

Sixteen Distinguishing Features of Self-actualizing People

By Abraham Maslow

Humanist psychologist Abraham made an intensive and far reaching investigation of a group of self-actualizing people. His sample included historical figures, such as Lincoln, Jefferson, Walt Whitman, Thoreau, and Beethoven. Others, such as Eleanor Roosevelt and Einstein, were living at the time of Maslow's investigation.

Maslow found that self-actualizing people share the following qualities:

1. They are realistically oriented;
2. They accept themselves, other people, and the natural world for what they are;
3. They have a great deal of spontaneity;
4. They are problem-centered rather than self-centered;
5. They have an air of detachment and a need for privacy;
6. They are autonomous and independent;
7. Their appreciation of people and things is fresh rather than stereotyped;
8. Most of them have had profound mystical or spiritual experiences, although not necessarily religious in character;
9. They identify with mankind;
10. Their intimate relationships with a few specially loved people tend to be profound and deeply emotional rather than superficial;
11. Their values and attitudes are democratic;
12. They do not confuse means with ends;
13. Their sense of humor is philosophical rather than hostile;
14. They have a great fund of creativeness;
15. They resist conformity to the culture;
16. They transcend the environment rather than just coping with it.

Source: Calvin S Hall and Gardner Lindzey, *Theories of Personality*, third ed. (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1978, pp. 269-70. Reprinted with permission.