) and then watch a fall from Grace? When one gets out of synch with Graceful living, negative feelings and negative consequences or what may be termed negative karma usually follow. Many of us have seen the stumble-and-fall act so many times that we can predict the negative consequences that usually follow.

As a transpersonal counselor, my self-actualizing ideal is that clients find their own way toward the grace-filled peacefulness found at the upper levels of our being. It is my job to provide tools or healing arts, to help them on the journey to find their "true" place in the world. Some eventually tap into their enlightened potential and full-spectrum of personal power. This power may include the intuitive and the psychic—a full spectrum multi-dimensional Self.

In his 1954 book, *Motivation and Personality*, transpersonal psychologist Abraham Maslow studied what he called exemplary people such as Albert Einstein, Jane Addams, Eleanor Roosevelt and healthy college students rather than mentally ill or neurotic people. He claimed that the study of crippled, immature, and unhealthy specimens can yield only a crippled psychology and a crippled philosophy. He uncovered what humans needed in order to grow and develop. Then, he outlined those needs into a pyramidal shape, a five level model of humanity's physical, mental, emotional, social and spiritual needs.

At the bottom of the pyramid, the base is wider and the first three levels represent the material needs we must have taken care of in order to move to the next step to develop and grow into fully mature beings. At the first level are the literal requirements for survival: air, water, food, sex, sleep, homeostasis and excretion. This is what we need to be alive. After that the second level, safety needs take precedence and dominate our behavior. Safety needs include: security of the body, resources, morality, the family health and well-being. At the third level needs are social and involve feelings of Belongingness. This aspect of the hierarchy involves emotionally based relationships of friends, family and intimacy. According to Maslow, most people don't develop beyond this level. At this level, people can be reasonably happy and so they become complacent and don't heed the innate call towards further growth.

The two upper levels represent higher more refined needs as we develop our spiritual selves. At the fourth level, everyone needs to be respected and to have self-esteem and self-respect. It is the normal human desire to be accepted and valued by others and many seek fame or glory, which is external and depends on others. At some point at this level one comes to the realization that one must first accept and love themselves. Finally, at the fifth level the need is for self-actualization. This pertains to realizing what your full potential is and then materializing that potential. The requirement to attain this final step takes a strong personal commitment. Maslow describes this as the desire to become everything that one is capable of becoming.

Although, there are no true lines marking the developmental stages or strict order of developmental events, essentially, people must satisfy basic needs like hunger and safety before they turn their attention to raising their consciousness to include beauty, truth, and the development of their higher potential and self-actualization.

While helping clients develop, I patiently listen and watch for clues of what she/he may need. I set a few basic goals, suspend judgment, and then work spontaneously taking action, offering insight producing tools, like Tarot cards, in the moment. Then, I set my intentions and allow Nature to take its course. Synchronicity, or meaningful consequences, happens during therapy that facilitates client growth. When these instances occur, I take it as an indication that our timing and intentions are in line with the client's natural course. If all goes well their development is completed in a positive way; their consciousness is raised and they experience an ego expansion or development to the next stage of their growth.

Each of us has the potential to recognize the mysteries buried in our soul and this knowledge will help clarify areas of our life into which we need to bring more psychological and spiritual understanding. Tools like Tarot cards use an archetypal psychology that helps us retrieve unconscious information and grant us insights on how to best live our life. The evolving life patterns contain the urge towards wholeness of self. Our life's challenges are seeded with opportunities to gain insights and grow toward self-actualization, individuation, and enlightenment. With each new insight, the soul shines through a little more and we grow, each according to an innate timing known only to our earthly bodies and our spiritual Nature.

Exercise: Hierarchy of Needs Pyramid and Tarot Layout

Copy and paste the pyramid on a page and print. For a printer friendly version, please [click here](#).

With a deck of Tarot cards in your hands, take a moment to meditate upon the levels of development in the pyramid. Ask that you be given information about your present level of development at each of the levels. Shuffle your cards with this question in mind. Begin your 5 card layout at the bottom of the pyramid, placing the cards progressively upwards. With pen and paper handy, write down your impressions of the imagery in the cards describing your assessment of where you are on this developmental journey.



Example: Hierarchy of Needs assessment: Golden Tarot deck

Because I am 63 years old, I have lived long enough to have achieved my potential; I used myself as an example. All assessments will be different depending upon your developmental needs and what is happening for you at each level.

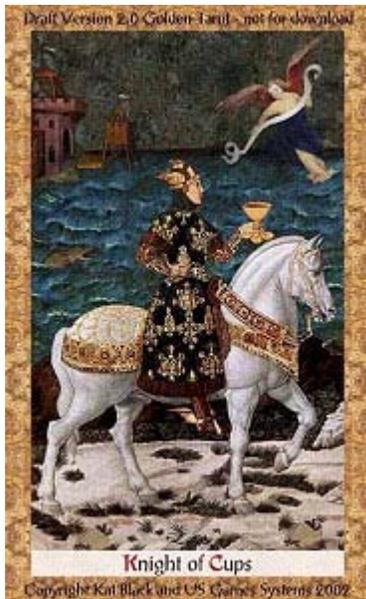
Level 5 Self-Actualization: The Hierophant

As the author of two books on archetypes and their uses in healing and personal development, I am actualizing as a teacher of contemporary Western esotericism.



Level 4 Esteem: Knight of Cups

My life's journey has metaphorically been about the search for the Holy Grail, a spiritual journey that has taught me about the human condition. I have come to understand the multi-dimensions of consciousness in all of us. When you truly know who you are, it is sacrilege to feel bad about yourself.



Level 3 Belongingness: Wheel of Fortune

I have been fortunate to have a life-mate who helps tend the home fires so that I can pursue my dreams. With a natal Jupiter in the 8th house, my luck expanded to include children and grandchildren who have challenges. Their childhood joys and developmental thresholds add to

my knowledge of human behavior as well as opportunities to put spiritual coping theories to the family test.



Level 2 Safety: Seven of Cups

Choices are needed on a daily basis. I choose to follow the dictates of a higher calling and to a spiritual path. Wise choices not only keeps one safe, but places you on the road to higher development.



Level 1 Survival: Page of Swords

The wonderful grandmother/grandfather imprinting I received, during my formative years, guides my path. The greatest earthly gifts are the transfer of awareness from loving elders; imprints that carry messages of gentle love and wisdom. Beyond that, sturdy genes gave me a fine mind, and strong body. Astrologically, my foundation includes a Gemini sun with a Uranus conjunction; I am a critical thinker with a broad vision.



Toni Gilbert

Author's Biography

Toni Gilbert is a holistic nurse with a practice in transpersonal counseling. As a professional with a formal education in psychology, transpersonal studies, and certifications in wellness counseling, mind-body consciousness, guided imagery, the use of imagery in medicine and aromatherapy she offers clients an array of healing arts techniques to enhance wellness and prevent illness. She has a bachelor's degree in psychology and art, including undergraduate classes in Jungian psychology. She continued her interest in art and its symbolism in a graduate art therapy school. She holds a master's degree from the Institute of Transpersonal Psychology.

*Toni's first book is entitled *Messages from the Archetypes: Using Tarot for Healing and Spiritual Growth*, published by White Cloud Press. Her second book, *Gaining Archetypal Vision* published by Schiffer Books is due out in 2011. She has written for national and local publication. You may see her published articles on her personal web site.*

*Ms. Gilbert maintains three web sites: A personal web site www.tonigilbert.com and the on-line nursing journal the *Alternative Journal of Nursing* www.altjn.com and www.oregonholisticnurses.org . All sites are used as educational and promotional tools. Ms.*

Gilbert is the founding editor of the journal and the founding director of the Oregon Holistic Nurses Association.

In the recent past, Ms. Gilbert worked in the field of mental health nursing and owned Centre of Main St., a wellness center in Oregon, where she saw clients and facilitated therapeutic groups. In addition, she has taught psychology at two community colleges.