

Session 12

Wrap-Up

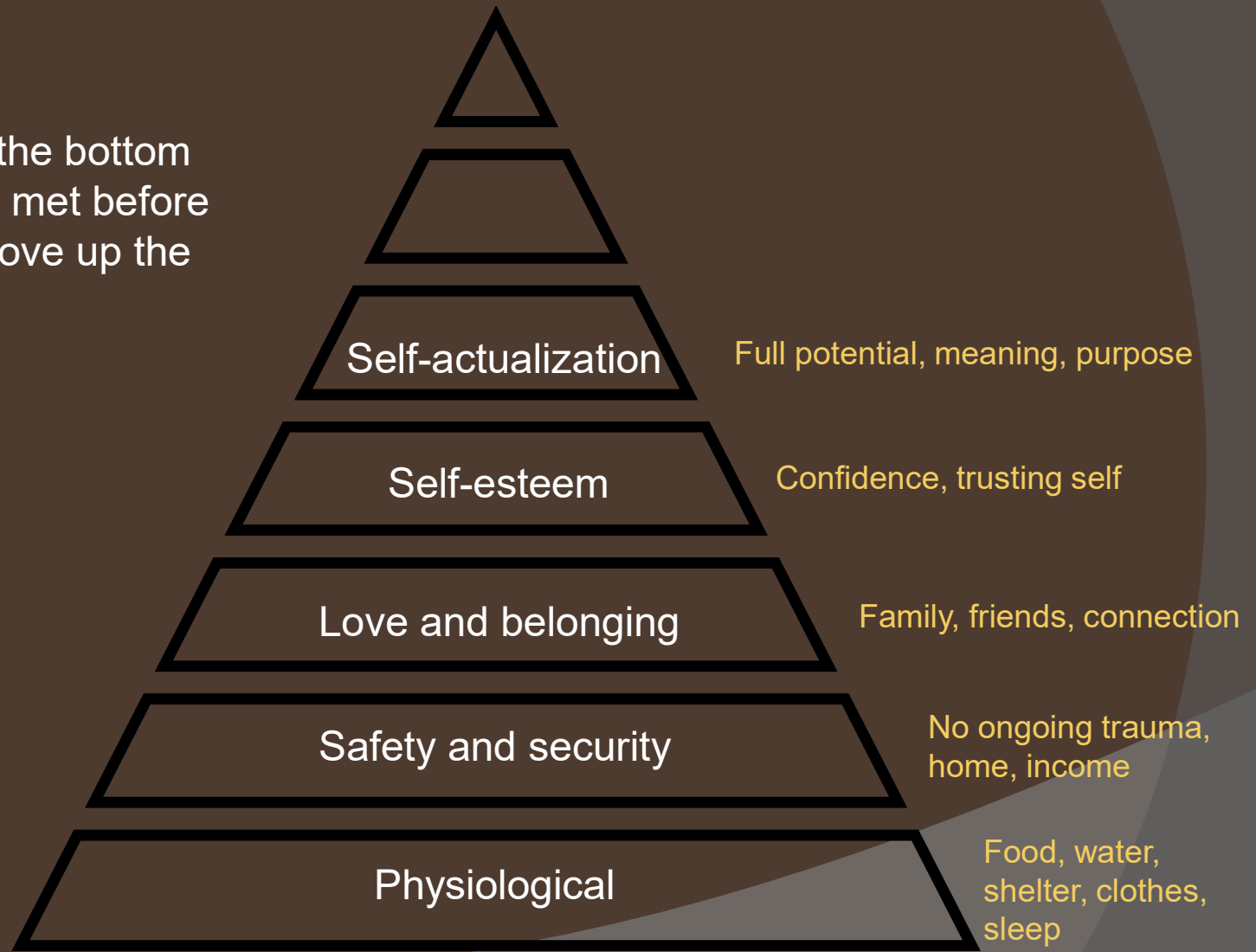
March 16, 2026

BOTTOM-UP EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONING

Hierarchy of Needs to illustrate Bottom-Up Executive Functioning

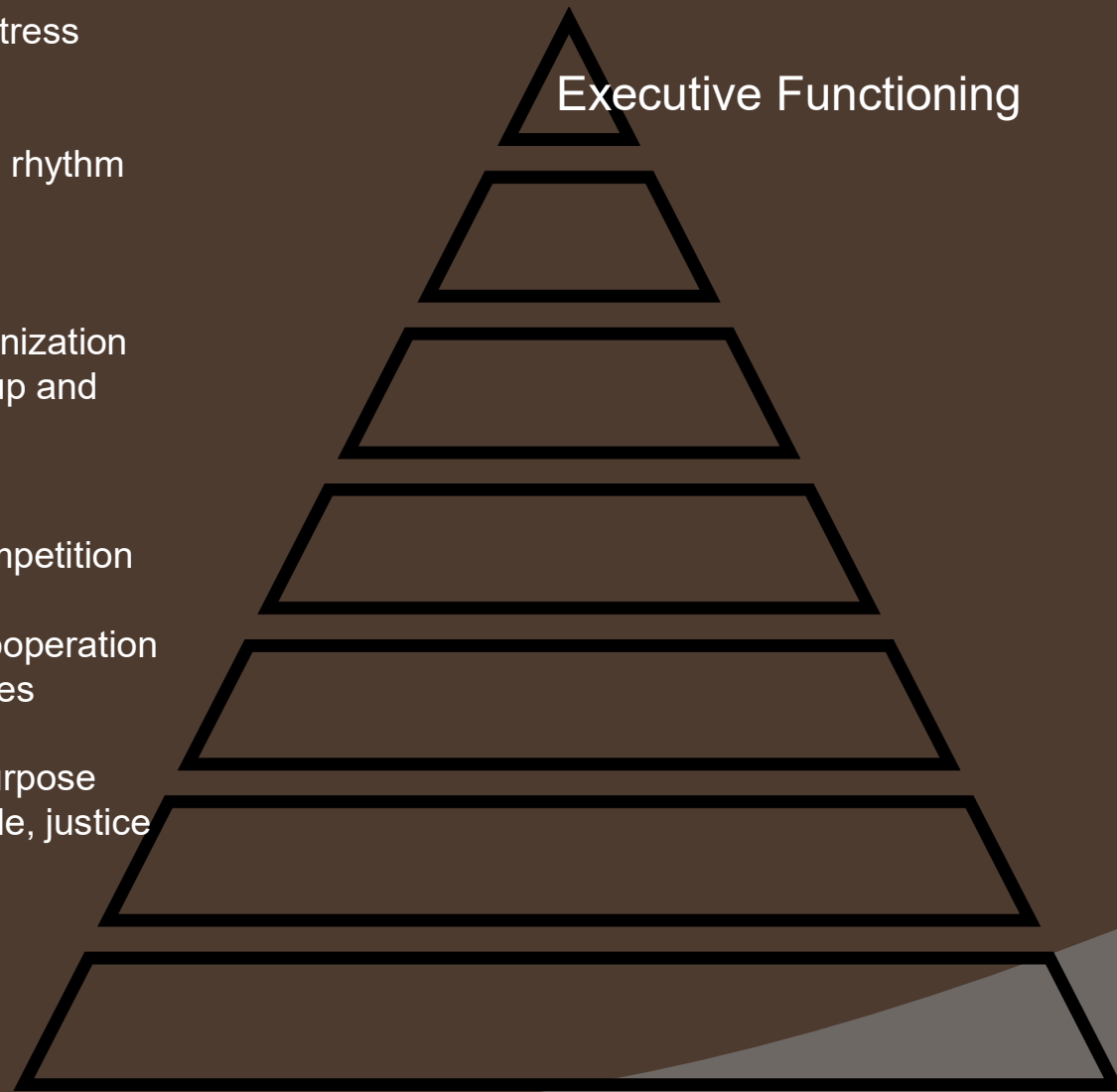
Maslow's hierarchy (Maslow, 1954)

Needs on the bottom have to be met before you can move up the pyramid.



Adapting Maslow's hierarchy

- Mental health, stress
- Sensory needs
- Energy levels
- Sleep, circadian rhythm
- Nutrition
- Exercise
- Medications
- Space and organization
- Time for warm-up and recovery
- Novelty
- Interest
- Challenge / Competition
- Emergency
- Interactivity / Cooperation
- Safe social circles
- Predictability
- Meaning and purpose
- Integrity, principle, justice
- Helping others



Example of exec func hierarchy

- Mental health, stress
- Sensory needs
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Example of exec func hierarchy



Emergency button

- Skips you to the top of the pyramid
- Get things done before your pyramid is finished
- What do you think happens when you use the emergency bypass instead of the pyramid on a regular basis?
- **Crash and burn. Accrued debt.**
- **Autistic burnout.**

Neuroception and needs

Neuroception:

Nervous system learns from environment and experience. All the realization and insight in the world won't change the nervous system if the environment feels dangerous.



Discussion

Discussion



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If insight alone healed, therapy would be instant.

It's not.

Because the nervous system changes through safety repetition, not understanding.

BRIEF-2A

Before and after

Results

- ⦿ Some clients completed before and afters.
- ⦿ We discussed the changes, if any.

What changed for you?

Mental Health First Aid Kit

First aid kit for minor physical injuries

- In an emergency, it is useful to have tools immediately available.
- Prepare to all different kinds of situations.
- Less to think about when you have visual prompts.



Minor mental health injuries

- ⦿ Rejection or possible rejection
- ⦿ Mistakes
- ⦿ Grief
- ⦿ Guilt
- ⦿ Anger
- ⦿ Anxiety
- ⦿ Sadness
- ⦿ Discomfort

First aid kit for minor mental health injuries

- ⦿ Sensory tools for comfort
 - Blanket
 - Comfort foods
 - Coolness or heat
 - Music
 - Weighted vest
 - Candles
 - Scents
 - TV or game
 - Creativity (poetry, art, dance)
- ⦿ Exercise
- ⦿ Intense interests
- ⦿ Nature
- ⦿ Connection (pets, friends, nature)

Maaya at Structured Success (ADHD coaching) (Hitomi, 2026)

<https://www.structuredsuccess.ca/post/sensory-issues-suck-but-we-use-them-to-self-sooth-and-self-regulate>

Objective #2

Use the prompts below to add more examples to the previous page. Highlight, circle, cross-out, or make notes if it helps

Visual

What you can see: Colour, pattern, shape, texture

Vivid / Pastel
Bright / Dull
High- / Low-contrast
Flashing / Moving
Crowded / Dispersed
Natural / Mechanical

Shiny / Matte
Patterned / Solid
Colour / Monochrome
Abstract / Tangible
Transparent / Opaque
Soft / Hard

Auditory

What you hear

Loud / Subtle
Complex / Simple
Rhythmic / Varied
Musical / Discordant
Predictable / Changing

Abstract / Forthright
Twang / Orchestral
Nostalgic / Recent
Growl-y / Melodic
Game / Movie

Wind / Rain
Animal / Nature-like
Natural / Mechanical
Repeated / Changing
Harmonious / Clashing

Emotional / Stoical
Natural / Artificial
Varied / Uniform
Novel / Familiar
Rich / Plain

Olfactory

Your sense of smell

Tangy / Astringent
Sweet / Savoury
Strong / Subtle
Harsh / Gentle
Food / Drink-related
Sunlight / Rain-like
Varied / Uniform

Brief / Long
Metallic / Earthy
Flowery / Mechanical
Natural / Artificial
Novel / Familiar
Pungent / Mild
Rich / Simple

Tactile

Touch, texture, temperature

Repeated / One-off
Metallic / Plastic-y
Woody / Feathery
Uniform / Varied
Scratchy / Soft
Sharp / Rolled
Cold / Warm / Hot

Complex / Simple
Shapes / Patterns
Novel / Familiar
Wet / Dry
Fuzzy / Prickly
Flexible / Stiff
Smooth / Rough

Gustatory

Your sense of taste

Sweet / Savoury
Tangy / Astringent
Harsh / Gentle
Strong / Subtle
Metallic / Earthy

Flowery / Mechanical
Natural / Artificial
Novel / Familiar
Rich / Simple
Varied / Uniform

Proprioception

Flex, stretch, and position in space

Stretched / Curled up
Flexed / Relaxed
Tense / At-ease
Standing / Sitting
Horizontal / Vertical
Planned / Unplanned
Constant / Changing

Close / Spacious
Flex Arm / Legs / Core
Stretch Chest / Neck
Exhausting / Restoring
People-y / Solitary
Claustrophobic / Open

Vestibular

Your balance or head movement

Spinning / Falling
Side-to-Side / Front-to-Back
Tilting / Leaning
Stable / Precarious
Difficult / Easy

Changing / Unchanging
Sliding / Locomotive
Floating / Grounded
Accelerating / Slowing

Remember to make your examples as specific and actionable as you can. We often struggle to decide or brainstorm when we need these most!



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Also add categories for:

Temperature

Pressure

Research interests

Nature

Connection

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<https://www.structuredsuccess.ca/post/sensory-issues-suck-but-we-use-them-to-self-sooth-and-self-regulate>

Objective #3

Look back at your examples on the first page. Find 5 - 10 you could do just about anywhere and have the biggest impact on your day. Add them to the card below.

When you're done, print this card and keep it with you. If you're ever feeling overwhelmed or dysregulated, these sensory moments are here to help you feel safe and anchored!

When things feel overwhelming, use one or more of these sensory experiences to help yourself settle!

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

When things feel overwhelming, use one or more of these sensory experiences to help yourself settle!

- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.

Objective #4

Look at your examples on the first page once more. Take 5 minutes to make it eye-catching, easy to read, meaningful, or aesthetic *for you*.

For example, you might increase negative space to make it easier to read, colour-code your examples to make them easier to spot, or add graphics that you are meaningful to you.

Once you're done, print the first page and display it somewhere you'll see it often or in a place you go to when you're feeling overwhelmed.

The next time you're overwhelmed, dysregulated, or just feel like you'd like to relax, use one or more of your examples to help settle your body and ground you mind.

Major injuries, suicide, homicide

- ⦿ All these things can be used to hold you until the urge for suicide/homicide passes
- ⦿ Add lists and ideas for more severe injuries and suicidal/homicidal thoughts/urges

In addiction and trauma counseling

- ◎ Your body wants certain things.
- ◎ Your trauma brain wants avoidance and blame and people-pleasing.
- ◎ Your values are different.
- ◎ Take time to figure out who you are and what your values are. Lifelong journey.
- ◎ “Is this consistent with who I really am?”

(Doyle, 2025)

Discussion

Two Random Things

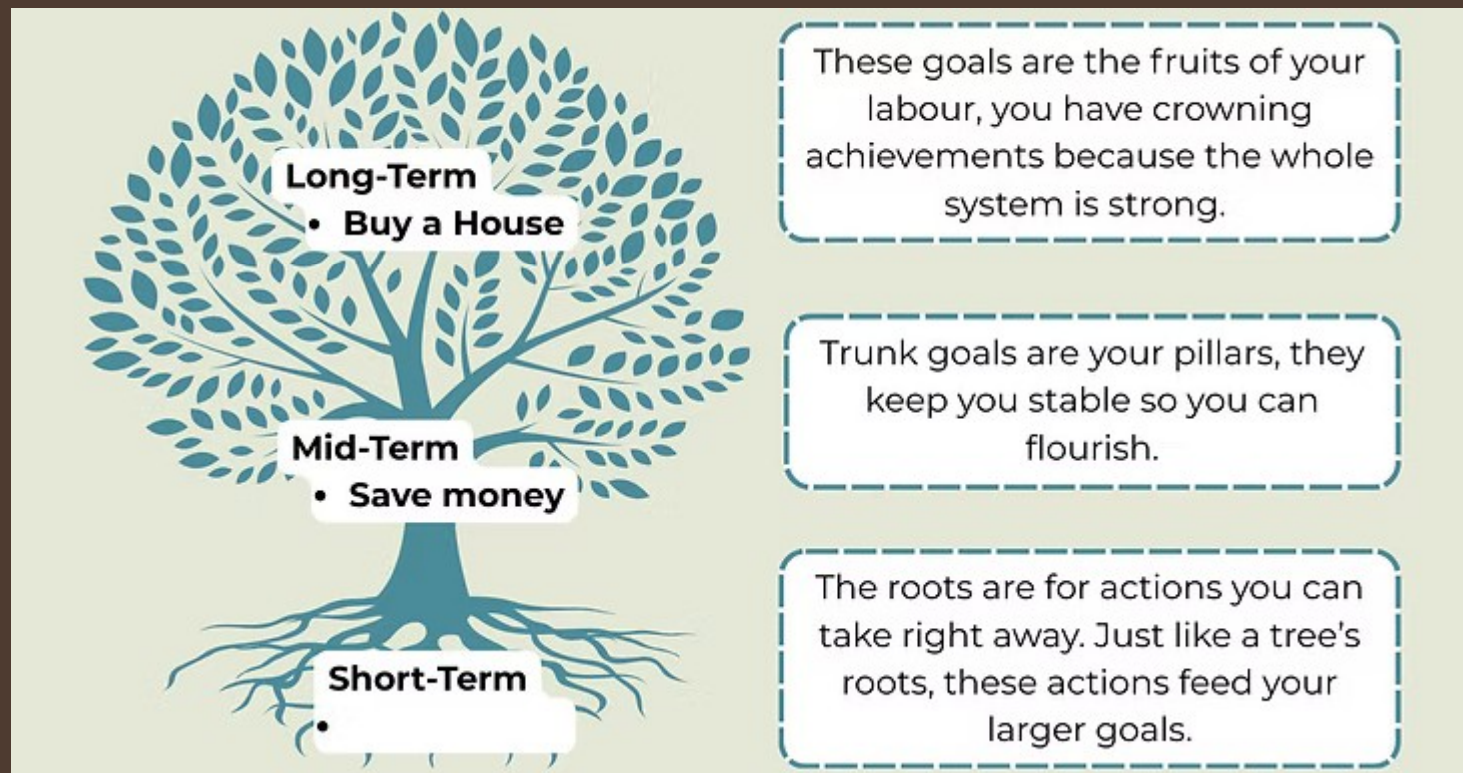
Novelty and anchor at the same time

- I've talked about it like 2 conjoined twins that need to take turns
- Article by Travis Gilly (Gilly, 2026)
<https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/only-subject-never-gets-boring-why-matters-more-than-you-travis-gilly-0fryc/>
- ADHD needs novelty. Autism needs an anchor. Find an interest that can serve both as novelty and anchor.
- Broad enough you will never run out of novelty. You can stay in the same interest anchor.
- For Travis Gilly, his interest is harm.
- Sometimes, you can satisfy both ADHD and autism.

Goal Trees (Hitomi, 2025)

From Maaya in Structured Success

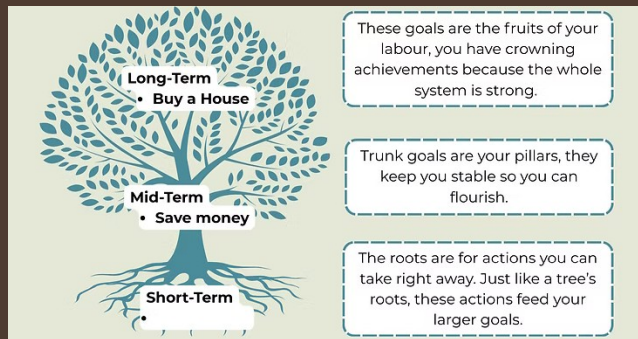
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- “Is this consistent with who I really am?”
- “Is this consistent with who I want to be in the future?”
- Who do I want to be in the future?

Discussion

Note about Abraham Maslow

- Someone alerted me to historical and cultural context about Maslow's work, which was based (uncredited) on the way of life he learned from Blackfoot elders.
- Interview with Dr. Sidney Stone Brown, a Blackfoot therapist who wrote a book (*Transformation Beyond Greed: Native Self-actualization, 2014*) to document Maslow's rip-off. She described that Blackfoot culture inverts the pyramid, with the pointy side down. Self-actualization is the start, but it gets bigger with community actualization, and then cultural perpetuity as the base of the triangle at the top.
- Article about how Maslow adapted the Blackfoot model for corporations.

References

- ◉ Brown, S. S. (2014). *Native Self-Actualization: Transformation Beyond Greed*. BookPatch.
- ◉ Doyle, G. P. [@DrDoyleSays]. (2025, December 19). Realistic CPTSD recovery starts when we begin making everyday decisions through the lens of, "is this consistent w/ who I really am, [Post]. X. <https://x.com/DrDoyleSays/status/2002046268336464054>
- ◉ Feder, A., Southwick, S. M., Goetz, R. R., Wang, Y., Alonso, A., Smith, B. W., Buchholz, K. R., Waldeck, T., Ameli, R., Moore, J., Hain, R., Charney, D. S., & Vythilingam, M. (2008). Posttraumatic growth in former Vietnam prisoners of war. *Psychiatry*, 71(4), 359–370. <https://doi.org/10.1521/psyc.2008.71.4.359>
- ◉ Gilly, T. (2026, March 12). *The only subject that never gets boring: Why it matters more than you think*. LinkedIn. <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/only-subject-never-gets-boring-why-matters-more-than-you-travis-gilly-0fryc/>
- ◉ Hitomi, M. (2026, March 12). *Sensory issues suck: but we use them to self-soothe and self-regulate*. <https://www.structuredsuccess.ca/post/sensory-issues-suck-but-we-use-them-to-self-sooth-and-self-regulate>
- ◉ Hitomi, M. (2025, November 25). *Goals are hard for ADHD'ers. Here's how to make it easier*. Structured Success. <https://www.structuredsuccess.ca/post/goals-are-hard-for-adhd-ers-here-s-how-to-make-it-easier>
- ◉ Maslow, A. H. (1954). *Motivation and personality*. Harper & Row