

1-1-1978

We Suggest

Eleanor Buelke
Western Michigan University

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/reading_horizons



Part of the Education Commons

Recommended Citation

Buelke, E. (1978). We Suggest. *Reading Horizons: A Journal of Literacy and Language Arts*, 18 (2).
Retrieved from https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/reading_horizons/vol18/iss2/14

This Book Reviews is brought to you for free and open access by the Special Education and Literacy Studies at ScholarWorks at WMU. It has been accepted for inclusion in Reading Horizons: A Journal of Literacy and Language Arts by an authorized editor of ScholarWorks at WMU. For more information, please contact wmu-scholarworks@wmich.edu.

WE SUGGEST

Eleanor Buelke

Maslow, Abraham H.

Motivation and Personality

New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1970. Pp. xxx + 369.

We have acquired much information about the body machine and some skill in controlling its responses and correcting its defects. In contrast, we know almost nothing of the processes through which every man converts his innate potentialities into his individuality. Yet without this knowledge, social and technological innovations are not likely to serve worthwhile human ends.¹

Most of what is now known about human motivation comes from psychotherapists treating patients. In this book, *Motivation and Personality*, Dr. Maslow contends that any theory of motivation worthy of attention must be more positively orientated, and must deal with "the highest capacities of the healthy and strong" as well as "the defensive maneuvers of crippled spirits." In his writing here he attempts to construct a psychology of motivation for self-actualizing people. It is a very readable, systematic presentation of his views of human motivation, based upon a synthesis of holistic and humanistic principles, with primary emphasis upon the psychology of health.

In his study of the self-actualizing personality, Maslow uses the term, "gratification health." He maintains that personal physical and mental health which enable persons to function with autonomy develop from gratification of the basic needs of safety, love, belongingness, and esteem. At the point in growth where these needs have been gratified, real development of individuality begins and the human being "proceeds to develop his own style, uniquely, using these universal necessities to his own private purposes." This, then, promotes development from within rather than from without. Self-actualizing behavior is characteristically growth-motivated, not deficiency-motivated. Actions and creations become in a high degree simple, spontaneous, and self-disclosing.

This author places all behavior into two categories: *coping* and *expressive*. He sees *coping* behavior as gratification-bent, tending to die out unless rewarded, as effortful and purposive. It is more often a functional response to a problem arising from the physical/cultural world. *Expressive* behavior is seen as effortless in most instances, often existing without reward or reinforcement, as arising from the nature of the inner character structure. Healthy, self-actualizing persons are viewed as essentially ver-

¹Rene Dubos, *So Human An Animal*, p. xi. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1968.

satile. They are able to be expressive when they desire to be. Also, they are able to cope, to control, to defer goals, or to delay pleasures when such actions are deemed desirable. They have a large reserve of responses, have retained capacities which help them to move toward full-humanness.

In his observations of self-actualizing people, Maslow has drawn some conclusions with implications for educators. He suggests that the motivational life of self-actualizing persons is different from others *qualitatively* as well as *quantitatively*. In general, they live within a wide framework of values, concerned with basic philosophical issues and ethical, eternal questions. They are problem-centered, rather than ego-centered. They are capable of intense concentration, possess a strong sense of “free will,” and are remarkably self-governed and self-disciplined. They are not pawns to be moved about or beaten down by others; but, since they are growth-motivated, not propelled by deficiency motivation, they maintain a relative stability in the midst of frustrating, depriving circumstances. They possess an uncommon feeling of empathy for mankind, and can sustain deeper and more profound interpersonal relationships, than the general population. Their hostile reactions are not character based, arising out of low evaluations of others, but are usually reactive or situational. Self-actualizing people possess a pervasive sense of humor, closely allied to philosophy, more spontaneous than planned, and intrinsic to a situation rather than added to it. Trivialities and differences of what passes for morals, ethics, and values are transcended by a philosophic acceptance of the nature and self and human nature, and of a great portion of social life and physical reality. Self-actualizing individuals are more apt to enjoy differences than to be anxious or fearful about them. Generalizing further, the author infers that self-actualizing people are very different from average people, not only in degree, but in kind. He suggests that study of them yields a different kind of psychology than the “cripple” psychology and philosophy generated by study of “crippled, stunted, immature, and unhealthy specimens.”

All people who work or associate with others in close daily relationships have within their hands powerful psychotherapeutic tools to stimulate conation in those others. They should be aware that every time they threaten, humiliate, unnecessarily hurt, dominate, or reject another they destroy a measure of that person's healthy self-motivation, promoting the creation of psychopathology. They should also recognize that each time they demonstrate kindness, helpfulness, decency, democracy, affection, and warmth they are exercising a therapeutic force. All the goals toward which they strive and institutional arrangements they support which gratify basic needs and foster, encourage, and produce good human relationships will help to build a society/milieu where the members have the greatest possibility of becoming sound, self-actualizing human beings.

There are two different ideal conceptions of family, law, society, and education now held by many: one is that they are restraining and controlling forms; the other is that they are gratifying and fulfilling. Perhaps, in order to achieve ideal health for the most persons, conceptions of in-

dividual psychology and theories of society need to undergo change. Maslow believes that:

. . . this ideal is not an unattainable goal set out far ahead of us; rather it is actually within us, existent but hidden, as potentiality rather than as actuality.

Ways need to be found and utilized to turn such potentiality into actuality.