

Wants vs. Needs

In today's fast-paced world, it's easy to blur the line between wants and needs. The pull of instant gratification can often overshadow the things that truly support our wellbeing. Taking a step back to reflect allows us to gain clarity.

What Are Wants?

Wants are shaped by desire and external influences. They can range from craving the latest gadget to seeking validation on social media. While fulfilling wants may bring fleeting joy, they don't always align with what sustains our long-term happiness or mental health.

What Are Needs?

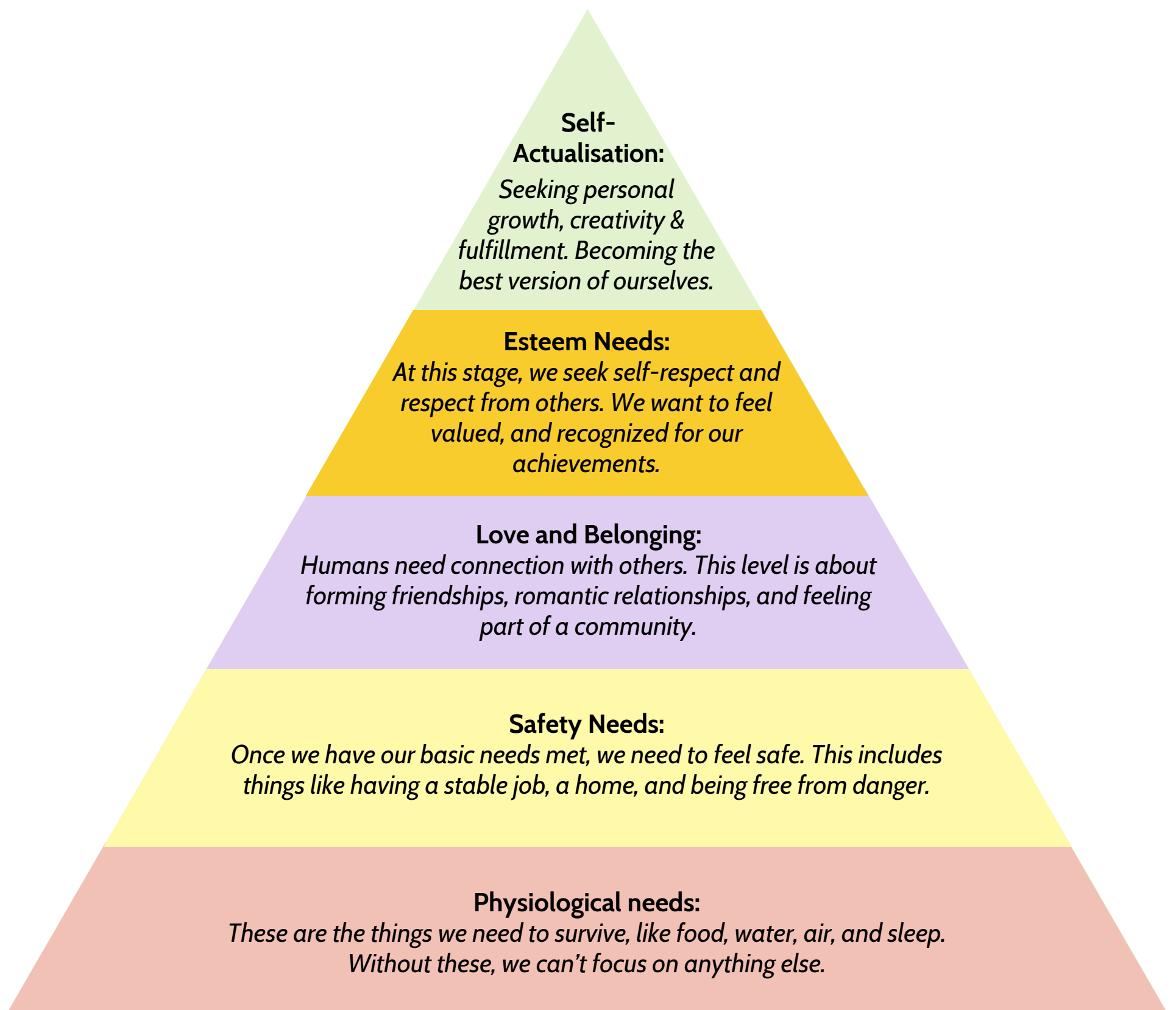
Needs are the essential elements that nurture our wellbeing. They encompass emotional support, a sense of belonging, physical health, and self-care. By recognizing and prioritizing our needs, we strengthen our connection to ourselves and others, focusing on what truly matters for a balanced and fulfilling life.

Figuring out the balance between what we want and what we truly need can be tricky at times. Here are a few simple exercises to help guide you:

Needs

To help separate your wants from your needs, take a look at the “Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs” triangle below.

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs is a simple way to understand our basic human needs. We must meet the needs at the bottom before we can focus on the ones higher up.

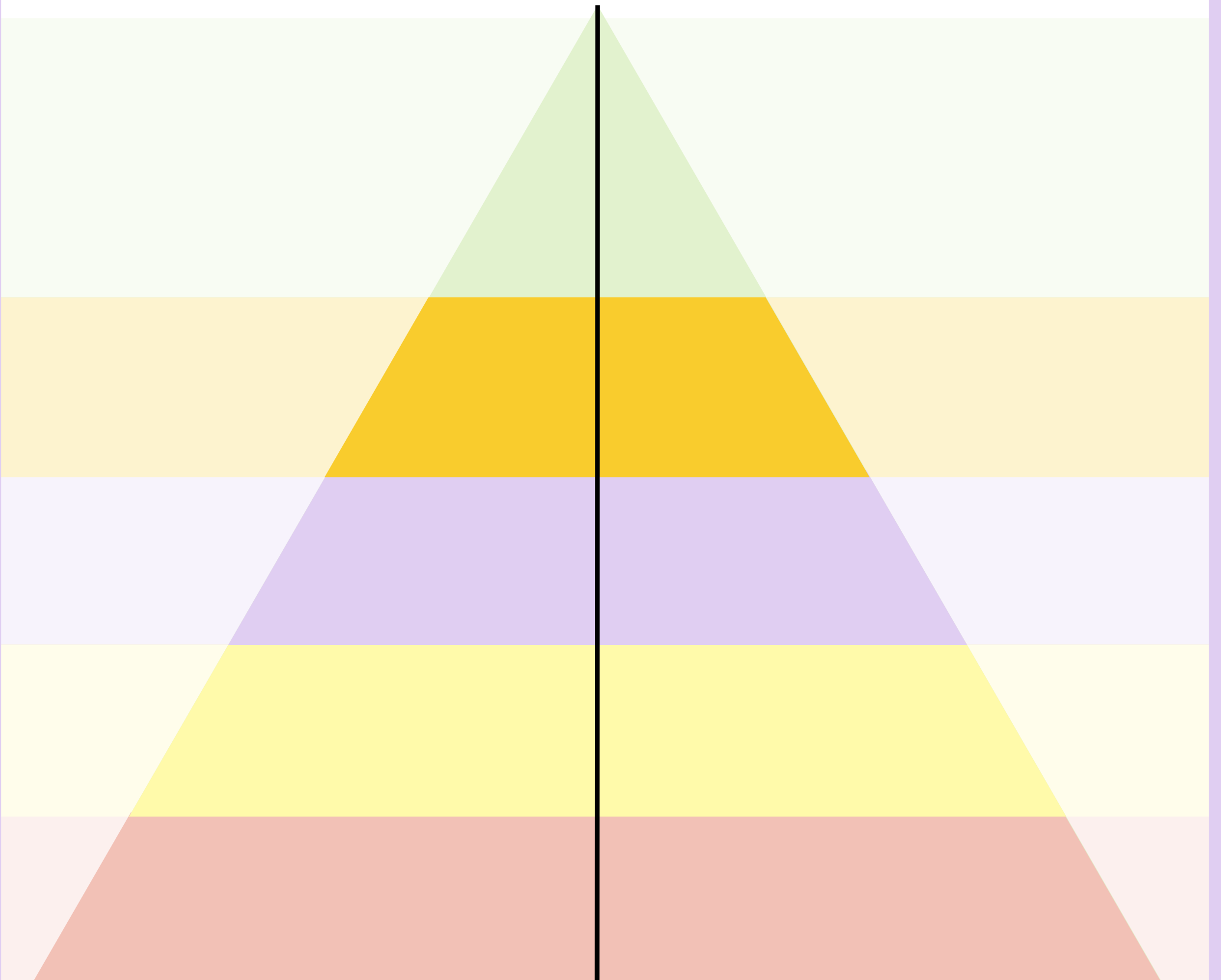


Needs

Using the triangle, identify where you **are** and **are not** meeting these needs:

Needs Met:

Needs Not Met:



Wants

Now, write down everything else that you want.

This could be: a promotion, a new car, a pet, a bigger house, etc.

12 horizontal writing lines, each starting with a colored arrowhead pointing right. The colors of the arrowheads are: light blue, green, yellow, purple, orange, teal, light green, tan, light purple, light blue, light orange, and yellow.

Wants vs. Needs

Have any of your wants been mistaken as needs?

Read the below example to help you decide.

Scenario:

You need a car to commute to work (often a basic necessity for earning a living), but you want a luxury car because it's more comfortable and boosts your confidence. However, you can only afford a modest car.

Breaking It Down with Maslow's Hierarchy:

- **Physiological Needs (Basic Survival)**
 - Transportation itself is not directly linked to physiological needs. However, getting to work reliably ensures you can earn money to meet survival needs like food and shelter. A car becomes a tool to support these essential needs.
- **Safety Needs (Security and Stability)**
 - Owning a car provides safety in terms of reliable transportation, especially if public transit isn't an option. A modest car fulfills this need as long as it's functional and dependable.
 - Wanting a luxury car isn't about safety, but the ability to afford one might conflict with your financial security, creating stress.
- **Love and Belonging (Connection and Relationships)**
 - A car can enhance your ability to connect with others by allowing you to visit friends and family or participate in social activities. This supports emotional needs for belonging.
 - A luxury car might feel like it enhances your social connections or status, but this is more of a want than a need, unless it directly impacts relationships.
- **Esteem Needs (Respect and Self-Worth)**
 - Driving a luxury car might boost self-esteem by making you feel accomplished or confident. If your esteem is tied to external validation, the luxury car may feel like a need. However, true esteem needs are met through inner confidence and respect, not material possessions. A reliable car can meet the basic need without requiring a luxury upgrade.
- **Self-Actualization (Personal Growth and Fulfillment)**
 - If owning a luxury car aligns with your personal goals or aspirations, it might feel connected to self-actualization. However, if the modest car allows you to meet your basic needs and pursue meaningful growth, the luxury car remains a want rather than a critical need.

In this scenario, the need for transportation is clear—it supports safety, stability, and the ability to connect with others. However, the want for a luxury car does not become a need unless it fulfills something essential, like significantly improving health, safety, or access to opportunities. Financial limitations make it important to prioritize the functional car to meet your needs while recognizing that the luxury car, while desirable, is not essential.