



Reaching Self Actualization and Finding a Purpose

By Rachel Kornilakis LLMSW

The Post Adoption Resource Center has focused their recent newsletter series on a resource family style hierarchy of needs. When Maslow first conceptualized his hierarchy of needs, it was during a time when the study and treatment of mental illness was in its beginning stages and most doctors involved at that time were focused on pathology or illness. Maslow had a different approach. His approach was to highlight what contributes to health and he created a model of mental health that illustrates what people need to thrive. Social work's strengths based approach has roots in Maslow's hierarchy and also focuses on what is positive in order to help people increase personal resilience. As parents, we know that focusing on our children's strengths is one of our best strategies to help children achieve a happy and fulfilling life.

We've made it to our final level in the hierarchy of needs, which is Self-Actualization. Self-actualization can be described as reaching one's full potential. When a person's basic needs are met and their need for safety, acceptance, value and love are fulfilled, it is then that they are most able to explore opportunities for personal growth. When an individual feels secure and knows their needs are met, they will strive towards the achievement of skills and goals that give them

a sense of purpose. This level goes beyond a checklist of needs that seem to make up the bottom rungs of the model and brings focus to those things that give life meaning and value. Focus shifts from meeting needs to cultivating that which makes life worth living.

Gauging a child's potential for growth and challenge when they are not on the traditional trajectory for childhood development due to trauma, loss, disability, prenatal exposure or premature birth can feel like one of the most difficult dimensions of parenting. Today's medical and educational systems are designed to constantly assess, measure and ensure each child's growth and development. This can be difficult if your child is struggling to meet milestones or unable to reach grade level academic achievements. Some of us may associate reaching one's full potential with the achievement of these prescriptive milestones. However, reaching one's full potential is not directly related to these types of narrowly defined constructs.

Instead, self-actualization is highly individualized and based on a person's unique talents and interests and the goal of self-actualization is constantly evolving because it is based on the individual's life experiences. Continue on Next Page

Reaching one's full potential.

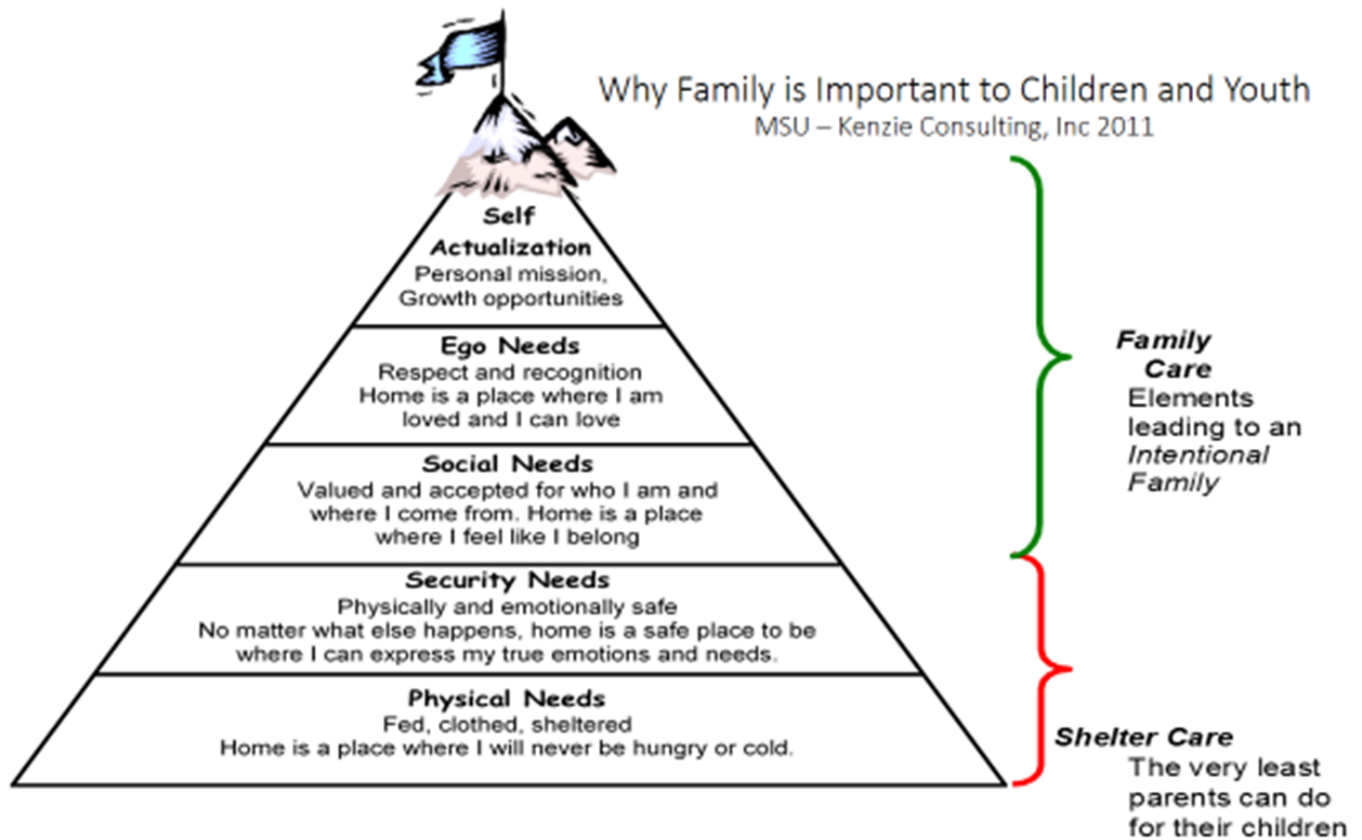
Support your children throughout their lives.

How do parents best support this concept of self-actualization with children who may have complex needs? Parents of young children should always embrace early assessment and intervention as evidence shows this is the best way to help a child reach all of their developmental potential. For middle age children, it is also important to support and help foster their sense of identity.

Children who are approaching adulthood can benefit

from increasing independence and need support to individualize from their parents.

For all ages of children, parents and communities should commit to making time for and investing in the development of a child's talents and interests. In children who may always struggle to keep up with their peers, supporting those activities which bring them energy, joy and passion, may turn out to be the most essential support parents can offer.



Ways to Foster Self-Actualization

Adapted from PsychCentral.com

- Create a positive environment for child development.
- Provide a healthy and safe home.
- Help your child realize what their strengths are.
- Encourage self acceptance.
- Help your child create lasting bonds with the people in their lives.
- Encourage appreciation for people and things.
- Provide a space for continual growth.
- And most importantly... let them know that each person is born with uniqueness that goes with them in everything they do.

Value the uniqueness of your child.

Dear Mom & Dad...



Dear Mom & Dad,

As time goes by I keep looking ahead. You guys are always there to keep me in the present. Your unrelenting passion to inspire me and the rest of the world is what I strive to accomplish every single day. As I go out into my own life, I will be forever grateful for your unconditional love. I know it will be tough and there will be many trials and tribulations, but you taught me one thing that is an extremely hard thing to grasp for me, human compassion. Although I might not display it very well at home, I try my best to be empathetic to people's situations because of the way you raised me. I truly believe that when my coach said "I was a product of good parenting" that it was put perfectly and you guys are a spectacular duo that the world has never seen. Wait, why was I writing this? Oh yeah, braces. Thank you for my braces. Please never take me off your insurance plan. Hahaha.

Yours forever and always,

(Name Removed)

Adopted child, age 17

Resource Corner

Orthodontics - Did you know that medical subsidy often covers the costs of braces? For a certified orthodontic condition, the adoption medical subsidy program for this service currently will cover up to \$3,500 of lifetime payments. Additionally, request for prior approval may be made for dental conditions that existed prior to adoption, such as congenitally missing teeth or severely damaged teeth that were diagnosed prior to adoption finalization.

Don't have Medical Subsidy - there are many low cost providers or dental schools that offer comprehensive levels of orthodontic care for all ages at cost-effective prices.

Contact your PARC worker if you need assistance in finding a program that works for you.



Region 6 Events

Build connections with and get support from others who truly understand!

Celebrate Spring!

Use this season to build family bonds and memories. One idea is to schedule in at least one family fun activity for each week.



Adoptive parents sometimes have multiple children and a wide age span, so it can be challenging to find activities that everyone enjoys together, but it's worth it when you do. Let your teens have a lot of input and you'll get better results. Here are some ideas to get you started:

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| Have a picnic | Plant a garden |
| Lie on a blanket and look at the stars | Go to the zoo |
| Visit a petting farm | Go bird watching |
| Play with sidewalk chalk | Go fishing |
| Play horseshoes | Ride a bike |
| Blow some bubbles | Go to a farmers market |
| Fly a kite | Go to a festival |
| Go on a hike | Have a bon fire |
| Play at a park | Feed ducks at a pond |

Sometimes parents ask us what books we would recommend to parents of children with trauma. Here are a few of our favorites!

The Connected Child by Karyn Purvis

20 Things Adopted Kids Wish their parents knew by Sherrie Eldridge

The Explosive Child by Dr. Ross W. Greene

From Fear To Love by Bryan Post



Due to the current pandemic, all Support Groups, Conferences and Trainings have been postponed.

For a complete list of events, visit the calendar page on our website. Additional activities and resources are listed there as well!

<http://www.parc-judson.org/calendar>



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