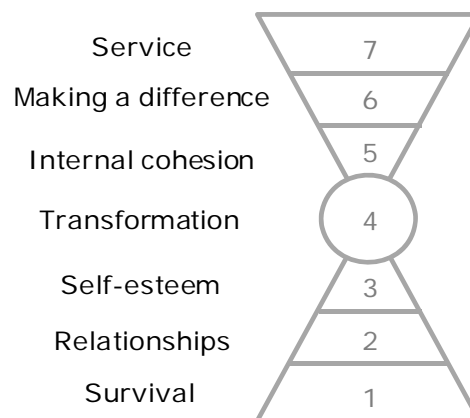


The Seven Levels of Personal Consciousness

By Richard Barrett

Every human being on the planet evolves and grows in consciousness in seven well-defined stages. Each stage focuses on a particular existential need that is common to the human condition. These seven existential needs are the principal motivating forces in all human affairs. The level of growth and development of an individual depends on their ability to satisfy their needs.

The seven stages in the development and growth of personal consciousness are summarised in the following table and described in detail in the subsequent paragraphs. The table describing the Seven Levels of Personal Consciousness should be read starting from bottom and working up.



Level	Focus	Motivation	
7	Service	Devoting your life to self-less service in pursuit of your passion or purpose and your vision.	
6	Making a Difference	Actualizing your sense of purpose by cooperating with others for mutual benefit and fulfillment.	
5	Internal Cohesion	Finding meaning in your life by aligning with your passion or purpose and creating a vision for your future.	
4	Transformation	Becoming more of who you really are by uncovering your authentic self and aligning your ego with your soul.	
3	Self-esteem	Feeling a sense of personal self-worth	Underlying anxieties about not being respected and not being enough
2	Relationship	Feeling a sense of love and belonging	Underlying anxieties about not being accepted and not being loved
1	Survival	Feeling secure and safe in the world	Underlying anxieties about not being safe or secure and not having enough
		HEALTHY MOTIVATIONS	UNHEALTHY MOTIVATIONS

The first three levels of consciousness focus on our personal self-interest—satisfying our physiological need for security and safety, our emotional need for love and belonging, and our need to feel good about ourselves through the development of a sense of pride in who we are, and a positive sense of self-esteem. Abraham Maslow referred to these as “deficiency” needs. We feel no sense of lasting satisfaction from being able to meet these needs, but we feel a sense of anxiety if these needs are not met. When these needs are paramount in our lives, we are conditioned by the expectations of those around us—by our social environment (the family and the culture we were brought up in). We align, and are loyal to the groups with which we identify.

The focus of the fourth level of consciousness is on transformation—learning how to manage, master or release the subconscious, fear-based beliefs that keep us anchored in the lower levels of consciousness. During this stage of our development, we establish a sense of our own personal authority, and our own voice. We are able to let

go of our need to identify with our social environment because we have learned how to master our deficiency needs. We now choose to live by the values and beliefs that resonate deeply with who we are. We begin the process of self-actualisation by focusing on our individuation.

The upper three levels of consciousness focus on our need to find meaning and purpose in our existence; actualising that meaning by making a difference in the world, and leading a life of self-less service. Abraham Maslow referred to these as “growth” needs. When these needs are fulfilled they do not go away. They engender deeper levels of motivation and commitment. During this stage of our development, we increasingly develop the capacity to stand back and reflect on the strengths and limitations of our own ideology. We learn how to become our own self witness, and develop an inner compass that intuitively guides us into making life affirming decisions.

Individuals that focus *exclusively* on the satisfaction of the lower needs, tend to live self-centred, shallow lives. They are significantly influenced by the anxieties and fears they hold about satisfying their deficiency needs.

Individuals that focus *exclusively* on the satisfaction of the higher needs tend to lack the skills necessary to remain grounded and operate effectively in the physical world. They can be ineffectual and impractical when it comes to taking care of their basic needs.

The most successful individuals are those who balanced both their “deficiency” needs and their “growth” needs. They operate from Full Spectrum Consciousness. They are trusting of others, are able to manage complexity, and can respond or rapidly adapt to all situations.

Full Spectrum Consciousness

Full Spectrum individuals display all the positive attributes of the Seven Levels of Personal Consciousness:

- They master survival consciousness by developing the practical skills required to ensure their physical security and safety.
- They master relationship consciousness by developing the interpersonal relationship skills required to engender a sense of belonging, and being loved.
- They master self-esteem consciousness by developing a positive sense of self-worth and a personal sense of pride in who they are and how they perform.
- They master transformation consciousness by learning how to manage, master or release the subconscious and conscious, fear-based beliefs that keep them anxious about satisfying their deficiency needs.

- They master internal cohesion consciousness when they uncover their sense of purpose or personal transcendent meaning for existence.
- They master making a difference consciousness by actualising their sense of meaning by collaborating with others to create a positive contribution in the world.
- They master service consciousness when making a difference becomes a way of life and they embrace the concept of self-less service.

The successful mastery of each level of consciousness or stage of development involves two steps: first, becoming aware of the emergent need, and second developing the skills that are necessary to satisfy the need.

When we first become aware of a need, we are generally unskilled at satisfying it – we are consciously incompetent. We know we don't know how to successfully manage the need. As we gain an understanding on how to manage the need, and develop the skills that are necessary to satisfy it, we become consciously competent. We know how to manage the need but we have to concentrate on what we need to do to satisfy it. Eventually, when we have developed the understanding and skills that are necessary to satisfy the need, we become unconsciously competent. It becomes second nature to us, like driving a car.

Learning how to manage our needs is a life-long process. Even when we have learned how to become the author of our own lives—to become a self-actualised individual – we will find situations arising where we discover that we still have limiting beliefs that keep us anchored in the lower levels of consciousness—situations that frustrate us or cause us to feel anxious and bring up our fears. It is vitally important, therefore, to develop a deep understanding of yourself and to learn the skills and techniques that allow you to manage your own transformation if you wish to find personal fulfilment in life.

For more insights into the evolution of personal consciousness, the reader is referred to the Seven Levels of Human Identity, and the Seven Levels of Human Motivation.