

Lesson 2: Hierarchy of Being

PURPOSE

To understand the special place human persons have in the world.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

By the end of the lesson, students will be able to:

1. Understand the powers humans share with animals and other living beings and recognize the powers to think and choose as specifically human powers.
2. Understand that human persons are essentially different from animals and all other living beings.
3. Understand the basic needs all humans share.

MATERIALS & RESOURCES

- Circle of Self Handout
- Powers of Beings Memory Game
- The Hierarchy of Being Pyramid
- The Table of Human Needs

VOCABULARY

- Power: the ability of a living being to do something on its own
- Power to think: the human ability to know and connect ideas
- Power to choose: the human ability to knowingly select between options

PROCEDURE

Step 1: Review the previous lesson. Recall the purpose of the course and the main topics that will be covered.

Step 2: Play the [Circle of Self](#) game. Give students the [Circle of Self Handout](#) and ask them to fill it in by writing some important facts about themselves, their talents, life-goals and hopes for the future.

Ask the students to form a circle. Every student should share something unique about themselves, from their Circle of Self. For example: “I have four brothers.” If another student also has four brothers, the students who share the ‘not-so-unique’ aspect have to sit down. The goal is to stand as long as possible and therefore to share very special things about oneself that no one else shares.

Step 3: Recall that in the earlier grades the students learned that non-living beings, plants, animals and humans form the hierarchy of being according to the complexity of powers they possess. All living beings (plants, animals, and humans) possess certain powers which enable them to do certain things on their own, while non-living beings do not have any powers.

Write the definition of power on the board:

- Power: the ability of a living being to do something on its own.

Divide the students into groups and ask them to play the [Powers of Beings Memory Game](#). Cut out the cards available in the materials and give a set of cards to each group. The groups should connect a power with its definition, and list the living beings that share this power. For example, one row of memory cards should look like this.

The correctly filled table should look like the one below:

Eat	the power to take in nourishment	Plants	Animals	Humans
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To “eat” means “the power to take in nourishment” and this power is found in plants, animals and humans. The groups should line up all the items in the correct way. The group that lines up the answers correctly first wins.

After all groups finish playing, ask them to share their conclusions and lead the class discussion using the *Teacher’s Answer Key* to help students recognize the correct answers.

Recall that plants have the power to grow, to eat, and to reproduce. In addition to these three, animals and humans have powers to move from one place to another, to use senses (taste, touch, smell, sight, hearing), to feel emotions (pain, fear, excitement, etc.) and to use instincts and memory (these two are considered to be internal senses so they are not listed as a separate group in the table). Humans have all these powers, as well as two others, which are unique to them and are not shared by plants and animals. These are the powers to think and to choose. These powers enable human beings to do exceptional things.

All beings form a hierarchy according to the complexity of powers they possess. Some powers are more complex and thus higher in the hierarchy, and some are less complex and thus lower in the hierarchy. With only the powers to eat, grow and reproduce, plants are on the bottom of the hierarchy and above them are animals with powers to use senses and feel emotions. Due to their complex powers to think and choose, humans have a special place at the top of the hierarchy of being.

This also means that human beings should develop these powers in the best way possible in order to live a fully human life.

Write the definitions of the powers to think and choose on the board:

- Power to think: the human ability to know and connect ideas
- Power to choose: the human ability to knowingly select between options

Highlight the fact that because humans have a special place in the hierarchy of being, this means that they should treat each other with respect and that they should not hurt animals or exploit nature beyond its capacity for regeneration. Human greatness comes with great responsibility.

Trees, rocks, dogs and cats are not able to think and choose like we can. While animals may be able to think on a basic level, and to choose between basic sensory preferences (such a chimpanzee choosing fresh food over older food), the human person alone can think abstractly, reason about decisions, make moral judgments and create art.

Give each student [The Hierarchy of Being Pyramid](#) so they can review the main themes of the lesson after school.

Step 4: Explain that all human persons have certain needs which everyone shares. This was recognized by many scientists, some of whom grouped those needs into several categories. One of them was the 20th century American psychologist Abraham Maslow, who is famous for his hierarchy of human needs, but there are also others, such as Clayton Alderfer, Manfred Max-Neef, Frederick Herzberg, Edward L. Deci, and Richard Ryan.

These scientists discovered different groups of human needs. Below are listed seven such groups:

Each human has the most basic SAFETY NEEDS, such as the need for personal security, employment, resources, health and property.

Every person also has the need for UNDERSTANDING, which means that all persons naturally strive for acquiring knowledge, comprehending the causes of things, gaining wisdom and achieving mastery in things they do.

Then there are BODILY NEEDS. These are the most basic needs such as the need for air, water, food, shelter, clothing, sleep and reproduction.

All humans also feel the NEED FOR LOVE AND BELONGING, which is realized through the family, love, friendship, community and closeness with others.

There is also a NEED FOR IDENTITY AND ESTEEM from ourselves and others. This need is met by developing a strong personal identity, and thereby receiving respect, recognition, having self-esteem and an experience of strength.

Moreover, everyone has the need for MEANING AND PURPOSE which means understanding the reason “why” one does everything he or she does.

Finally, each person has the NEED FOR EXCELLENCE, which is the desire to develop habits of excellence and become the best person one can be.

The students can remember the list with the help of the acronym S.U.B.L.I.M.E.:

S – Safety
U – Understanding
B – Bodily
L – Love
I – Identity
M – Meaning
E – Excellence

Give students [The Table of Human Needs](#) and ask them to individually think about each human need, what they can do to have this need fulfilled for themselves, and how they can help others to fulfill this need. Then they should write both solutions in the table. For example, it is more difficult to fulfill the basic needs of food and shelter for those who are poor, homeless, and without family. If the students are having trouble understanding the assignment, provide them with some examples from the Sample Answers sheet.

After all students finish working on their answers, ask the volunteers to share their answers and lead the class discussion to recognize some common ways of how the basic needs of themselves and others can be met.

Step 5: Summarize. Recall the three powers which all living beings share (eat, grow, reproduce), those which only humans and animals share (move, use senses, feel emotions, use instincts and memory) and two which distinguish humans from all other beings: the powers to think and choose. Highlight that the powers to think and choose are those which distinguish humans from all other beings, and which enable human beings to pursue excellence. Recall five types of basic human needs and highlight how the different needs of oneself and others can be met.

My talents

Important things about me

My name:

My life goals

My hopes for the future

POWERS OF BEINGS MEMORY GAME

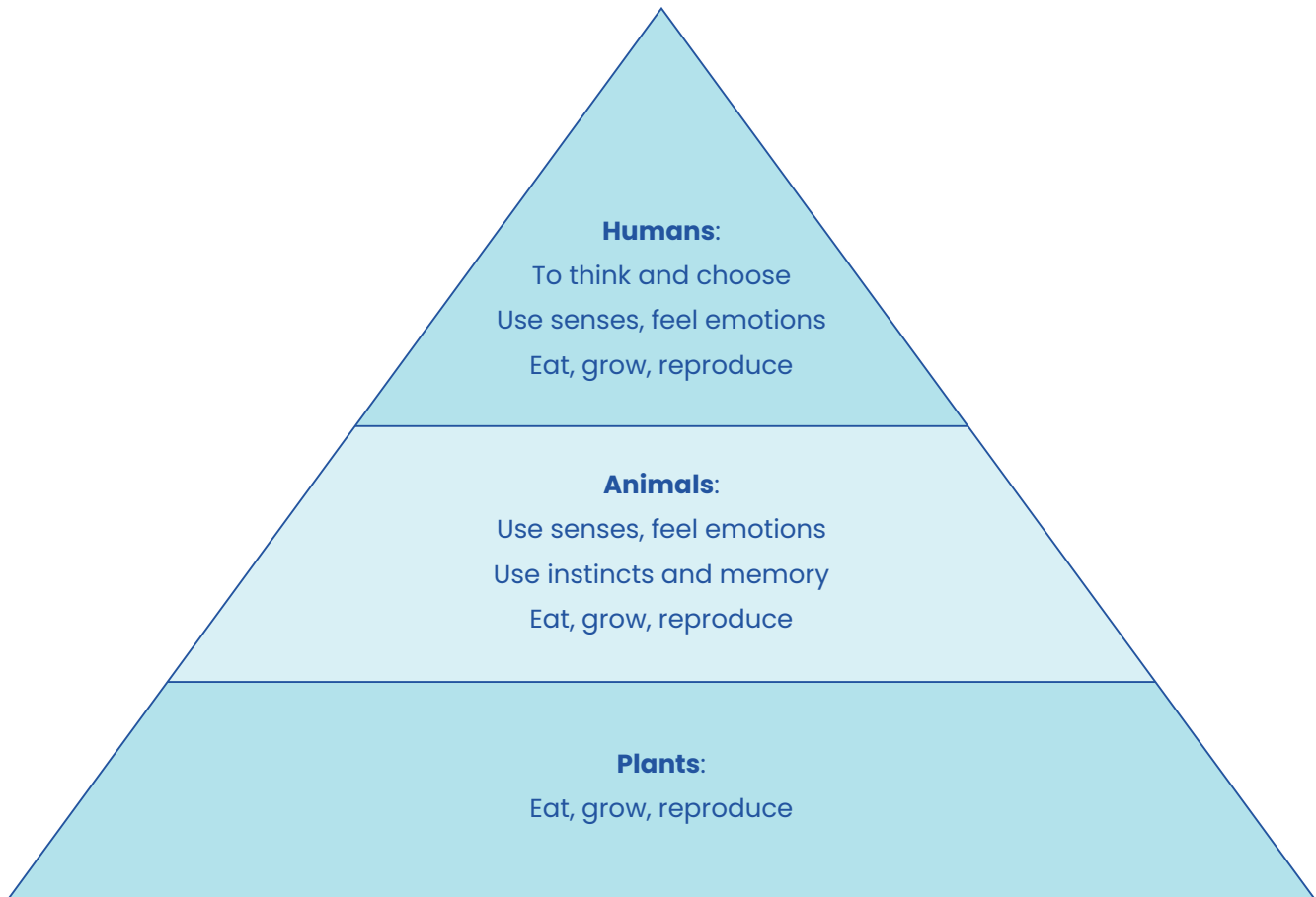
Cut out the cards below for each group

Plants	the power to take in nourishment	Emotions	Power to think
Animals	Humans	Plants	Animals
Humans	the power to create another being of the same kind	Instincts	the human ability to know and connect ideas
Move	Eat	Power to choose	the power for motion from within the body
Humans	Animals	Reproduce	Humans
Animals	the ability to be affected by internal or external stimulus	Animals	Plants
the ability to take action in response to a particular situation	Humans	the power to increase in size from within	Humans
Humans	the ability to remember knowledge gained through the senses	Animals	Humans
Animals	Grow	the human ability to knowingly select between options	Memory
Senses	Animals	Humans	Humans
the power to know with the body concrete details about the world			

Powers of Beings Memory Game – Teacher’s Answer Key

Eat	the power to take in nourishment	Plants	Animals	Humans
Grow	the power to increase in size from within	Plants	Animals	Humans
Reproduce	the power to create another being of the same kind	Plants	Animals	Humans
Move	the power for motion from within the body	Animals	Humans	
Senses	the power to know with the body concrete details about the world	Animals	Humans	
Emotions	the ability to be affected by internal or external stimulus	Animals	Humans	
Instincts	the ability to take action in response to a particular situation	Animals	Humans	
Memory	the ability to remember knowledge gained through the senses	Animals	Humans	
Power to think	the human ability to know and connect ideas	Humans		
Power to choose	the human ability to knowingly select between options	Humans		

The Hierarchy of Being Pyramid



The Table of Human Needs

Type of need	What can I do to have this need fulfilled?	How can I help others to fulfill this need?
SAFETY: Personal security, employment, resources, health, property		
UNDERSTANDING: Knowledge, comprehension, wisdom, mastery		
BODILY: Air, water, food, shelter, clothing, sleep, etc.		
LOVE AND BELONGING: Family, love, friendship, community and closeness		
IDENTITY AND ESTEEM: Respect, recognition, self-esteem, strength		
MEANING AND PURPOSE: Understanding the reason "why" one does everything they do.		
EXCELLENCE: The desire to become the best person one can be.		

The Table of Human Needs – Sample Answers

Type of need	What can I do to have this need fulfilled?	How can I help others to fulfill this need?
SAFETY: Personal security, employment, resources, health, property	<ul style="list-style-type: none">» To study and work hard to find a good job afterwards» Avoid walking alone in dangerous neighborhoods» To save money» To protect my health	<ul style="list-style-type: none">» To give money to the poor» Not to intentionally hurt others» To stand up for those who are being bullied
UNDERSTANDING: Knowledge, comprehension, wisdom, mastery	<ul style="list-style-type: none">» To study regularly» To develop useful skills» To always learn new things	<ul style="list-style-type: none">» To help others with studying» To help others in things I am good at» To share things I know with others
BODILY: Air, water, food, shelter, clothing, sleep, etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">» To eat healthy» To have enough sleep each day» To drink enough water each day	<ul style="list-style-type: none">» To give food to the needy» Not to text my friends during school or too late into the evening» Use water economically» Not waste food
LOVE AND BELONGING: Family, love, friendship, community and closeness	<ul style="list-style-type: none">» To be kind to my family» To invest time and care in building friendships» To spend time with people who make me a better person» To cherish my best friend	<ul style="list-style-type: none">» Decide never to spread gossip about friends» Offer listening ear to the friend in need» To spend time with a classmate who does not have many friends
IDENTITY AND ESTEEM: Respect, recognition, self-esteem, strength	<ul style="list-style-type: none">» To study hard to perform well in school» To respect myself and others» To practice music, sports, other hobbies» Not to compare myself to others but realize that I'm worthy just by being myself	<ul style="list-style-type: none">» Help a friend who has problems studying» Not to make disrespectful comments about others» To teach others a skill I am good at» Give a compliment to someone that I would like to receive
MEANING AND PURPOSE: Understanding the reason "why" one does everything they do.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">» Try always to consider the reason "why" behind the things I do» To consider if the things I'm doing are consistent with my long-term goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none">» To help others recognize if they are doing something without an adequate reason» To help others recognize good things they should be doing, if they are not
EXCELLENCE: The desire to become the best person one can be.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">» To develop good habits» To persevere in good things I do» To abandon bad habit» To get up and try again after I fail» To develop my skills and talents» To keep going forward when it's hard» To try to pursue excellence in my life in all of my actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">» To motivate others to persevere in good decisions despite hardships» To be supportive when someone starts doing something good» To want others to pursue excellence and therefore not to encourage friend's bad habits