

What Are Elements of a Psychologically Safe Learning Environment? How Can We Enhance Them?

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Building Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in Higher Education:
for Students, Staff, and Faculty

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Safety has many dimensions

... like emotional, psychological and physical safety. These constantly influence each other and therefore it is meaningful to look at safety as a whole.

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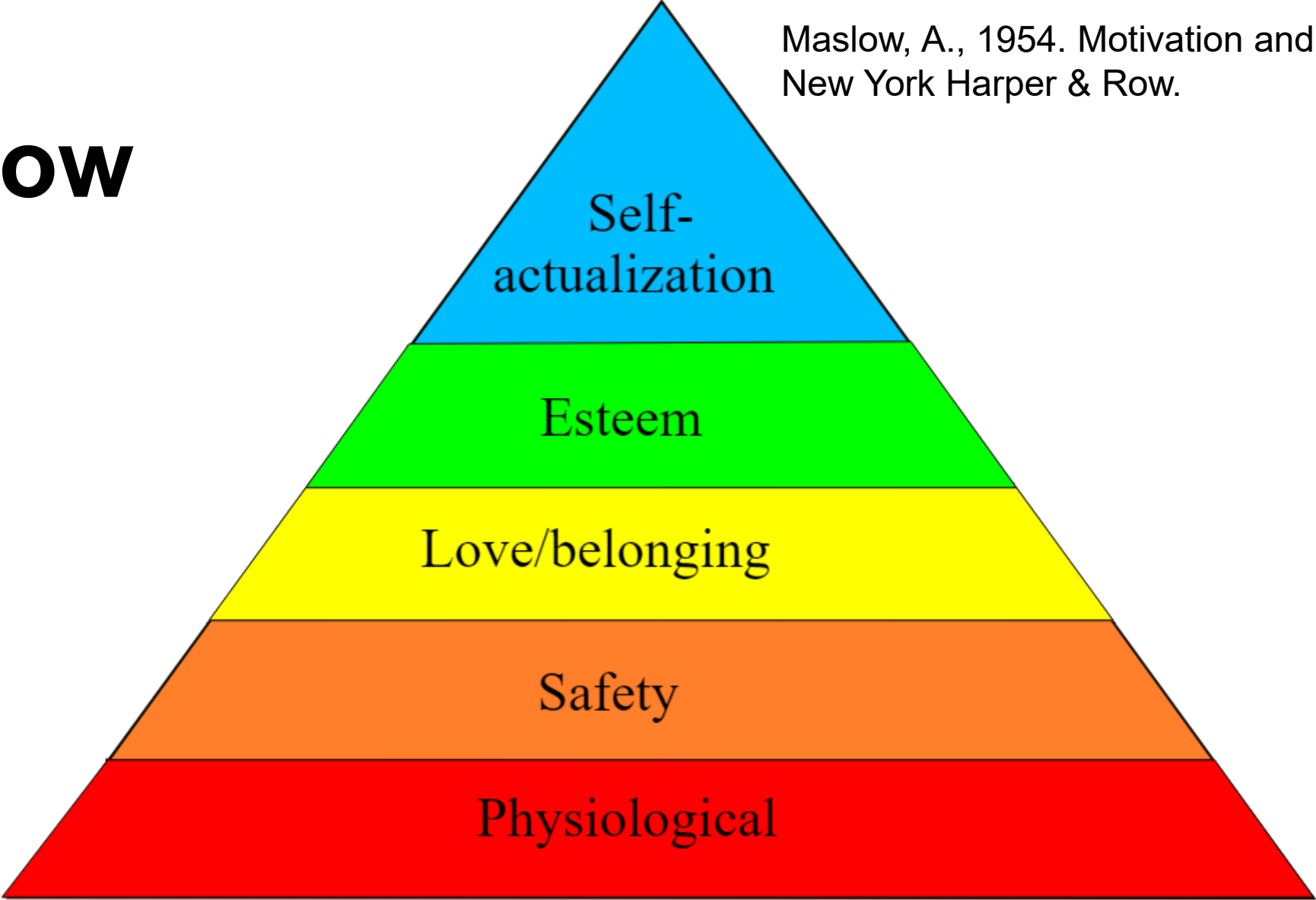
Työsuojelurahasto
Arbetskyddsfonden
The Finnish Work Environment Fund



TIITU – Tiimit ja turvallisuus

Maslow, A., 1954. Motivation and Personality. New York Harper & Row.

Maslow



Psychological Safety

- Amy Edmondson, psychological safety refers to what is “shared by team members as a belief that it is safe to take risks in a team” (Edmondson, 1999), when people dare to participate, challenge and make mistakes without fearing negative consequences. (Edmondson & Lei 2014)

Self Determination Theory (SDT) by Edward Deci and Richard Ryan

- *Autonomy* refers to the experience of volition and willingness.
- *Relatedness* denotes the experience of warmth, bonding, and care, and is satisfied by connecting to and feeling significant to others.
- *Competence* concerns the experience of effectiveness and mastery.

See

- <https://selfdeterminationtheory.org/topics/application-basic-psychological-needs/>
- Center for Self Determination Theory
- (Deci and Ryan, 1985; Ryan and Deci, 2000)

Social Cognition and Autonomic Nervous System

- These social cues are usually transmitted to our brain without us noticing and with the help of our usual sensory mechanisms (See e.g. Hari R., Henriksson L., Malinen S., Parkkonen L. (2015); Falk and Bassett, 2017)
- Thus The human autonomic nervous system constantly evaluates the feeling of safety.
- Functionality depends on this assessment. If the situation is safe according to the assessment of the autonomic nervous system, the individual's ability to function is optimal. (See e.g. Steele, K. (2021))

Predictability

My central claims. Psychological safety in learning environment is constant interaction between structures, predictability and planned tasks. Better psychological safety reduces the need for structures (This does not mean that structures are not needed. That depends on the context.) When the psychological safety is high, the predictability is high and the group also has potential to face unpredictability.



Thank you!



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