

### **Factors which block the search for meaning (20m)**

The human search for meaning can often be hindered by certain influencing factors. Abraham Maslow was an American psychologist born and raised in Brooklyn, New York. He coined the term 'Hierarchy of Needs' in relation to human behaviour. Maslow proposed the idea that people are motivated to achieve certain needs and wanted to understand what motivated them. He came to the conclusion that in order to become the best you can possibly be you must fulfil certain needs. When certain need are met the person can move to the next stage.

The earliest and most common version of 'Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs' can be demonstrated with a 5-stage pyramid diagram. According to Maslow's theory each need is satisfied in order. The first needs are physical needs and include food, water, air and shelter. The next stage is safety needs and they refer to the need for security, protection, freedom, fear and anxiety. The third stage is the need for belonging to a group and the need to give and receive affection and love. The fourth stage is the need for esteem, the need to be respected by others and feeling a sense of achievement. The highest level of need is for self-actualisation. This is the need to achieve a sense of self-fulfilment to feel that we are in the process of becoming the best possible version of ourselves.

According to this theory if a certain level of need is not satisfied a person will have no motivation to satisfy a higher level of need, for example, a person who has not met their physical needs will not concern themselves with finding meaning in their life as the lowest level has yet to be accomplished. The person will have no motivation to achieve self-actualisation, the stage were you explore the meaning of life. As a result a

person may never explore or discover meaning in their life. Maslow estimated one in a hundred people achieve self-actualisation.

Apathy and consumerism may also block the search for meaning in a person's life. People who are apathetic tend to have a pessimistic outlook on life. It is common that they have witnessed inhumane acts which could have caused them to lose faith and lack concern or motivation. This is often the case with many soldiers who become indifferent and apathetic after fighting in a war. They believe that there is no meaning in their life as they have seen the darkest horrors of war. This may prevent someone from exploring a religion to discover a spiritual meaning in their life as they do not possess the motivation to do so.

Consumerism may also block a person searching for meaning in their life. Our modern culture is infatuated with shopping and owning the latest goods. Although everyone is a consumer on way or another, it is when people begin buying goods in extreme excess of their basic needs that it may lead to the search for meaning being blocked. Some people begin to believe they must have a good or service in order for their life to have meaning, once they have the next item they will be happy. But the cycle repeats itself again and again. This distracts some people from things life family and friends and gives a greater importance to owning material objects. The search for meaning may be blocked by this obsession and may cause people to isolate things that will truly provide them with long term meaning.

There are many factors which may block a person searching for meaning. According to Maslow certain needs must be met in order to find meaning. Apathy and consumerism may also block one's search for meaning.