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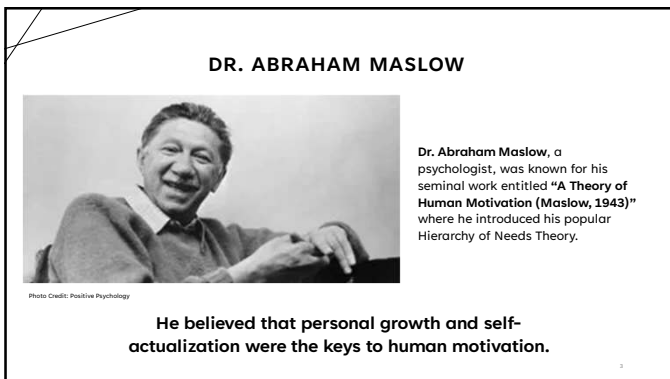
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### BRIEF HIERARCHY OF NEEDS THEORY REVIEW

**Physiological Needs:** Air, water, food, shelter, sleep, and reproduction.

**Safety Needs:** Safety and Security (Physical safety, financial security, health and well-being, and protection from accidents and threats.)

**Love and Belongingness Needs:** Social connections. This level encompasses the need for relationships, love, intimacy, friendship, and a sense of belonging to groups or communities.

**Esteem Needs:** Esteem and recognition. This includes self-esteem, confidence, respect from others, achievement, and the feeling of competence.

**Self-Actualization:** At the top of the hierarchy is self-actualization, where individuals strive to realize their full potential (or in OT terms, living life to its fullest). This involves personal growth, creativity, problem-solving, and achieving a **sense of purpose and fulfillment**.

Maslow (1943)

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### SELF-ACTUALIZATION

- Personal Growth:** Continual development and striving to become the best version of oneself.
- Authenticity:** Living in accordance with one's true self, values, and beliefs rather than conforming to external expectations.
- Creativity:** Engaging in creative activities and expressing oneself in unique ways.
- Purpose:** **Having a sense of meaning and purpose in life**, often linked to contributing to the well-being of others or to a greater cause.
- Self-Awareness:** A deep understanding of oneself, including one's strengths, weaknesses, and potential.
- Fulfillment:** **Achieving a sense of satisfaction and contentment from personal achievements and experiences.**

Maslow (1943)

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### REALIZING FULLEST POTENTIAL

But, when you are there (showing signs of self-actualization characteristics), or close to it, the unexpected may occur. People's worlds are shattered. Chaos ensues. A renewed focus on occupations, what one does with their time, and the purpose of occupational therapy comes to mind.

Let's take a quick glimpse of what this has looked like in the recent past.

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### November 2024?



Photo Credit: CBS News

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### POPULAR POLITICAL TOPICS OF CONCERN

- Taxes
- Energy
- Wars
- Education
- Trade
- Food and Agriculture
- Housing
- Healthcare
- Artificial Intelligence
- Social Media (Tic Tok)
- Industrial and Labor Policies
- Immigration and Border Control
- Taxes – Safety Needs (2)
- Energy – Physiological Needs (1)
- Wars – Safety Needs (2)
- Education – Esteem / Self-Actualization (4/5)
- Trade – Physiological Needs (1)
- Food and Agriculture – Physiological Needs (1)
- Housing – Physiological Needs (1)
- Healthcare – Safety Needs (2)
- Artificial Intelligence – Safety Needs (2)
- Social Media (Tic Tok) – Love and Belongingness (3)
- Industrial and Labor Policies – Safety Needs (2)
- Immigration and Border Control – Safety Needs (2)

33% Physiological, 50% Safety, 8.5% Love and Belongingness, 8.5% Esteem & Self-Actualization

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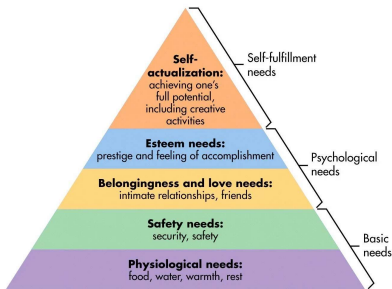
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### 83% FOCUS ON BASIC NEEDS



Simple Psychology (2024)

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## Who will address (PRIORITIZE) Love and Belongingness and Self-Actualization Needs?

# OT

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## COVID-19 & NONESSENTIAL-NESS

COVID-19 brought about many drastic economic and personal changes to life around the world. The effects still linger today. Employees were laid-off, furloughed, or required to change how they did their work. They were **categorized** as workers. They were either **essential** (interpreted as very important by many) or **nonessential** (interpreted as not very important).



Photo Credit: PPF Stock Photo

Who were you during this time?

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## WHO WERE ESSENTIAL WORKERS?

The US Federal Government provided guidelines to states with the categorization of workers as they planned ahead for dealing with COVID-19. States could also choose to adopt their own guidelines. Some of these sectors overlapped and there was a lot of variety amongst the states, depending on their government leadership.

- Some of the federal and state guidelines that overlapped, included the following sectors (not all inclusive):
  - o Energy.
  - o Childcare.
  - o Water and wastewater.
  - o Agriculture and food production.
  - o **Critical retail** (i.e. grocery stores, hardware stores, mechanics).
  - o Critical trades (construction workers, electricians, plumbers, etc.).
  - o Transportation.
  - o Nonprofits and social service organizations.

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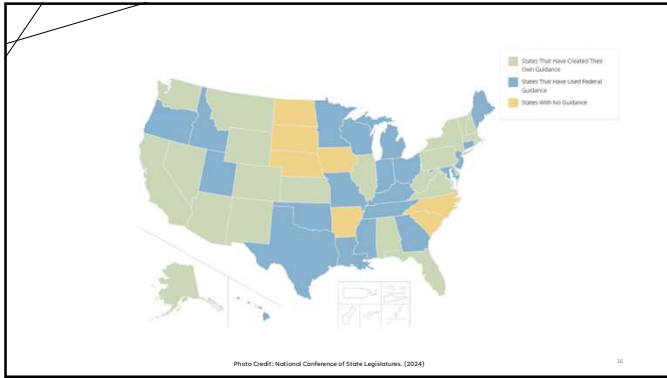
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**DIVING DEEPER INTO JUST ONE OF THESE:  
LET'S CONSIDER CRITICAL RETAIL WORKERS**

- Examples and Demographics:
  - The retail industry is the second-largest employment sector in the United States, accounting for nearly 1 in 10 of all domestic workers.
  - Demographically, 40% of retail workers are women, although the gender distribution varies widely by occupation within the sector.
  - Cashiers, who earn an average of \$8.25 per hour, are predominantly women, whereas delivery drivers, who earn an average of \$16.20, are predominantly men.
  - The median retail worker age is 40, with 28% of workers reporting educational attainment beyond a high school diploma.
  - The racial makeup of the retail sector mirrors that of the overall workforce: 62% non-Hispanic white, 17% Hispanic, 13% African American and 5% Asian.
- Examples of State-determined "essential workers": Workers supporting groceries, pharmacies, convenience stores and other retail that sell human food, animal and pet food and pet supply, and beverage products.

National Conference of State Legislatures (2024)

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**THE ESSENTIAL WORKERS PROJECT**

A collaboration between the Johns Hopkins Berman Institute of Bioethics and the University of Colorado Boulder's Masters of the Environment program indicates who the essential workers are (were) during Covid-19, and what is owed to them by asking the moral questions.

- They identify **medical providers, police officers, sanitation workers, transportation workers, food chain workers, and others** as essential workers, as *"we rely upon always and need more than ever when faced with disaster, especially a pandemic."*
- They've identified that **"Many categories of essential workers generally earn low wages, receive few benefits, have negligible financial security, and have, at best, a limited political voice."** In other words, essential workers are, too often, undervalued and socially marginalized" members of our society and workforce.
- **Addresses how to protect essential workers'** Baseline Vulnerabilities, and what they call a moral awakening (The low pay, poor benefits, and social marginalization of many essential workers also send a message of not respecting the dignity of their efforts, yet another reason why how we treat essential workers is a moral issue and a social justice issue.), and what would happen if there were no essential workers.
- They offer a variety of Essential Worker Briefing Books as resources.

Johns Hopkins University Berman Institute of Bioethics (2024)

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### CORRELATIONS: ESSENTIAL WORKER AND BEHAVIORS

A study published on the National Institute of Health website, under the National Library of Medicine, identified the correlation between essential worker status and changes in work hours with unhealthy behaviors during the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Method:** The study used multivariate models and survey data from 913 employed adults in a semi-rural mid-Atlantic US county, and test whether essential worker results vary by gender, parenthood, and/or university employment. Multivariate models indicate that essential workers used tobacco on more days and were less likely to sleep 8 hours than non-essential workers.

**Sleep:** The risk of sleeping less than 8 hours was concentrated among essential workers in the service industry and non-parents.

**Exercise:** Feminine essential workers exercised on fewer days than feminine non-essential workers.

**Alcohol:** Workers with reduced work hours consumed more alcoholic drinks, while workers with increased work hours consumed alcohol and exercised on more days.

*Highlights indicate Changes in Behaviors (healthy and unhealthy) based on essential or nonessential worker status -> feelings of relevancy of one's work?*

Martin et al., 2022.

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### SO, WHO WERE THE NONESSENTIAL WORKERS?

Nonessential workers were those whose jobs were not considered crucial for maintaining public health, safety, or basic societal functions during the crisis. Examples of nonessential workers included:

**Retail Workers (non-essential stores):** Employees at businesses selling non-essential goods, like clothing stores or electronics retailers, where in-person shopping was not deemed necessary during lockdowns.

**Hospitality Industry Employees:** Workers in restaurants, bars, hotels, and entertainment venues that were not offering essential services or were restricted to delivery or takeout only.

**Personal Services:** Staff at businesses such as salons, spas, and gyms, which were often closed or restricted during the pandemic to prevent the spread of the virus.

**Entertainment Industry:** Workers in movie theaters, live performance venues, and other entertainment facilities that were not operational during lockdowns or restrictions.

**Travel and Tourism Workers:** Employees in sectors such as travel agencies, tour guides, and some aspects of the airline industry that were significantly impacted by reduced travel.

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### WHAT WE THINK ABOUT WHAT WE DO INFLUENCES HOW WE DO WHAT WE DO (A PREMISE OF OT)

What we think about what we do influences how we do what we do. This is an established OT premise. This is why we must consider what our clients want for themselves, as opposed to dictating what goals clients will work on when receiving occupational therapy intervention. *However, what society thinks about what we do may also have an influence on how we think about what we do.*

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**LIFE'S NARRATIVE**

Some can do what they chose to do.  
Some do what they do not chose to do but MUST do to survive.




Photo Credit: PPT, Stock Photos (2024)

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**DEFINING RELEVANCY**

**Encyclopedia:** "The degree to which information, a concept, or an argument is pertinent to the context in which it is used."  
Encyclopedia Britannica (2024)

**Thesaurus:** "The state of being applicable or suitable for a particular purpose or situation."  
Oxford University Press (2024)

**Dictionary:** "The perception of how relevant or important something is to an individual's current situation or needs."  
Oxford Languages (2024)

**Psychological:** "The extent to which information or stimuli are perceived as meaningful or significant to a person's psychological state or goals."  
Eysenck, M. W., & Keane, M. T. (2015)

**Social Context:** "The evaluation of how relevant a piece of information or an action is within the context of social interactions and societal norms."  
Goffman, E. (1959)

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### OTHER RELATED TERMS

#### Relativity

"The concept that the perception and measurement of various phenomena are relative to the observer's frame of reference or conditions."

Merriam-Webster (2024)

#### Loneliness

Loneliness is a complex and subjective emotional state characterized by a perceived deficiency in social connections and meaningful interactions.

Sander, J., & McAllister, M. (2023)

**Note:** Loneliness can have significant implications for mental and physical health, including increased risks for depression, anxiety, cardiovascular diseases, and impaired cognitive function...does not necessarily mean the physical absence of other people. It can include expectations and social norms.

Sander, J., & McAllister, M. (2023)

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Sander, J., & McAllister, M. (2023)

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### AFFIRMING RELEVANCE

Affirming a person's sense of relevance can be understood through the concept of *existential validation* in psychology, which emphasizes the importance of recognizing an individual's worth and contributions to foster a sense of relevance and meaning in their lives. Research suggests that when individuals perceive their actions and contributions as **valued and significant**, it enhances their **sense of purpose and overall well-being** (Steger, Frazier, Oishi, & Kaler, 2006).

#### Existential Validation Strategies:

- Acknowledge Contributions
- Express "genuine" Interest
- Validate Feelings
- Highlight Strengths
- Support Goals
- Show Respect
- Meaningfully Engage
- Affirm Impact
- Share Positive Feedback
- Give Compliments
- Personal Touch
- Seek Advise

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### HOW TO ASSESS VALIDATION

Assessing "Existential" and some Internal Validation Strategies:

- **Acknowledge Contributions** – list achievements at work and home (no matter how small)
- **Meaningfully Engage** – social involvement, value of friendships, activities involved, hobbies, etc.
- **Affirm Impact** – who do you impact and how, how do you know, what are results of your impact?
- **Validate Feelings** – what are the feelings?
- **Share Positive Feedback** – Provide positive feedback (a mindset) to self, assess capacity to do so.
- **Highlight Strengths** – List strengths, frame weaknesses as opportunities.
- **Give Compliments** – Inquire about recent compliments, list at least 5 compliments to self from outside perspective, ask others to identify a few areas to compliment.
- **Support Goals** – must have goals to begin with, what is needed to achieve goals, who are the important people or what factors are needed.
- **Personal Touch** – A simple hug (when was the last time you were genuinely hugged for >5 seconds? No tap taps)
- **Show Respect** – Respect for self, assess for destructive behaviors, healthy eating, exercise, lifestyle, etc.
- **Seek Advise** – Who is available, who are the resources, who is in the support system?

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### FRAMING RELEVANCY FOR CLIENTS

- o Consider Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (other aspects in clients' lives that may be missing).
- o Consider the context of life in which your client(s) currently exist.
- o Help to identify their unique gifts, talents, and abilities.
- o Help to identify their place in the world, who looks up to them, who depends on them, who they influence.
- o Help to prioritize personal growth by identifying areas of interest, opportunities for enhanced skills, thinking outside the box or bubble they are comfortable in, expand knowledge, share and make others aware.
- o Help to provide structure around how to achieve a stronger sense of relevancy with hopes to positively impact motivation [to perform].
- o Use Existential Validation Strategies

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### ASSESSING SELF-RELEVANCY AS OT PRACTITIONERS

- o Consider Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs and how fulfilled other areas are in your life (and work).
- o Identify **YOUR** unique gifts, talents, and abilities.
- o Identify your place in the world, who looks up to you, who depends on you, who you influence.
- o Prioritize personal growth by identifying areas of interest, opportunities for enhanced skills, thinking outside the box or bubble of your comfort, expand knowledge, share and make others aware.
- o Ensure structure around how to achieve a stronger sense of relevancy with hopes to positively impact your motivation [to perform]. With structure, take a look at personal and professional life-balance **relative** to how you envision your **self-actualization**.
- o **Assess your personal existential validating factors.**

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**ADDITIONAL RESOURCES TO SUPPORT OT PRACTITIONERS WITH SUPPORTING CLIENTS**

**National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI)** <https://www.nami.org/>  
Provides information on mental health, including how feelings of being undervalued can affect mental well-being, and offers resources for support and self-care.

**Psychology Today** [www.PsychologyToday.com](http://www.PsychologyToday.com)  
Offers articles and blogs on various psychological topics, including self-esteem and dealing with feelings of undervaluation. It also has a directory for finding therapists.

**MindTools** [www.mindtools.com](http://www.mindtools.com)  
Provides practical tools and resources for personal and professional development, including managing workplace challenges and improving self-worth.

**Verywell Mind** [www.Verywellmind.com](http://www.Verywellmind.com)  
Features articles on mental health topics, including strategies for dealing with feelings of inadequacy and building self-esteem.

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**ADDITIONAL RESOURCES TO SUPPORT OT PRACTITIONERS WITH SUPPORTING CLIENTS**

**BetterHelp** [www.BetterHelp.com](http://www.BetterHelp.com)  
Provides online counseling and therapy services, connecting individuals with licensed therapists who can help address feelings of being undervalued or unappreciated.

**TED Talks** [www.ted.com](http://www.ted.com)  
Features inspirational talks on a wide range of topics, including self-esteem, personal growth, and overcoming feelings of inadequacy.

**The Self-Esteem Shop** <https://selfesteemshop.com/>  
Offers books, workbooks, and other resources focused on improving self-esteem and personal confidence.

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**REVIEW OF LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

- 1) Understand the relevance of the term "relevance."
- 2) Reflect on your own sense of relevance in life and occupation.
- 3) Reflect and frame relevance for self and clients.
- 4) Identify 3 strategies to affirm relevance in occupations.

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THANK YOU

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