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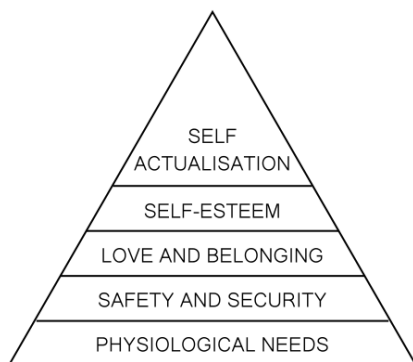
PRIORITIES

Addiction changes priorities. When your addiction is your priority, by definition, you must deprioritise something else. That something else is taking care of yourself and your basic needs. Neglecting these fundamentals—even slightly—profoundly affects your general well-being. They are the foundation of your life, which, if degraded, cannot support general health, let alone higher-order needs, such as happiness and life fulfilment. This needs to be recognised, stated, and rectified—no matter how obvious it may seem.

Abraham Maslow proposed the theory of a hierarchy of needs in his 1943 paper *A Theory of Human Motivation*.¹ The theory offers a framework for what we ought to do for ourselves to achieve balance and growth. In our circumstances, it can help us to prioritise what to focus on and fix before moving on to higher-order needs. As the following illustrates, the hierarchy can be split into five levels or layers.

¹ Maslow, A. H. *A Theory of Human Motivation*. Martino Fine Books, 2013.

MASLOW'S HIERARCHY OF NEEDS



The wide base of the pyramid represents broad foundational needs, including fundamental necessities for survival, such as air, water, food, and shelter. These are universal and essential for everyone. At the opposite end of the spectrum, the narrow peak of the hierarchy represents the pinnacle of human development. The pinnacle is associated with individuals reaching their highest potential and a fulfilled life. Once the needs of a lower layer are satisfied, an individual can achieve and maintain the needs at a higher level. Ironically, failure to meet these higher-level needs can lead to a descent to the bottom. When this happens, our focus and energy can become anchored to the lowest layers for reasons we'll explore shortly.

When you first encounter alcohol, it enters into your hierarchy somewhere in the middle. But over time, alcohol makes its way

further and further down the hierarchy. As it does, layers of needs have to give way until, finally, alcohol is at the base. It's your number one priority.

PRIORITY NUMBER ONE



You're never really present for anything because your mind is obsessed with your base need: alcohol. The catch is—as we shall see in the following chapters—that your need for alcohol is never met because it cannot be met. It's an entirely open loop.

When you're sitting eating garbage for dinner because you can't be bothered to make anything else, that's because your time, energy, and money were allocated to your number one priority. Whatever was left over was allocated to feeding yourself.

Unwinding all of this is not straightforward, either. In theory, you could just decide that you were going to stop prioritising

alcohol, but it doesn't work that way. You're stuck in a Chinese finger trap—a complicated one that's been years in the making.