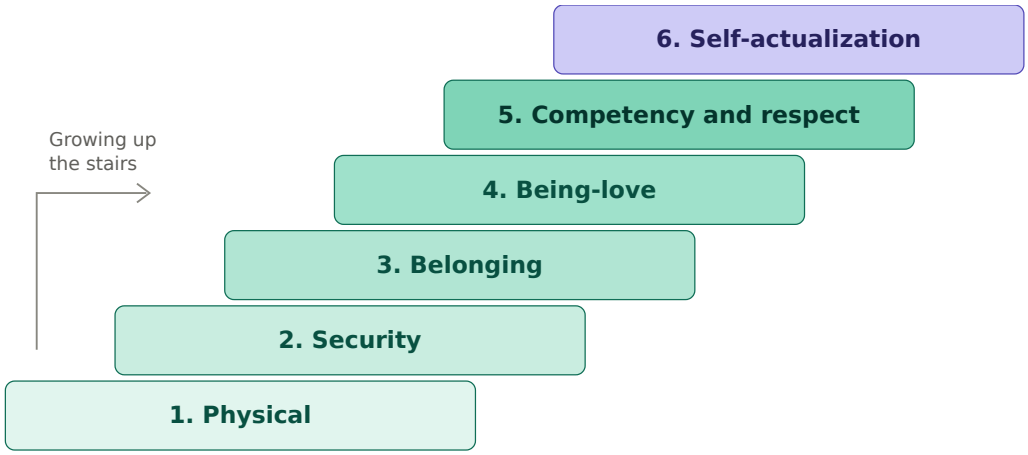
# The staircase of needs

What children (and parents) need in order to grow and thrive

Psychologist Abraham Maslow found that people have needs that build on one another, like steps on a staircase. When one step is solid, we're free to climb to the next. When a step is missing, it's hard to grow, and behavior often shows it.




### 1. Physical needs

Food, water, sleep, shelter, health care, and being held and touched. Cuddling actually helps young children grow.

**Try:** When behavior falls apart, first ask: is my child hungry, tired, or unwell? Build hugs and snuggles into each day.

### 2. Security

Feeling safe in body and heart: predictable routines, calm adults, and clear, consistent limits. Limits are like handrails on a high bridge.

**Try:** Keep daily rhythms steady, especially bedtime. Avoid arguing about discipline in front of children.

### 3. Belonging

Knowing "I am part of this family," and that someone will always be there and never push me away. Even one caring adult can change a child's life.

**Try:** Family rituals, inside jokes, and saying "This is where you belong."

### 4. Being-love

Being loved just for being alive, not for what we do. It grows from warm attention at ordinary "neutral" times, not only when there's a problem.

**Try:** A smile, a touch on the shoulder, or a few minutes together "just because," every day.

### 5. Competency and respect

The joy of learning new skills and being respected as capable. Children want to feel they're learning to be in charge of their own lives.

**Try:** Let your child do things for themselves, and notice out loud the effort and skills you see.

### 6. Self-actualization

When the steps below are strong, we blossom: confident, courageous, caring for ourselves while kind to others, and learning for the joy of it.

**Remember:** This is a lifelong journey, for parents as well as children.

**Everyone slips down the stairs sometimes.** Stress, illness, a move, or a divorce can shake the lower steps for children *and* parents, and "childish" behavior often follows. That's normal. Go back to the basics, be gentle with yourself and your child, and rebuild one step at a time.

Adapted from *Taking Charge* by JoAnne Nordling, based on Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs.

**Shared by Dr. Anhar Bekhet**