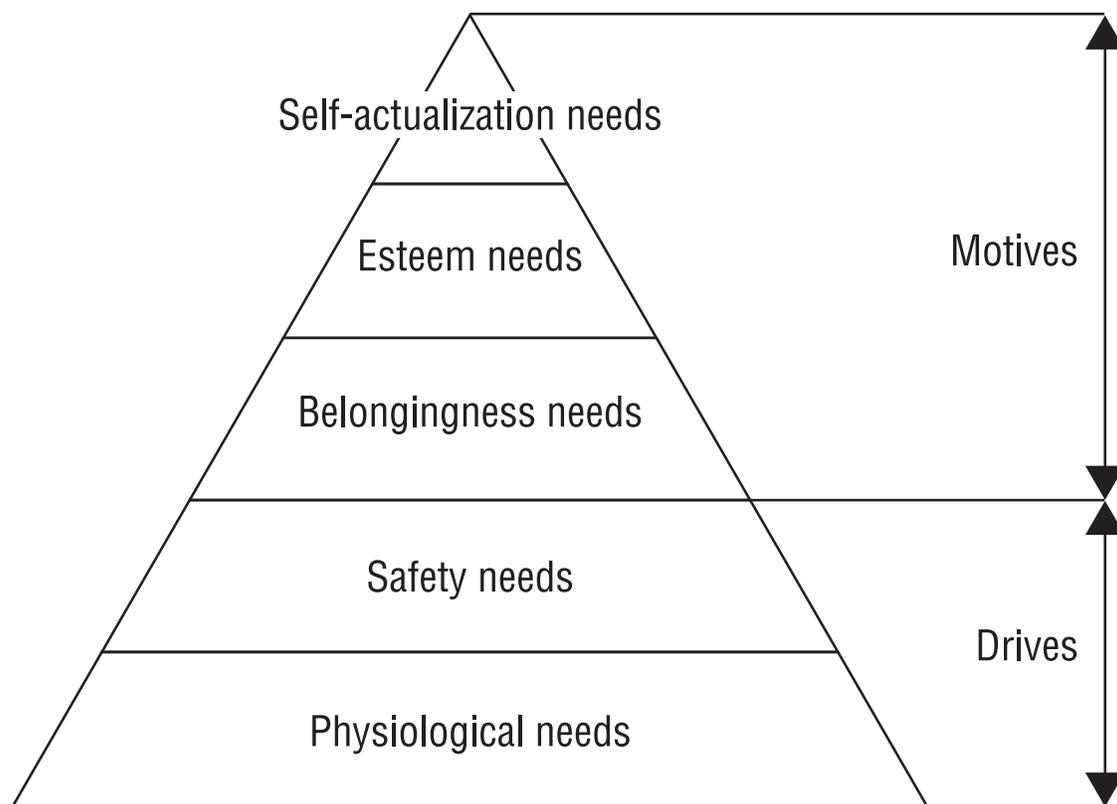


Personal Perspectives on Poverty ...

Key Points

- It is easy to make assumptions and not be aware of them.
- Often our perceptions are based on feelings, judgments, stereotypes, and underlying beliefs.
- It is important to examine our assumptions and judgments so we can make informed choices about what we believe.
- It is important to gather evidence to support how we see and perceive different aspects of life.
- The truth is that none of us has the truth about poverty.

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs



The Realities of Meeting Basic Needs

(Dr. Donna Beegle, *See Poverty...Be the Difference! Discovering the Missing Pieces for Working with People in Poverty*, 2005)

Consider the following questions and reflect on your list of physiological and safety needs. Imagine the amount of time people in poverty spend meeting these basic needs. Think about the resiliency and resourcefulness of people in poverty.

- Where can you cash a check without any identification? How much will it cost?
- Where can you get a loan on your car title? How much will it cost?
- From which dumpsters can you get returnable cans and bottles without being caught?
- How can you get tons of newspaper and cardboard? Where do you sell these items? How much will you earn?
- Explain what to do if you are being evicted and have no money to move.
- Tell what you would do to survive without garbage service, utilities or a telephone.
- Explain how to survive winter nights without heat.
- Where would you go for help if your utilities were being shut off?
- How do you show “proof” that you live in a neighborhood that you really don’t in order to get better services?
- Explain how to go for days without food.
- Which stores will let you get food and pay for it later?
- Explain how to keep food cold without a refrigerator.
- Explain how to cook without a stove.

Keys for Working With Those in Poverty

(Dr. Donna Beegle, *See Poverty...Be the Difference! Discovering the Missing Pieces for Working with People in Poverty*, 2005)

- Those who do work with individuals living in poverty must communicate with them effectively in order to honor and include their voices as planning for poverty services continues.
- In order to serve people in poverty, individuals need to continually ask questions about context and experiences related to poverty so that they keep learning and growing.

Questions That Consider Context of Those Living in Poverty

(Dr. Donna Beegle, *See Poverty...Be the Difference! Discovering the Missing Pieces for Working with People in Poverty*, 2005)

Contextualizing how people in poverty live is long overdue. Helping professionals and volunteers can ask the following questions to improve success:

- Does the intervention that I am suggesting or implementing make sense in their current context?
- Am I setting them up for success?
- Am I considering their situation, resources, and health before asking them to follow through with my organization's programs or policies?
- Are there supports that I need to build in and help people connect to that will increase their ability to be successful?

If these questions are asked, outcomes for moving people forward will dramatically improve.

To All Advocates/Social Service Providers

(Dr. Donna Beegle, *See Poverty...Be the Difference! Discovering the Missing Pieces for Working with People in Poverty*, 2005)

Participants in Dr. Donna Beegle's research groups suggested ways for advocates and social service providers to improve educational opportunities for students from generational poverty backgrounds:

1. Don't ignore poverty realities. They won't go away. Address the real situations people are in. Connect with people. Build relationships and trust. This demands more time and energy.
2. Encourage further education (more than simply getting low-wage jobs). Know about the financial aid process and be able to simplify and help students from poverty to see possibilities.
3. Develop programs that meet people's basic needs so they can focus on education and other possibilities. Fund extracurricular activities focused on ensuring that students can read and understand math and science.
4. Work to change negative perceptions of people who are in poverty. Build relationships and understanding with them instead of judging. Operate on the assumption that people in poverty are doing the best they can in their situations. Understand each case and do not label people. Avoid stereotypes.
5. Change some rules. Make the rules less focused on middle-class values and priorities. Understand what the world of poverty is like. Study cases and change the criteria to fit the realities.
6. Be more aggressive with outreach for access to health care, housing and basic needs for those experiencing poverty.
7. Understand that people in poverty may have fears or negative attitudes about education and other social service organizations. Work to provide them a new, positive frame of reference.
8. Help with life skills and fitting into middle-class culture. Help to understand what normal behavior is in that culture. Uncover the secret codes. They need to know what middle-class cultures eat, how they talk, dress, act and speak in middle-class environments. Set up mentor programs where it's safe to ask questions about these things in addition to health care, basic needs and education.
9. Be an advocate and make connections for people who do not have networks of support. Conceivably show them possibilities.