

## *Original Paper*

# Schizophrenia, Maslow and Coping Strategies

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According to Maslow personal growth hierarchy of needs the progression is a linear step by step process but what I have found in trying to climb the tree in the context of schizophrenia is anything but. The difference here is that some of the levels can influence climbing other levels in the hierarchy both with ascending and descending the ladder of self develop.

The themes in this article develops and brings together lines of thought outlined in more length in a number of my other books including Schizophrenia an Anxiety, A mind under threat and Schizophrenia articles. Together they provide much detail about living with schizophrenia and what this is like when trying restore life to normal and grow again.

Various methods of doing with involve coping with the various impacts of schizophrenia on day to day living. Graded exposure to fear, distraction, positivity, delusions of grandeur, family support, rest and relaxation, courage, the mental health system and medication are all important to allow for climbing the maslow tree and can influence normal response to life.

Finally, It is argued that reaching self actualisation and peak experience should be the goal for mental health service users as they deserve the best therapies available, as provided by the Maslow tree. The techniques and outcomes outlined here are instrumental to doing this but are as yet embryonic and need further research to the point they can be administered through mental health day centres.

Going up and down.

So in my case there has been some movement up and down the levels. These will be outlined in turn and will be illustrated with examples from my own experiences of schizophrenia and how problems and solutions to climbing the malsow tree can be brought to bear on the process.

Not being able to look after myself as by eating and wandering the roads to get away from spying neighbours even during blizzards compromised was frightening and affected my level two needs ate the same time.

Another one is that the emotional pain from the criticism from level one will keep you trapped at level three...

Another is that having the strength to overcome the privations of level one needs with get you back up to level two.

Life at level one for me had been very taxing and has required some endurance to get through it. You need to be quite hardened physically to get through battling the elements outdoors and withstand the hunger and self neglect.

Constant fear from level two safety needs can cause emotional pain at level two while pain and lead to depression some proper emotional regulation and maybe an anti-depressant can help climb the maslow tree...

You need to believe in yourself to come through the privations of level one and the caveat here is a lot of people will give up on life as this will be so overwhelming.

Courage might lead to opening up our inner voice and inner core emotions at level 3 and might help with going up to levels four and five.

Being a good person as manifest in your emotional core which can be further opened up by reinforcement will in turn make it easier to be who you are and allow some self esteem.

Being able to connect with you emotions at level 3 might stand up to the criticism of the voices at level four as you can positive reinforce your good emotional other side of yourself so you see yourself being reinforced more positively.

Reinforcing you identity can allow you to be who you are more easily and allow you to value yourself through knowing its good qualities and opens the self to the possibility of peak experiences.

My Problems at level one was that I was wandering the roads without warmth or shelter and was in a do or die situation to get back home safely. I need not give in to ending up dead with this and measures up to the challenge as the impression to stay alive took over.

I had to overcome the fear so I could get my appetite back and feed my self properly. I was down to ten stone at these points.

My reaction to this was that it is a challenge that had to be dealt and that made strong enough to also not just give in to self neglect.

You have to be strong enough to keep going and in my case when I was running out the house I had to have the fortitude to get back home.

Being in emotional pain from the voices and not eating or sleeping properly was both mentally and physically draining and the result was I went into shock and again I was back down to level one again.

You have to believe in yourself to do this and tell yourself you are going to come through this: in my case it was possible to rest, eat and feel restored emotionally once I had the self-reassurance I was going to get through things.

Courage and insight at level 2 needs belief in ourselves is need and might again require some further positive reinforcement. Belief in ourselves allows for this strength to satisfy our safety needs.

Hearing the banging noise and wandering the countryside at night anything could have happened to me and again it was not safe at level two I nearly froze to death at one point.

When the fear wears off I had a new challenge in that the voices were causing a lot of emotional pain to the point of feeling suicidal and again thing caused problems for my level 2 safety needs.

I wasn't strong enough to commit suicide but as I began to stand up to the voices more this affected my safety needs again...

Again at level 2 voices were criticising me for causing 9/11 and the emotional pain made me suicidal. The voices were telling me to commit suicide.

I felt I was a bad person through criticism for the voices and this was in addition to thinking I had killed all those people at 9/11. Together the voices and delusions were a very powerful force for negative reinforcement.

It is possible to numb the pain emotional you feel with the fear and emotional hurt and even at level 2 this can help: fear shuts down the emotions including the emotional pain from voices and delusions and in some ways might take the edge of experiencing them.

At moderate levels of anxiety some emotional pain is still possible but when really frightened the fear can be just as bad as the emotional pain so that at the higher levels of fear when you might be tortured to death this is nearly as bad as thinking you have killed all those people.

Yet positive reinforcement will reduce the emotional pain and allow for proper emotional development and might help opening up our inner core which with insight can counteract the negative force of the delusions about being responsible for 9/11

Positive emotional engagement with our selves allows for opening up the heart allows us to reconnect with our positive emotions: we are good people and are kind and loving and are worthwhile human beings despite feeling responsible for terrible things.

Our family cares for us and hold us in high regard and that love is unconditional even though we have caused terrible things. They pointed out catastrophes are common in history and what I feel responsible for is no different to what other people have done and that should help with needing self-esteem.

In my case causing 9/11 was because certain cultures were threatened by the globalisation of a western way of life which has been a good cause in the world. Yet dying for a cause like that is the same as murder in any form or other and is no different from any kind of killing so in moral terms is much more soothing and less mentally painful.

Proper emotional insight reinforced by family contact can allow for some strength so that when the next time we are frightened we might cope with it better instead of reverting back to level two. Though this depends on how overwhelming the symptoms are.

Family recognition we have good qualities means we are not such bad people and allows for some self-expression and once we can recognise this there I something to focus on to allow some self-esteem. In our hearts we are no different from anyone else.

Instead of experiencing emotional pain get back on to a more normal emotional in life and so stands a higher chance of getting to the esteem level. Negative reinforcement from the voices can still cause emotional pain and send you back down to level two so this might need to be strengthened again.

Being positive about ourselves allow more of a chance to find our inner voice that because it speak out for us should help stop the critical voices damaging our self esteem

So positive reinforcement can cause us to counteract the critical voices and esteem levels and again allows for climbing the Maslow tree to level five.

The recognition we have good qualities which can be brought out and further strengthened by positive reinforcement all help in getting to the next level where we can just be ourselves. When we know who we are we are less likely to question ourselves vis a vis causing 9/11 and the associated voice

Positive reinforcement allow us more to be who we are and so allows some chance of self-actualisation and again if we can connect with ourselves and our inner core thinking positive about who we are can help with this level two.

So the positive reinforcement at level five opens the way for feeling safe and emotionally happier and to enjoy this and the feeling of self-esteem and in terms of who you are you can also enjoy self-actualising and being who you are.

All this positivity allows a pleasure response and then for clicking the frontal lobes forward which opens up many helpful aspect of the brain including language, logic, emotions and creativity as well as personality all of which is therapeutic for dealing with the schizophrenia.

The emotions involved when they have been reopened allows the chance for getting involved with life again and reconnecting with friends and family. From there once the door is opened this can have the further effect that these emotions will be more profound and pleasurable and will further help climbing the pyramid as they start a virtuous circle of increasing pleasure.

#### Coping Strategies

A lot of this revolves around trying to find ways of controlling the mind either by clicking the amygdala forward, having courage and controlling the mind all help keep me calm from flipping out.

Courage is they in all of this and is combinable with positive reinforcement but the whole thing can be dangerous as too much can make you snap. The key to approach the problem with graded exposure and is not just down level two needs and it helps if you can practice this with other people who can support you.

Some other incentive is needed to tackling courage such as hiding away indoors from people you are paranoid about just makes things worse as it concentrates the mind on the voices. You have to ask yourself do you want to spend your life hiding away or do you want to get out and enjoy life again.

Courage isn't just about paranoia but also about standing up to the voices and the emotional pain they can cause. Again having someone on hand like a psychologist to reinforce your good points and who you are can be a powerful support for just being yourself.

The fear never goes away completely and in between the fear episodes there is a state of continual and anxiety. Relaxation techniques like Yoga or Pilates or even massage can reduce stress in between more severe episodes so to overcome this allowing for some rest.

This also makes the times at level two in between severe episodes more therapeutic and enjoyable and further to allow some source of strength and optimism to get through the difficult parts. When the symptoms are more manageable it can click forward to the point to allow much more personal growth.

Anxiety will also click you back and when it goes on along time it needs to be dealt with even though it is just anxiety. Like fear it is enough to click you back and there are a number of antidotes to it including safe place imagery, breathing and aromatherapy oils are all important getting past level two.

Clicking forward could help climb the Maslow tree. In particular emotional pain is located in the reptile brain but emotional support from family like being loved and supported should help develop generate a lot of what life can throw at you stress wise and what can hurt you in particular.

Emotional support is important along these lines and being loved can soothe the pain caused by voices and delusions. Being criticised can make us feel worthless and being gloved can remind us we are valued human beings which willing turn to help with mood.

Whatever the voices say about this having a loving voice from families can act as a support against this and prevent the feeling of being emotionally drained which might act as a source of strength against the voices and in my case the disabling fear cause by the delusions.

So family support could be a source of strength too for clicking forward and climbing the Maslow tree. Family emotions are very powerful and should allow for some development on the emotional level in particular as voices are emotionally abusive

Family support also means self-esteem and from here it might be possible to find your inner core and inner voice can help with this too. Being able to speak out for yourself allows for being who you are could make you withstand the emotional and esteem criticism from the voices.

Delusions of grandeur can reduce stress and help click forward as well. These very powerful feelings of pleasure will open up the frontal lobes a lot and release our emotions and intellects somewhat though concentrating can be difficult when you are strung out on high.

All the same the mood swings can be a much needed out let for the years off suffering that schizophrenia can inflict. This is true but you have to be careful with this bombshell as when the paranoia returns you swing back down again and the lows are worse.

You have to be careful with delusions of grandeur as going from highs to lows all the time can be very stressful and may end with the sufferer snapping with the swings. The trick is to try to even out the peaks and troughs so the experience is less intense and should make things more manageable.

If this can be achieved much of the effects of schizophrenia like emotional pain and damaged self esteem can be removed because we are experiencing such pleasure and feeling we have achieved great things. In my case I believed I had invented computers and contrary to 9/11 has been a great force for good in the world.

The other relevant factor here is that with my highs and lows is that there is often a chance to rest in between when the symptoms wear off so I can relax and build up strength until the next episode and this improve life with the illness even more.

Another strategy with critical voices and my delusions about 9/11 is to try and do something about them on a personal level. This has mainly involved my writing which has been an achievement for my

self esteem and emotional pain. Helping other people has been a powerful source of therapy at levels two and three but can only take place once I calm down from the safety tier.

Positive adrenalin has also been an important coping strategy because once you have courage at level two you can you might be able to weigh up the illness as a challenge. Instead of getting negative reinforcement you can begin to enjoy the pain as an opportunity and not as a disability.

Again with things like schizophrenia is easier said than done though to some extent depends on the severity of the symptoms which in my case vary from anxiety, fear and terror. This allows for each to be challenged in turn and can be challenged with graded exposure.

If you have ever been on a roller coaster the back of a motor cycle and walking through a field of cattle you can begin to get some idea what the feeling of fear is like. It is much harder to image the terrors of schizophrenia unless perhaps you have been in a war.

Such feats where there is a certain amount of danger is an electric experience and again produce an extended high like the delusions of grandeur but if you can overcome it you will feel like you have overcome and the confrontational strategy isn't so bad.

What the problem is as with many things you are going to run up a limit where some fear is going to be too much and it is easier just to bottle out. And with schizophrenia which can be often severe this seems highly likely.

All the same if you can confront some of it head on life will then begin to get more therapeutic as it will in turn allow some concentration for doing activities and again allow some self-esteem for the achievement of being so brave.

Also it will allow the strength to look after your basic needs and if you can do this it might allow you to help look after some one else as well as in friendship and a loving relationship. Again level one and three are being influenced here.

The experience of confronting it can make you run from the situation so climbing the Maslow tree in this way can be helped by adding some one to come with you or else co-existing with the fear rather than just positively confronting the first challenge the initial step can be made less difficult.

The caveat here is of course deriving pleasure from the symptoms often does not soothe them as people end up committing suicide. In particular even though they have the strength to commit suicide rather than survive the illness.

Distraction is another technique that could help and make the illness less stressful and make it possible to click forward even in between episodic phases. The key here is to find something pleasurable and like the pain can be soothed.

I think day centres are the key here where you do educational courses and have an engaging chat over a cup of coffee. Again we need make the most of the times in between getting symptoms and enjoying this and can be good for distraction.

You have to make the most of the good times as when the voices start again and to keep telling yourself that you will get through it and things can return to normal. This still means you will suffer but with rested emotional support you can get through and you will start to grow again.

The other way of doing things lies with medication which can be taken early to avoid the worst parts. I am on an anti-psychotic which has a very powerful sedatives so I can avoid the experience of safety needs and simply get off to sleep.

Of course Valium and sleeping tablets like Zopiclone are available which should mean calming down versus safety needs and sleeping for basic needs. Again a non-addicted nerves tablet should really be developed here for Maslow's hierarchy.

The other antidepressant tablets are good for soothing the suicidal low mood at levels one and three and the depression that can result from critical voices as at level two. Nerve tablet and anti-depressants can be effectively combined here.

Often with schizophrenia you can become very isolated and withdrawn and it is necessary to prevent this from recurring as this will prevent personal growth. This can also mean taking medications like anti-psychotics which can stabilise and improve things so we can bring ourselves back and calm down enough to engage socially.

Finally one thing with schizophrenia is that the experience can so be so overwhelming that it goes over your head and is buried in the subconscious. You need to confront it head on and to have the strength to do this which again is easier said than done. This is the brain's reaction to protecting you but things cannot be left like this as it comes back as constant anxiety.

With this there will be a constant of anxiety and there will still be problems with safety needs as there will be let up with it. It also causes flash backs and tarrying memories which can be very severe so there is a need to stop the system overload...

The strategies outlined here including graded exposure to anxiety and fear which can leave you drained, emotional support from friends and family and resting in between episodes might give you that strength and from there we might apply climbing the Maslow tree a lot more effectively.

## Conclusion

Various approaches allow compassion, positive reinforcement Insight and courage could help climb the Maslow tree as well. Maybe an eclectic approach might be best and together combine into a powerful arsenal. The coping strategies outlined here can be combined with those of compassion focused therapy, positivist behavioural therapy and cognitive behavioural therapy which are all other ways of climbing the Maslow tree. Maybe once these techniques are generally be applied there will be much more hope for recovery in schizophrenia.