

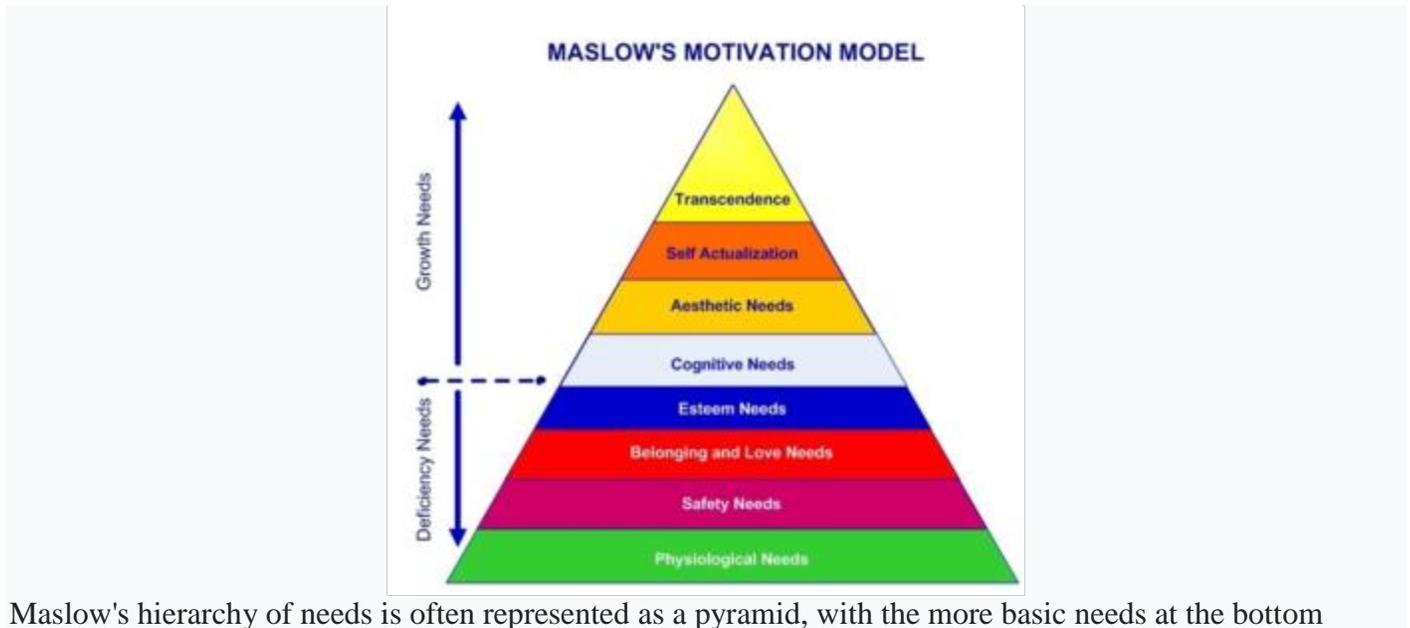
Coach Hans' Blog

How Much Kids Have Changed over the Years?

I was asked quite recently by a young coach to weigh in on how much kids have changed over the years I have been coaching. I gave it some thought for about 30 seconds and replied, much to his astonishment that kids have not changed at all. It is the world around them that has changed, and they are simply adapting to that.

I think he was expecting me to say that they are lazier, less focused, more self absorbed etc, perhaps they appear to be that way, but that is because of the world they are growing up in and this is largely our fault as adults since we helped to create the world, they live in.

Kids have the same needs that they did 40 years ago. Take a look at Maslow's hierarchy of needs



Maslow's hierarchy of needs is often represented as a pyramid, with the more basic needs at the bottom

Maslow's hierarchy of needs is an idea in psychology proposed by American Abraham Maslow in his 1943 paper "A Theory of Human Motivation" in the journal *Psychological Review*. Maslow subsequently extended the idea to include his observations of humans' innate curiosity. His theories parallel many other theories of human developmental psychology, some of which focus on describing the stages of growth in humans. He then created a classification system which reflected the universal needs of society as its base and then proceeding to more acquired emotions. Some indigenous academics have speculated that his theories, including the hierarchy, may have been influenced by teachings and philosophy of the Blackfeet tribe, where he spent several weeks doing fieldwork in 1938; however, while this idea has gained attention on social media, there is no evidence to suggest he borrowed or stole ideas for his hierarchy of needs, which he only first published in 1943. The hierarchy of needs is split between deficiency needs and growth needs. While the theory is usually shown as a pyramid in illustrations, Maslow himself never created a pyramid to represent the hierarchy of needs.

Having the same needs would indicate that they would have the same motivation to achieve them as they did before. The reason I put this here is because as children and young adults attempt to meet their needs, they will look to the best way they can to fulfill them. As a sport we can choose to do a really good job in meeting those needs. Belonging, esteem, cognitive, self actualization are needs can all be well met within the realm of sport.



In fact if you asked the kids why they swim, their reasons would fall into place within a lot of those needs. They swim to make friends, to belong to something, to feel good about accomplishing something or simply to become great swimmers. How well their needs are met plays an important role in how long they continue to swim as well as how successful they eventually become.

Let us take a look at the World around them and how it has changed.

There are several different factors at work here

Environment, which includes many different factors

- Media - this will give them a glimpse into the world around them and from that they will form expectations and norms
- Technology - This might be the biggest one, especially as it relates to their social life and how they relate to the world around them. It also gives them a myriad of choices to choose from when entertaining themselves. Technology also has made it easier to perform many tasks which many become dependent upon.
- Social and cultural expectations - Kids are also expected to grow up faster today even though they are not expected to work as many did generations ago.

Parents, when I say parents, it is mostly the expectations they place on their children, sometimes consciously or even unconsciously. What we communicate as parents tells the kids a lot about their parents' values and how they view the world around them. For example, if they are overprotective, it communicates that the world is a dangerous place. I am not even sure that the roles that parents play have changed but how they play those roles certainly has.

Education - Kids are expected to learn more in less time than ever before. One way that the way kids are taught affects the way they learn and train. In the past we had to do a lot of memorization, especially at an early age. There is also much more pressure for marks and getting into University, especially on high schoolers which certainly affects their lives and training both directly and indirectly

When looking at our swimmers it is important to understand their needs and their values which help shape the choices they make. As adults we need to mitigate the negative effects of the world around them and help them to form solid values that help them make beneficial and positive choices.

