

Wants and Needs

IMAGINE you are going camping in a remote area for several days. Make a list of the things you would pack. Then evaluate that list to categorize the items into things you want and things you need to have with you. Sometimes it is difficult to differentiate between the two. In this lesson, you will learn more about wants and needs and about how they change over the course of your life.



Objective:



Explain how to differentiate between wants and needs.

Key Terms:



goals
life tasks
needs

physical needs
psychological needs
trade-off

values
wants

Differentiating Between Wants and Needs

Throughout your life, you must make a series of choices. Many of the choices involve money, such as deciding when to make a purchase. It can be difficult to make a decision when your money is limited. You might not have enough money for everything you want. In those cases, you have to learn to balance your wants and needs.

WANTS AND NEEDS

Wants are things a person wishes for or desires, but wants are not a necessity for survival. For example, you may want a sports car, but a late model sedan would get you to work. You may want name-brand jeans, but a store brand will do. You may want a new cell phone with all the bells and whistles, but a less expensive model would be fine. In contrast, **needs** are the basic things required for survival and include physical and psychological needs. Some things

may be deemed needs and wants. For example, food is a need, but a cheeseburger and chocolate bar are wants. Likewise, clothing is a need, but a walk-in closet full of designer clothing is a want.

Physical Needs

Physical needs are requirements that must be met for a person's body to function properly. According to Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, the physiological needs of humans are breathing, food, water, sex, sleep, homeostasis (stability), and excretion.

Psychological Needs

Psychological needs are requirements that must be met for a person to function effectively in society. According to Maslow, psychological needs are necessary for individuals to function purposefully in the world. Individuals only focus upon the higher needs (at the top of the pyramid) after the lower needs (at the bottom of the pyramid) are satisfied. For instance, when a person is diagnosed with a life-threatening disease, he or she expends more energy on health concerns (lower levels) than on working or dealing with family responsibilities (higher levels).

Maslow's categories of need are:

- ◆ Physiological needs include food, water, sleep, breathing, and excretion.
- ◆ Security includes safety and security of body, employment, resources, morality, family health, property, and shelter.
- ◆ Love and belonging includes acceptance, friendship, family, and sexual intimacy.
- ◆ Esteem includes self-respect, confidence, achievement, respect of others, and respect by others.
- ◆ Self-actualization includes morality, creativity, spontaneity, problem solving, lack of prejudice, and the acceptance of facts.

WANTS OUTWEIGH NEEDS

Wants often outweigh needs. All human beings have the same basic needs, but wants differ greatly. Wants are influenced by your environment, including your culture, geography, the Internet, and media (e.g., advertisements, television, newspapers, and magazines). Peers may also influence your wants.

Wants and needs influence behavior. Your wants and needs affect what you do with your time and money and how you get along with others.



FIGURE 1. A person's wants may be influenced by media, such as magazines and advertisements.

CHANGING WANTS AND NEEDS

Wants and needs change throughout life as a result of many factors, such as family, values, goals, life tasks, and finances.

- ◆ Family is one of the strongest influences on a person's wants and needs. Family provides a support structure, which is needed for personal growth and development. In addition, family provides fulfillment of social, emotional, physical, and social wants and needs.
- ◆ **Values** are principles or qualities that are deemed important to an individual. As a person ages, different things become important and valuable.



BROADENING AWARENESS...

AMAZING ASPECTS: Erikson's Stages of Development

Erik Erikson (1902 to 1994) was a developmental psychologist who defined the eight stages of development. Erikson found that each person overcomes a conflict to advance to the next stage of development.

Stage 1 is infancy, from birth to 18 months. The ego development outcome of this stage is trust versus mistrust. The basic strengths are drive and hope. The most significant relationship during this period is with the maternal parent or any constant caregiver.

Stage 2 is early childhood, from 18 months to 3 years. The ego development outcome of this stage is autonomy versus shame. The basic strengths are self-control, courage, and will. The most significant relationships during this period are with the parents.

Stage 3 is the play age, from 3 to 5 years. The ego development outcome of this stage is initiative versus guilt. The basic strength is purpose, and the most significant relationship is with family.

Stage 4 is the school age, from 6 to 12 years. The ego development outcome of this stage is industry versus inferiority. Basic strengths include method and competence. The most significant relationships during this period are with individuals from school and the neighborhood.

Stage 5 is adolescence, from 12 to 18 years. The ego development outcome of this stage is identity versus role confusion. Basic strengths are devotion and fidelity. The most significant relationships during this period are with peer groups.

Stage 6 is young adulthood, from 18 to 35 years. The ego development outcome of this stage is intimacy and solidarity versus isolation. Basic strengths are affiliation and love. Significant relationships during this period are with marital partners and friends.

Stage 7 is middle adulthood, from 35 to 55 or 65 years. The ego development outcome of this stage is generativity (contributing to society) versus self-absorption or stagnation. Basic strengths are production and care. Significant relationships are with individuals in the workplace, community, and family.

Stage 8 is late adulthood, from 55 or 65 to death. The ego development outcome of this stage is integrity versus despair. The basic strength is wisdom. The significant relationship during this period is with humankind.

- ◆ **Goals** are activities or actions that a person plans to complete. Often as one goal is met, another goal is set. You may use wants and needs to meet goals.
- ◆ **Life tasks** are those challenges a person meets, completes, and perhaps overcomes throughout the stages of life.
- ◆ Budget or finances may, in part, determine the goals and life tasks that a person tackles and completes. In some cases, there must be a **trade-off**, which is an exchange of one thing to receive something else, to accommodate wants and needs. For example, you may say to yourself, “I really want that designer handbag, but it would mean skimping on groceries for a month or putting the purchase on my credit card. I’ll wait to purchase the bag when I can pay cash.”

Summary:



Wants are things a person wishes for or desires, but wants are not a necessity for survival. Needs are those basic things required for survival and include physical and psychological needs. According to Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs, the physiological needs of humans are breathing, food, water, sex, sleep, homeostasis (stability), and excretion. Maslow identified the higher categories of need as security, love and belonging, esteem, and self-actualization. All human beings have the same basic needs, but wants differ greatly. Wants and needs change throughout life as a result of many factors, such as family, values, goals, life tasks, and finances.

Checking Your Knowledge:



1. Describe the difference between wants and needs.
2. What are the physiological needs, according to Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs?
3. What did Maslow identify as psychological needs?
4. What is a trade-off?
5. How do wants and needs change over a person’s life?

Expanding Your Knowledge:



Think about a time when your wants outweighed your needs. Write a short paragraph explaining the situation. What “want” did you fulfill, and what “need” did you fail to meet? Think about the consequences of your decision. Would you make the same decision again at this stage in your life?

Web Links:



Erikson's Stages

http://psychology.about.com/library/bl_psychosocial_summary.htm

Six Human Needs

<http://www.successnet.org/articles/angier-6needs.htm>

Wants vs. Needs

http://frugalliving.about.com/od/frugalliving101/qt/Wants_vs_Needs.htm

Worksheet

<http://www.smartaboutmoney.org/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=btPZX3SemLs%3D&tabid=632>