

## “With Care...”

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In the past, I taught classes on emotional intelligence and conflict management to teens and adults who may have been court ordered, in a school program or seeking self-improvement. These were very educational experiences for me as much as they were for the students in my classes. The skills ranged widely but the most basic tool I found very helpful was Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. It is a simple way to understand why people may react in a certain way to tension and threats and how a person's essential human needs affect their relationships with others.

In the current circumstances of our world and communities, I find this is incredibly helpful to remember. Let's briefly break it down. The human needs can be seen as a triangle with 5 levels of needs. One cannot master the next level up without having the levels below them met. From the bottom up, they are:



1. **Physiological needs** for human survival such as air, food, drink, shelter, clothing, sleep, etc.
2. **Safety** including emotional and financial security, lack of fear, health, law and order, etc.
3. **Love and belonging** which encompasses friendship, acceptance, intimacy and connectedness.
4. **Self-Esteem** which masters self-worth, respect, status and dignity.
5. **Self-Actualization** – the ultimate level of needs when a person realizes their full potential.

Why do I provide this refresher now? As our world feels like it is in a state of chaos many people are lacking some of the most basic needs even in levels 1 and 2. As we encounter our neighbors, community members and fellow church community, keeping our hearts and eyes open to understanding where a person may be will help us respond with grace and humility. Similarly, turning this towards ourselves and understanding how a deficiency in our hierarchy of needs will help us understand our own triggers and conflicts. Solving our human needs is a topic for another day, but grace for others and ourselves can interrupt the cycle of a conflict.