

Pathwork™ Steps

The Spiritual Significance of Crisis

Study Guide for Online Meetings on PL 183 Part 1 of 2

Week 1: Stagnation => Crisis

Week 2: Fear of Change => Crisis

Week 3: 'I cannot go on any longer' => Crisis

Week 4: Not understanding Crisis => Dark night of the Soul

Week 1: Stagnation => Crisis

Crisis is an attempt of nature, of the natural, cosmic lawfulness of the universe, to effect change. If change is obstructed by that part of the consciousness that directs the will, crisis must be the result in order to make structural change possible.

Man remains in the cycle of death and rebirth, of pain and struggle, of conflict and strife -- physically as well as spiritually and psychologically -- precisely because the illusion is coddled that **going through can be avoided and refuge will be good**.

Actually, refuge not only does not do any good, but increases the boil. The momentary relief is illusion of the most serious nature -- serious because the inevitable crisis that comes later is then no longer connected with its source and inner reason, and that hurts more.

However, when the mind is made up, "I will not take refuge, I will go through it," the capacities and the resources within the human soul will become almost instantaneously available.

I emphasize, again, a person may be oriented in this way **in some areas of his being** while he still remains closed and unwilling in some problematic manifestations. It is accordingly that he will experience life and himself.

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Crisis: www.AHDictionary.com etymology: Greek Krei, to separate, decide, judge, explain.

1. A crucial or decisive point or situation, especially a difficult or unstable situation involving an impending change.
2. A sudden change in the course of a disease or fever, toward either improvement or deterioration.
3. An emotionally stressful event or traumatic change in a person's life.
4. A point in a story or drama when a conflict reaches its highest tension and must be resolved.

***This month**, we will use Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (below) to explore different levels of crisis and how we react to change and fear of death. Once the Physiological level has been secured (our bodies are safe) the next level is a more refined concept safety than simple life or death; freedom of movement, healthy and nourishing relationships, personal achievement.*

Self-realization can also be seen as the manifestation of one or more of the divine essences described in *Three Personality Types PL 43: wisdom, courage, and love.*

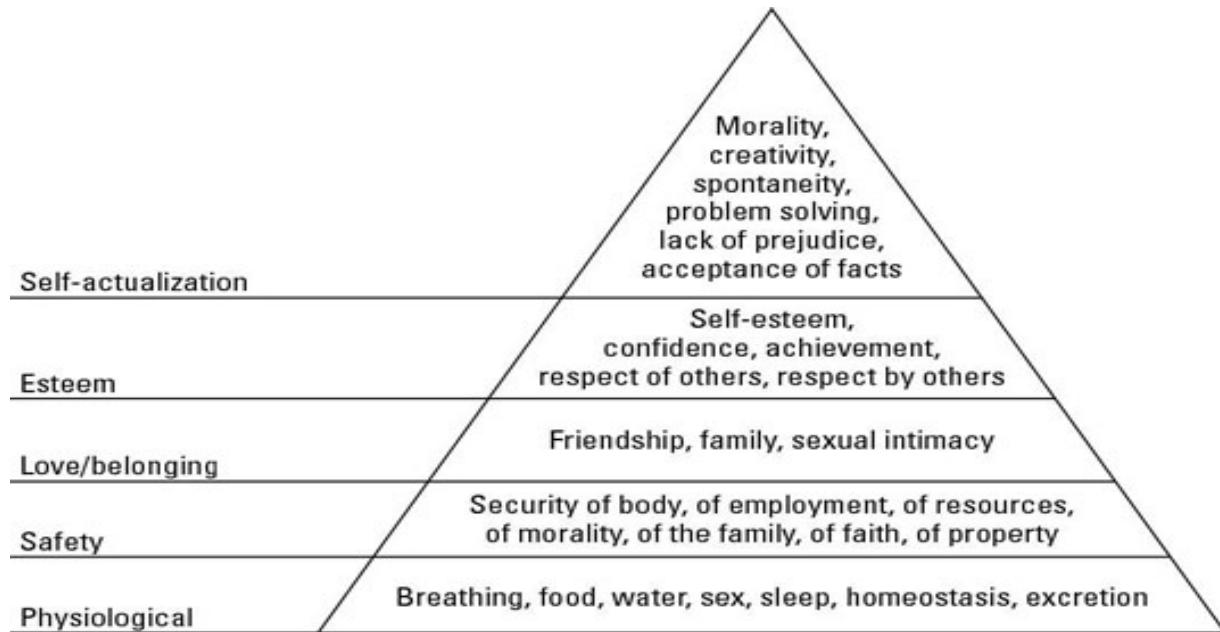


Figure 1: Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

Daily Review PL 28

Exercise: Keep a record of incidents that disturb you. Focusing upon subtleties may help us from becoming distracted by exaggerating or over-dramatizing a situation. Notice feelings of discomfort, where your suspect you may be uninformed, ignorant, unprepared, or unaware.

Each week, notice what level of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs your disharmonies (= mini-crises) involve. Allow some levity; several iterations of the chart are scattered throughout the study guide; invent your own! Self-analysis requires a sense of humor.

All you need is a ½ page of lined paper per day. Create 4 columns. At some point during each day, jot down brief notes about each incident (limit:10 per day). Eventually, this can become a thought process. The Guide refers to Daily Review as 'spiritual hygiene'.

1. Two to three words to identify each incident (no details)
2. What feelings or emotional reactions came up
3. The judgments or conclusions you came to at the time

At the end of each week, read through your entries and complete the last column:

4. What do you notice today that you did not notice at the time? Are there patterns?
5. Using your preferred form of meditation (sitting, walking, or while doing 'mindless' chores) reflect upon your early childhood experiences.

Week 2: Fear of Change => Crisis

When necessary change is not accepted willingly, you put yourself automatically into a state of crisis. The intensity of the crisis indicates the intensity of the opposition as well as the urgency of the need for change. The greater the need for change and the greater the obstruction to change, **the more painful the crisis is going to be.**

The more openness and willingness there is, on whatever level, to go into a change and the less necessary the change is at any given moment of the evolutionary path of an individual, **the less severe and painful the crisis is going to be.**

The way to go about a positive response is to want it; you must be willing to be in truth and to change. And you literally have to pray to the innermost divine functioning within your soul to make the change possible.

Then you wait for the change to take place, in a trusting, confident, and patient way. This is the absolute prerequisite for change.

The attitude "I am so bad, I am nothing" is always dishonest. This dishonesty has to be exposed so that the crisis can become meaningful, whether it be small or great.

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Personality element involved:	Positive Intention to develop our Divine Aspect:	Fear: Change might result in:	Ego/Will must Control Change to:	Leads to Distortion of the Divine Aspect:	Aspect of Evil we become vulnerable to:
Reason	Wisdom Clarity	Chaos	Maintain order	False Serenity Withdrawal	Materialism: overreliance on proof /evidence
Will	Courage Leadership	Helplessness	Win!	Righteousness Aggression	Separation: Me vs. You Us vs. Them
Emotion	Love, Divine Connection	Disconnection	Keep group together	False Love Submission	Half Truths: Value connection over integrity

Reference: Three Personality Types: Reason, Will and Emotion PL 43, also 84 & 248

Figure 2: Attitudes about Change & Strategies to Control change.

Serenity Prayer: God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change; the courage to change the things I can; and the wisdom to know the difference.

Mediate upon: "I want to change, but my ego cannot do it. God will do it through me. I will make myself a willing, receptive channel for this to happen," When it does not even occur to a person to assume this prayerful attitude, he is basically unwilling to change and/or is doubtful about the reality of the higher forces within him.

It is important that you simply want to do the best you can. **It is not important whether or not you make "mistakes,"** whatever they may mean. The struggle itself is what counts and what must bring conciliation. The thus arising blessing, strength, and growing wholeness of the personality cannot be put into words. It cannot be described.

Man wants "ideal solutions," so he always temporizes on the threshold of this total commitment. But what are ideal solutions? They mean nothing if they are not based on the growing wholeness of a person, which comes to pass through this process described here.

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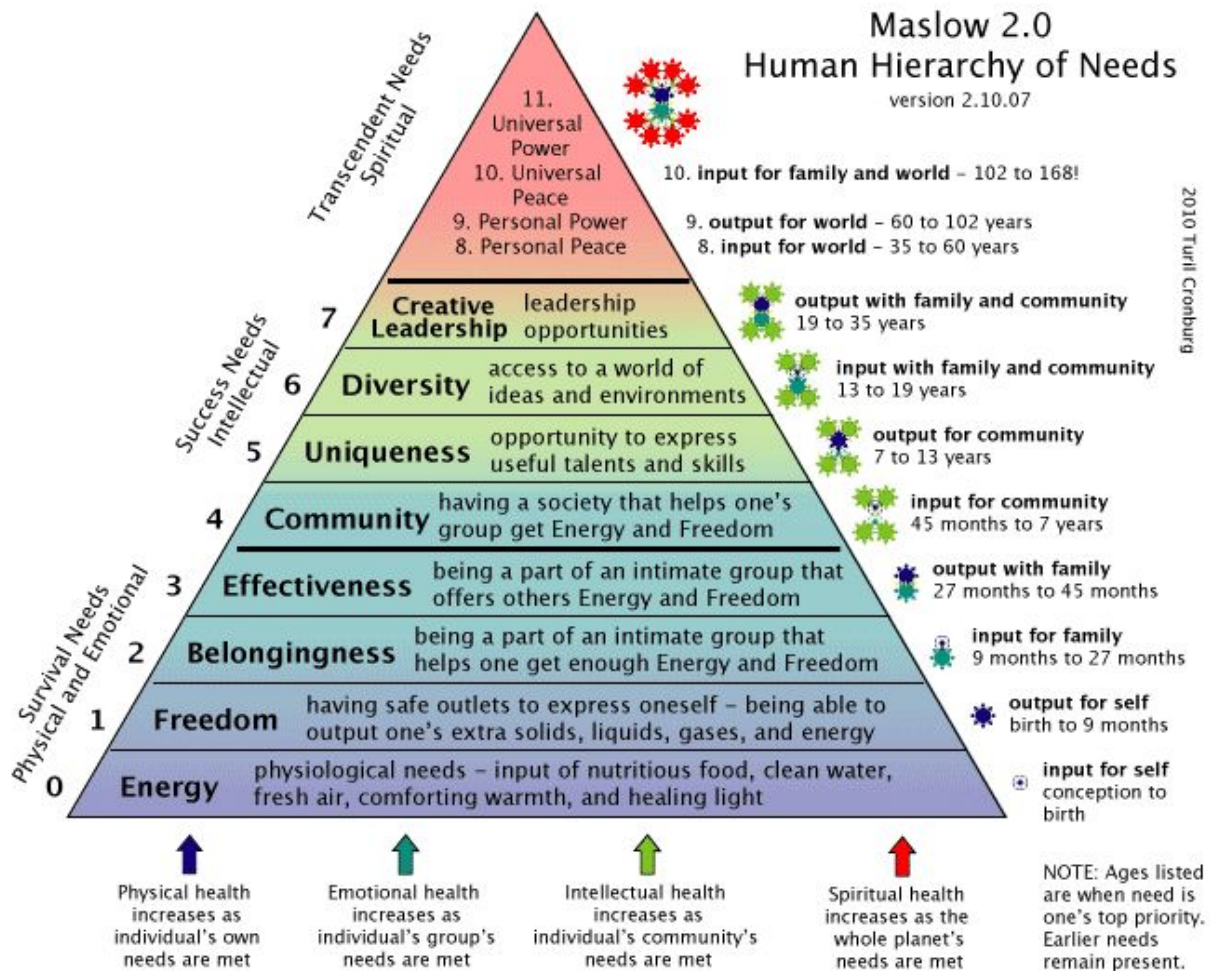


Figure 3: Real Life can be more complex than a 5-level diagram

The Maslow 2.0 chart is complex -- and a bit tongue-in-cheek. Notice that you need to be 102-168 years old to fully achieve Stage 10, Input for family and world! And that the stage of natural, organic, totally functional narcissism lasts only from conception until birth. The cry 'Do it for me!' refers to a physiological reality we once experienced.

By noticing what level your disharmonies and crises occur on / connect with, it's possible to also notice what levels function well. It's important in self-analysis to occasionally take a step back, and take in the larger picture / greater reality. We are more than our dysfunctional areas.

Week 3: 'I cannot go on any longer' => Crisis

The Defense PL 101 describes the effects of confusing desires of the Ego with survival. The Ego (consciously or unconsciously) activates physiological fight/freeze/flight defenses by exaggerating or dramatizing real feelings about being thwarted or blocked.

Overuse of adrenaline harms the body, and can hard-wire our entire nervous system to the dualistic perspective of a mind where choices are life vs. death instead of preferred / not preferred. Instead, PL 183 invites us to see crisis as a response to stagnation. That is:

Change is needed + opportunities are ignored = disruptive change becomes inevitable

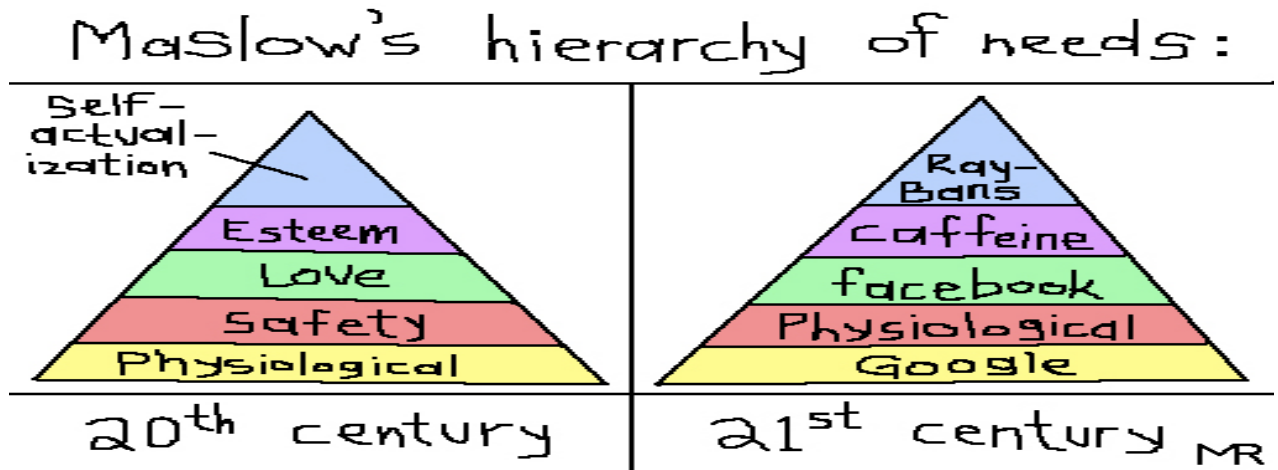


Figure 4: Hierarchy of Needs may be distorted by how we interpret them.

Superficial death of the human body takes place because the consciousness says, "I cannot go on any longer," or "I am at my wit's end." **Any crisis contains this thought and attitude.**

Consciousness always expresses to itself, "I can no longer deal with the situation" -- either with a specific one, so that then a specific crisis in life occurs, or with one's present incarnation as a whole, so that then physical death will occur. In the latter case, the eruption takes the form of the spirit's breaking out of the body until it finds new life circumstances **in which to deal with the same inner distortions all over again.**

Since eruption, breakdown, and crisis always aim at discontinuing old ways of operation and creating new ones, the process of death and rebirth signifies this identical principle.

Man, however, opposes his going on to other ways of operating and reacting. This obstruction is so unnecessary.

It is actually this opposition that creates the tension and strain of crisis, not the giving up of the old structure itself.

The more painful a crisis is, the more the will directing part of consciousness must obstruct the necessary change. The necessity for crisis is so great because negativity is a stagnant mass that needs to be shaken up in order to let go of itself.

Change is an integral characteristic of life. Where there is life there is unending change. Only those who are still in fear and negativity, who resist change, perceive change as something that ought to be resisted. They thus resist life itself, and the suffering closes more tightly in on them.

Human beings can be free and healthy *in areas in which they do not resist change.* They are in harmony with the universal movement, and thus in those particular areas they constantly expand, grow, and experience life as deeply satisfying.

Those same individuals react entirely differently in those areas where their blocks exist. They fearfully cling to unchanging conditions inside and outside of themselves. In the former instances, their lives will be relatively free from crisis; in the latter, crises are unavoidable.

The way to go about a positive response is to want it; you must be willing to be in truth and to change. And you literally have to pray to the innermost divine functioning within your soul to make the change possible.

Then you wait for the change to take place, in a trusting, confident, and patient way. This is the absolute prerequisite for change.

Ask yourself these questions:

- How deeply do you know that this is a reality?
- How deeply do you believe in your innermost potential to be self-creating, to be in bliss, to live the infinite life?
- How much do you believe in your resources to solve all your problems?
- How much do you trust in the possibilities that are not yet manifest?
- How much do you believe it is real that new vistas of yourself can be discovered?
- How much do you truly believe that you can unfold qualities of peace coupled with excitement; of serenity coupled with adventure through which life becomes a string of beauty -- even though initial difficulties are still to be overcome?
- **How much do you really believe in all this, my friends?**

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Week 4: Not understanding Crisis => Dark night of the Soul

The "**dark night**" of the mystics is such a time of breakdown of old structures. Most human beings are still plunged into the darkness of not understanding the meaning of crisis. They continually look in the wrong direction.

If nothing would be broken down, the negativity would continue. Yet it is possible after a certain amount of awakening has taken place in the consciousness that the person does not allow the negativity to become too firmly entrenched. Thus the negativity is prevented from starting the self-perpetuating cycle. It is confronted right at the start.

Crisis can be avoided by looking at the inner truth *when the first inklings of disturbance and negativity manifest on the surface*. But **it requires a tremendous amount of honesty** to challenge one's tightly cherished convictions. This cuts out the negative self-perpetuation, the motor force that compounds the destructive, erroneous psychic matter until it finds a breaking point. It avoids the many vicious circles within the human psyche and those between human beings in relationships that are painful and problematic.

If difficulties, upheavals, and pain in the individual's life, as well as in the life of humanity as a whole, would be viewed from this point of view, the real meaning of crisis would be truly understood, and much pain could be avoided.

I say to you now: **do not wait for crisis to come** in an eruptive fashion as the natural, balance-establishing event, which takes place as inexorably as a thunderstorm must take place when certain atmospheric conditions have to be altered and clarity in the atmosphere is to be reestablished. It is exactly the same within the human consciousness.

Growth is indeed possible without intense painful "dark nights," if honesty with the self becomes the predominant factor in the personality. True inner looking and deep concern with the inner being, and the giving up of pet attitudes and ideas must be cultivated, instead of obstructed.

Then the painful, disruptive crisis can be avoided because no inflamed boil whose pus must come out would form.

The negation of this process, the inner attitude that says, "This should not be, I should not have to go through this. Do I have to go through this? This and that and the other is wrong with others. If it were not, I would not have to go through this now," prolongs the agony.

This attitude tries to avoid the necessary eruption of the boil, that consists of a painful entanglement of ever increasing negative energy, whose momentum makes it more and more difficult to alter the course.

Hopelessness is a result of the ongoing negative cycle and its futile, automatic repetition that the consciousness is unable to stop, or rather, which it could stop only by no longer avoiding the necessary change.

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The attitude "I am so bad, I am nothing" is always dishonest. This dishonesty has to be exposed so that the crisis can become meaningful, whether it be small or great.

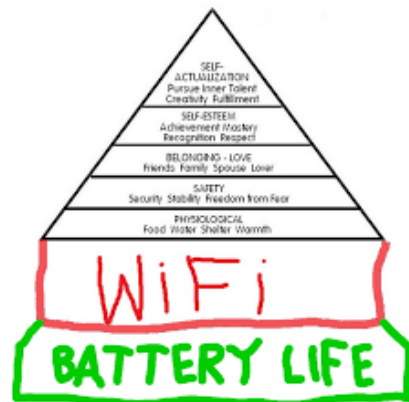
If you learn eventually to take the smallest shadow of your everyday life and explore it as to its deepest meaning, you will handle the little crisis -- this small event -- in such a way that it makes the swelling of the boil impossible. Hence no painful eruption is needed to destroy rotten structures.

This will reveal the stark reality to you that universal life, in its untampered state, is golden joyousness of ever increasing beauty.

Every smallest shadow is a crisis, for it need not be there. It is only there because of your turning away from the issue that creates crisis. So take those smallest shadows of your everyday life, and ask yourself what is the meaning of them.

What do you not wish to see and not wish to change? If you face this and truly, truly wish to face the real issue and change where it is necessary, the crisis will have fulfilled its meaning.

You will discover new dimensions about the issue which will make the sun rise, and **the dark night will turn out to be what it actually is -- the educator, the therapist that life continually is, if you so wish to understand it.**



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A bit of fun...

The Matrix' (2000) posits that reality is a computer-generated illusion, created by computers for the purpose of distracting us while our energy systems are 'milked' for electricity. Two catchphrases are used as spiritual shorthand: [Red pill / blue pill](#) (YouTube, 160 seconds) One of the turning points in the film is when Neo is asked if he wants to know the truth. If he takes the blue pill, he will wake up in his bed and can believe what he wants to believe. If he takes the red pill, he will be shown 'how deep the rabbit hole goes.' Taking the red pill represents the choice to face harsh realities rather than ignoring them. [There is no spoon – Scene 1](#) (YouTube 71 seconds; [Scene 2](#) 79 seconds) suggests looking beyond what we have been taught to see – including our own attachment to the pleasures and drama of 'real life' in the matrix, an analogy for entering into new levels of self-development and spiritual awareness.

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I bless you and ask you to open up your innermost being, your whole soul, all your psychic forces, to let go of the cramp that denies truth and change, therefore self-expression and light. Open up in this way so as to let the blessed power that is a constant presence within you permeate your whole being.

Let this process continue in the spirit advocated in this lecture so that your wholeness, your connectedness with the universe will grow and give you more of the joy that is inherently your birthright. Be blessed, be in peace.

PL 183

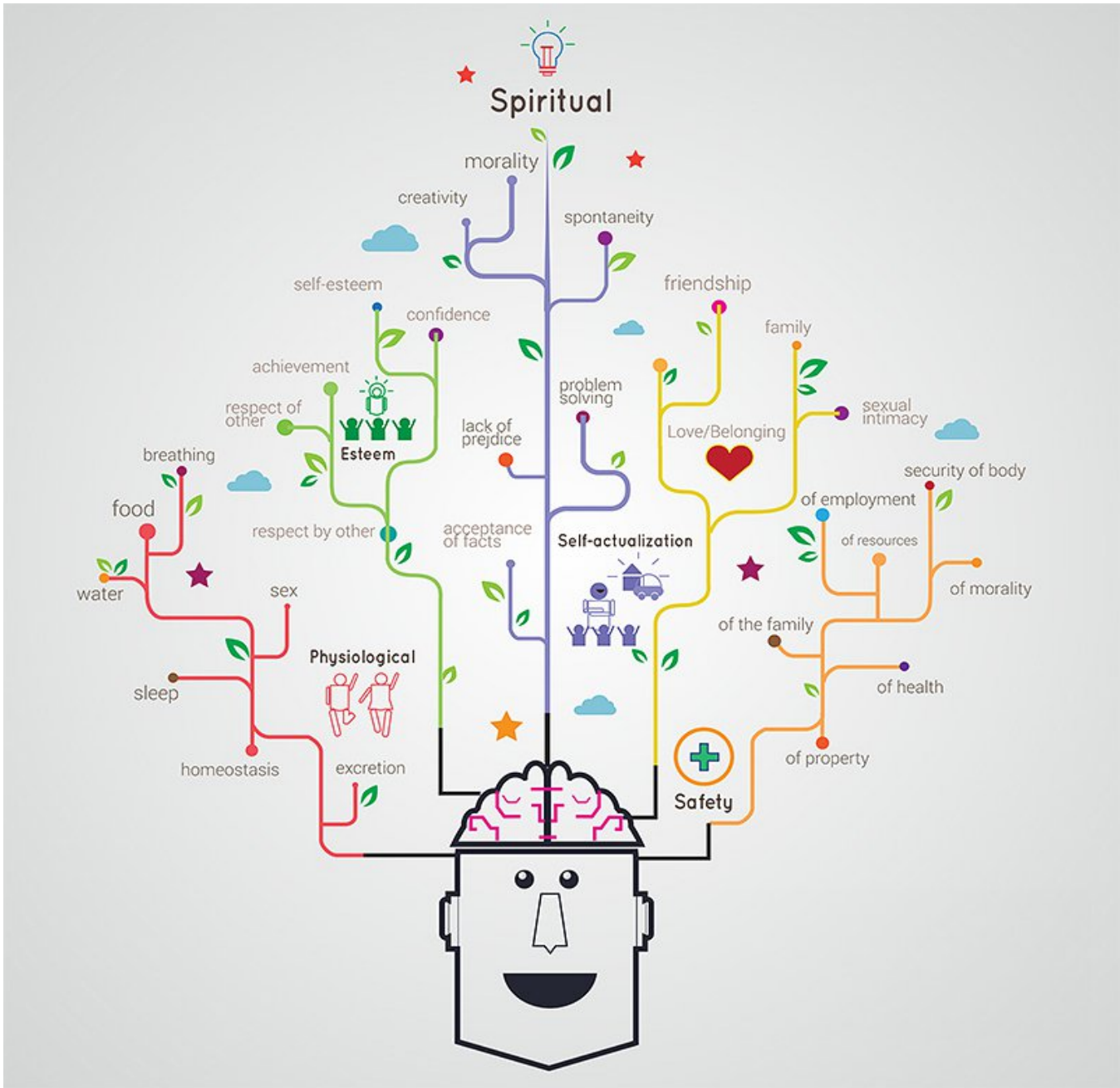


Figure 2: When no threat is perceived, intellectual constructs, momentary pleasures, desires, dreams, hopes, and fantasies consume our attention. We may be completely unaware of the underlying basic hierarchy of needs -- **as long as those needs are met**. Crisis exposes how the hierarchy pyramid of our needs has become unstable and needs to be addressed immediately.

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