



Wednesday Workshop: Supporting Survivors of Sexual and Domestic Violence

Podcast Transcript Season 4 Episode 3: October 6th, 2021 Prioritizing Your Needs

Presented by Marissa, Adult Domestic Violence Advocate, and
Sam, Dual Domestic Violence/Sexual Assault Advocate

MARISSA: Hello and welcome to the women's Center's Wednesday workshop, a podcast that shares helpful insight for survivors, community members and service providers alike. The Women's Center is based out of Waukesha, Wisconsin. We welcome and serve survivors of all ages, races, gender identities, sexual orientations, abilities, nationalities, and immigration statuses. The mission of The Women's Center is to provide safety, shelter, and support to empower all impacted by domestic abuse, sexual violence, child abuse and trafficking. Each episode will feature instruction on a healing topic.

Today, our topic is Prioritizing Your Needs. We are your hosts. My name is Marissa and I'm the Adult Domestic Violence Advocate here with The Women's Center.

SAM: And my name is Sam and I'm the Dual Domestic Violence/Sexual Assault Advocate here at The Women's Center. So in order to prioritize our needs, we need to know what our needs are. So, we use Maslow's hierarchy of needs, which was developed by Abraham Maslow in 1943. This is a pyramid that some may be familiar with, that describes the motivational theory and human behavior. So Maslow proposed that needs need to be met, to whatever base we can, from the ground up. So, the base of the pyramid is our physiological needs. So that looks like our food, water, warmth and rest. Then it goes up into our safety needs, then our belongingness and love, then esteem, and then self-actualization.

MARISSA: So let's talk about the potential of meeting our hierarchy of needs. We know that humans have the desire to move up towards the level of self-actualization, and that nobody wants to remain stagnant, but sometimes there are barriers that do prevent us from moving up. Some of those barriers can look like job or housing loss, failing a test, losing a friend, or a lack of accommodations you need to access a space. Abuse may even create or exacerbate some of these barriers as well, and reaching out to meet these needs can be difficult.

SAM: Now we're going to break down each stage of Maslow's model. So first is the basis, the physiological, so this it looks like biological requirements for human survival. So,

this can be, you know, getting air, food, drink, shelter, clothing, warmth, and sleep. We understand that the human body cannot function optimally if these are not satisfied. And this is considered to be the most important need. According to Maslow, and all other needs become secondary until these are met.

The next level is safety. So, this is protection from the elements, security order, loss, stability, and freedom from fear. Think about this in the context of an abusive relationship. So, your abuser may begin as someone we feel safe and secure around therefore satisfying this need. through the cycle of violence, the abuse escalates, making us feel unsafe. This creates complex dynamics of both threatening this need and satisfying it. When we truly satisfy this need, it will not come through an abusive relationship. So, this can look like reaching out to a shelter, staying with a friend, getting away from our abuser.

Next is the love and belonging stage. So, this can include friendships intimacy, trust, acceptance, receiving and giving affection and love, and affiliating, being a part of a group whether that be your family, your friends, work, etc. Human beings are social species - we do know this, so we do crave that feeling of belongingness and interpersonal relationships motivate this behavior.

Esteem is the next stage. So, esteem is our self-esteem. So, this can look like dignity, achievement, mastery independence, we do have a desire for reputation and respect, which does come from others. This can also include, you know, our status or prestige of those around us. This stage is very important for children and adolescents as we grow up, and it helps us build esteem for ourselves. And then the tip of the pyramid is self-actualization, which means achieving one's full potential, including creative activities, and this will be discussed a little more in depth later.

MARISSA: Let's talk about some strategies to meet some of our needs. Starting with physiological. We can drink plenty of water, we can try to invest in healthy eating habits and getting a good night's sleep. We may try to create a healthy and safe work life balance as well as safe housing and employment. To meet some of these safety needs, that might look like safety planning, which if you are a podcast listener, you have heard us talk about in depth. Safety planning can be our physical safety plan, our emotional safety plan, technological and there are other types of safety plans as well. And you can focus your safety planning in terms of what safety looks like at home, at work, in public, with your family, all things like that. To also meet your safety needs, it's helpful to know your local resources and hotlines. Again, if you are in the Greater Milwaukee area, The Women's Center can be a resource to you, and it's also helpful to identify safe support systems and spaces where you'd be most comfortable in.

SAM: And so again, we're going to talk about love and belonging next. So, some strategies to meet love and belongings can look like spending quality time with your loved ones, volunteering within your community, or even hanging out with your pets. Really, however you find your love and belonging, and that may look different for each individual. To meet your esteem need, you can do this through discovering your strengths and weaknesses. So, a lot of that is based off of some self-reflection and being

gentle with yourself through that process. You can also spend some quality time with people whose company you enjoy and feel safe with. You can pick up a new hobby or again you can volunteer within your community.

MARISSA: And in getting to the top of the pyramid, how do I reach self-actualization? So, we know that human motivation is based on people seeking fulfillment and change through personal growth, which of course looks different for every single person on this Earth. Maslow believed that a person is “always becoming, never static.” So, we're always learning we're always growing. As survivors, we're always healing as well. Again, each person is unique, and self-actualization leads people in all kinds of different directions. And we can measure this self-actualization through peak experiences, such as feelings of euphoria, joy, and wonder. So, thinking about the time where you were the happiest, or where you felt most intrigued by the world around you. That's a little bit of what self-actualization feels like for us. And it's a continual process rather than a perfect state of happily ever after. Again, we continue this process.

SAM: So, you may be asking yourself, how do we progress through each of these stages? And some of that starts with creating time for your needs. So, we recognize that this may be more difficult for others. But this is really important to not only understand what those needs look like, but also creating time to meet those needs. Also, recognizing that this is not an all-or-nothing phenomenon, meaning, you know, you might really be struggling with meeting some of those more physiological needs today, but you're doing really well in love and belonging. It really just depends on your journey and where you're at. Also, recognizing that needs can be partly met at a time and in different stages. So, you might have shelter, but you might be having some difficulty accessing food. But you also might be, you know, volunteering within your community or spending time with loved ones. Also recognizing that one behavior might meet two or more needs at the same time. An example of this is having dinner with somebody. You're meeting the physiological need for food, as well as the need of belonging by spending time with somebody that you care about.

MARISSA: To echo Sam's point, it's important to mention that needs can be flexible and should be flexible. Remember, our needs are based on external circumstances and/or individual differences. So, one person's need for self-esteem may be more important than the need for love, and vice versa. Another's need for creative fulfillment may also surpass their basic needs or be encompassed in their basic needs. Most behavior is multi-motivated. Behavior tends to be determined by several or all of the basic needs simultaneously, rather than by only one of them at a time. So, going back to that example that Sam provided about having dinner with somebody, that is a multi-motivated behavior.

SAM: So, when we're trying to meet our needs, it may be very overwhelming when we look at all of these needs that we might have - those that might be unmet. So, in order to heal from the ground up, breaking that healing into smaller, more manageable chunks, can help with that feeling of being overwhelmed. And it might help to also pick one need to start on, so you can put your focus on that one thing. So that can look like, “I'm going to make sure I satisfy a basic need of fueling myself properly with healthy food.” So by

breaking them up into smaller chunks, and focusing on one thing at a time, it can help with that feeling of being overwhelmed as well as you know, give you a little bit of motivation. To say, “Okay, I did this one thing, and that's awesome. So, now I'm going to try this next thing and keep up with that one thing that I had already done really great.” You also want to remember that no one is perfect. So, it is okay to be a work in progress through this, as healing has no finish line.

MARISSA: Yes, I think a very important takeaway of this as well is that remember that your needs are individualized to you. We don't have to follow the needs of other people in trying to achieve our own needs. What works for somebody else, may or may not work for you. And that doesn't mean one of you is wrong, that just means you have different needs and that's, that's okay and to be celebrated.

We want to thank you all so much for joining us to learn more about Prioritizing Your Needs. Our next episode will be about Trauma and the Body. The Women's Center focuses our work in partnering with clients to overcome barriers and gain a life free from violence. Our work is grounded in equity, upheld by inclusion, accountability, self-reflection and continual growth. We believe that it's important for survivors to feel seen and heard. We believe that Black Lives Matter because we cannot end violence without addressing the distinct injustices that black and indigenous people of color face. We know that all forms of oppression are ultimately connected, and when we center individuals most impacted, we're also supporting survivors who have faced any form of violence. While we're not experts in anti-racism work, we aspire to be allies in this movement. We all have a responsibility to contribute to unlearning racism and intersecting forms of oppression that take place in our communities.

If you would like to talk with an advocate about your own experience with abuse, please call our 24-hour hotline at 262-542-3828. Learn more about The Women's Center www.twcwaukeshasha.org, and find the resources mentioned on this episode by clicking resources, then podcasts on our website. If you're in the Greater Milwaukee area, we also host an in-person Wednesday workshop on the second and fourth Wednesday's of every month. Please call our hotline for more information on that. Thank you so much for listening and be well.