

How to Fulfill Your Belonging Need: The Belonging Needs Pyramid

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What is the belonging need?

Belonging is a deep-seated and foundation human need, as presented as one of the needs on the hierarchy of needs pyramid presented by Abraham Maslow. Fulfilling your belonging needs can bring out the best in yourself and help you reach your full potential.

According to Maslow, the belonging need involves being accepted and loved by others such as your family, peers, coworkers, and neighbors, especially those who you interact with often. As social creatures, we have a natural craving for connection and belonging. The more you feel accepted and loved by others, the stronger your belonging need. It is an emotional attachment, feeling at home, feeling safe, and an act of self-identification or the identification of others.

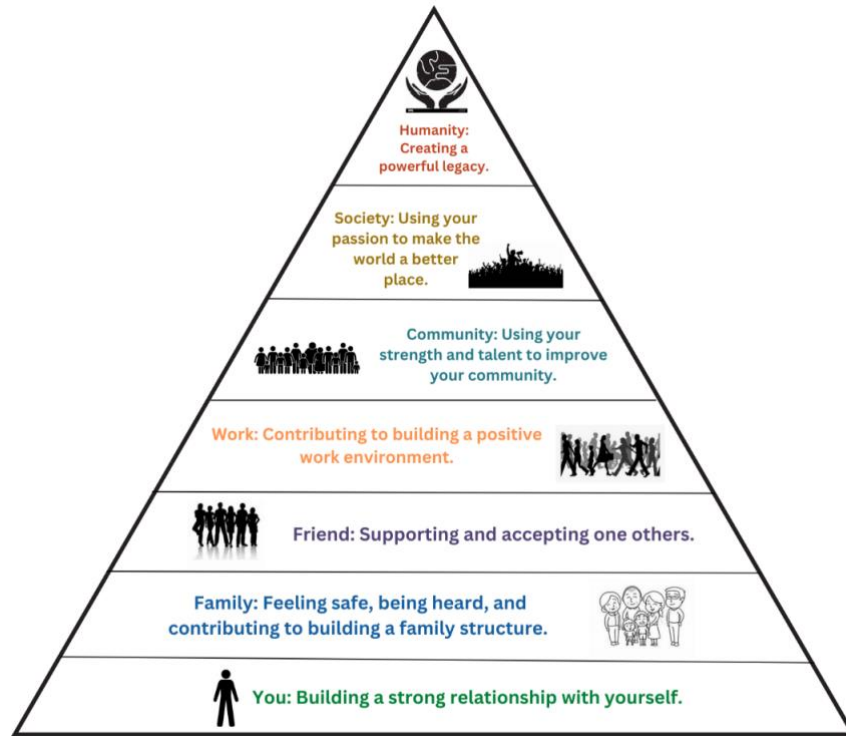
However, I believe there is a stronger belonging need that is not being discussed enough by Maslow and in the literature. This belonging need are toward your community, society, and the world. Anything that you are part of or interact with daily, you want to make sure you feel belong within it.

Building your connection with your community, society, and the world can give you a strong sense of self-worth. It can also increase your self-esteem and self-confidence. You believe that you can create a better future for yourself in your environment. For instance, you are more willing to contribute to your community when you feel like you belong there. The more resources and opportunities you have to share your knowledge and skills to your community, the higher your sense of belonging, the more meaning and purpose you will experience.

How to fulfill your belonging needs

One way to fulfill your belonging needs is to use your knowledge, skills, strengths, and talents to add value and contribute to your surrounding environments. This will help you feel valued, respected, and accepted by your peers and communities, fulfilling your belonging needs.

The Belonging Needs Pyramid



I created the Belonging Needs Pyramid to offer you a pathway to add value and contribute to others, your community, society, and the world. The pyramid also provides a pathway to learn and discover yourself because adding value and contributing is a journey of learning, discovering, and becoming.

There are seven levels on the pyramid. Level 1 (You), level 2 (Family), level 3 (Friend), level 4 (Work), level 5 (Community), level 6 (Society), and level 7 (Humanity). The pyramid starts from the bottom and goes up. The more you add value and contribute to the levels, the more meaning and purpose you will experience. I will start with the Family belonging and end with the You belonging.

Family

Feeling a sense of belonging within your family is important because you interact with them daily or often. They are the first people you see when you enter the world.

Adding value and contributing to your family means actively participating in improving your family structure. Be involved in family meetings and discussions. Even if your family doesn't agree with you 100% when you share, feeling heard still fulfills your sense of belonging. It is important to have the courage to speak up whenever you have something to share. You don't need to wait until family meetings to express your concerns. The stronger your connection with your family, the more comfortable you will feel speaking up whenever necessary.

Find ways to support your family outside of family meetings and discussions, such as doing small things. Small actions matter, especially when they add up.

Friends

You want to feel comfortable speaking up and expressing yourself with your friends. Have the courage to say no when you disagree. Contribute to planning activities by sharing your ideas. Find ways to support your friends when they need help, and feel that they can support you as well. If these elements are missing among your friends, you might feel like an outsider or be left out, which can prevent you from fulfilling your need to belong among your friends.

Work

You should feel accepted and valued at work because you spend 80% of your life working, which is a significant portion of your time. Your work environment will also influence you more than your friends because you see your coworkers and boss more often than your friends.

Ask yourself, are you making a contribution to your company? Is your knowledge and skills valued? Are you able to build meaningful relationships with your co-workers and boss?

See how you can use your strengths and skills to make the company stronger. Help the company solve problems, share your ideas and suggestions in meetings, raise your concerns if there are any, and develop positive relationships with your coworkers and boss so they can support you and you can support them. If you feel like your knowledge and skills are not valued, then it is hard for you to contribute to the company's success, and you would feel less connected to the company.

If you own your own business or are self-employed and work alongside other self-employed individuals, you also want to build positive relationships with them. Be proactive in ensuring that the work environment is safe and positive for everyone.

Other social groups

In addition to family, friends, and work, whatever social group you are part of, such as a church or a club, make sure to add value and contribute. The more you contribute and bring value to your social groups, the stronger your belonging need becomes. Small contributions can boost your connections within these groups.

You must learn how to become a self-starter and self-motivator. There will be times where you must be creative to start an activity to get involved to add value and contribute. You must have confidence and not be afraid to fail or look bad in front of others. For example, if you are a part of a group, and no task is assigned to you to add value, then you must use your creativity to see how you can contribute and add value. Otherwise, you will not feel belonged. Remember, if you want to feel belonged, it is your responsibility to make it happen.

However, if you don't feel like belonging within a social group after you add value and contribute, then that social group is not a good fit for you. You should let go and find a new social group. Don't be afraid to let go. For example, if you don't feel connected within your current circle of friends, you must have the courage to let them go and seek new friends. Don't be afraid and believe that no one else wants to be your friend. There will always be people who want to be your friend when you have a good character and personality. There are eight billion people in the world, so you can't run out of people to be friends with. Sometimes, for new friends to enter your life, you need to let go of your current friends first. It is the same with any social group.

Community

Since you are a part of your community, you want to develop a sense of belonging within it. To build a sense of connection within your community, you can take a daily or weekly walk around

your neighborhood and see what is happening. Even if you do not talk to anyone directly when you walk around in the community, your connections and a sense of belonging will increase.

However, it is best to develop strong relationships with your neighbors. For example, when you see your neighbors, be friendly and introduce yourself, and create small talk to open the channel of communication to build a relationship. With a strong relationship, you can support one another when in need, which is important to help you feel safe within your community.

You can also do small acts of kindnesses such as picking up trash that you might see around your neighborhood and community. When you walk to your car or house, and see a trash on the ground, you can simply pick it up and throw it in the trash.

The more you contribute and add value, the stronger your connections and sense of belonging for you within your community.

Society

When it comes to society, ask yourself daily; “How are my behaviors and lifestyle making a positive impact in society and the world?” See what the world is missing or in need of improvement, and then see how you can use your talents and skills to improve the situation. Contributing to society and the world means using your strengths and skills to make the world a better place.

If you do not know how to use your talents and skills to contribute, then you can do some research and see how others are contributing. And then, see how you can do the same or similar things as them.

Even though you might not see the result from your actions; if you know that you are doing your best and contributing to society and world, you are still bringing values. It is the acts that matter which will create a sense of connection and belonging within you. However, you have to truly being honest with yourself and authentic with your contribution if you want to develop your sense of belonging without seeing tangible result.

When you are able to feel belonging in society and the world, it will give you a sense of purpose that what you do matter, therefore, it will increase your self-worth and self-esteem.

Humanity

Humanity belonging is about leaving behind a legacy. You want to see how your contributions and work can continue to make social impacts after you die. You want to build a legacy that others can continue your work after you have died. Your work cannot be forgotten, and that is when you have reached one of the greatest senses of belonging, meaning, and purpose when you are alive.

You belong

You want to work on learning and developing your knowledge, skills, character, strengths, talents, and passions so you can add value and contribute to fulfill your belonging needs successfully.

It would be difficult for you to add values and contribute if you are not clear on what your strengths and talents are. You also want to work on building a strong relationship with yourself. It will help you to believe in yourself that you can use your abilities successfully to contribute. The more you learn and understand yourself, add value, and contribute, the more you will appreciate yourself and realize the great potential within yourself.

To build a strong relationship with yourself, be on a lifelong journey of personal development. Always find ways to become a stronger, happier, and better version of yourself. For example, learn to care and love yourself as you would care about and love another person. Spend quality time with yourself. Take care of your body, mind, and spirit. Give yourself positive comments and encouragement.

Learn new things to improve your health, relationship, career, or any other area that you might need to improve on. Learn new ways to understand more about life, society, and the world on how they work so you can contribute successfully.

Some of the skills you can learn to develop are creativity, problem-solving, emotional intelligence, growth mindset, goal setting, organization, kindness, and compassion. These skills will provide you will a strong foundation to add value and contribute at all levels of belonging.

The more you advance in your self-development, the higher and more opportunities you would have to contribute and add value to create a sense of connection and belonging within yourself, others, community, society, the world, and humanity.

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Dr. Mykim Tran is a humanistic psychologist, entrepreneur, inspirational leader, keynote speaker, and author. She is on a mission to unlock human potential and is committed to helping individuals create meaningful and purposeful lives. Dr. Tran founded and served as the CEO of the Wake-Up Foundation, a nonprofit organization that empowers people to become agents of social change and strengthen communities. Additionally, she is the author of “Life Success Formula: Effective Strategies to Overcome Challenges and Achieve Your Goals,” “Self-Esteem Building: How to Live Your Life as YOU,” and the co-author of “Secrets to Drama-Free Love,” where she emphasizes the importance of self-esteem, self-acceptance, and self-love in nurturing healthy relationships.