**Maslow’s Qualities of Transcending Self-Actualizers**

Abraham Maslow[[1]](#endnote-1) compiled a set of qualities that distinguish transcending self-actualizers from nontranscending self-actualizers. They may be helpful in assessing one’s core values and core strengths.

**Give yourself a score of 1 to 5: 1 applies the least, 5 reflects who I truly am.**

* 1. For the transcenders, peak experiences and plateau experiences become *the* most important things in their lives, the most precious aspect of life.
* 2. They speak naturally and unconsciously the language of poets, mystics, seers, of profoundly spiritual individuals who live under the aspect of eternity, the language of parable and paradox.
* 3. They perceive unitively the sacred within the secular, i.e., the sacredness in all things *at the same time* that they also see them at the practical, everyday level. This ability is in *addition* to—not mutually exclusive with—good reality testing.
* 4. They are much more consciously and deliberately metamotivated by the values of perfection, truth, beauty, goodness, unity, dichotomy-transcendence.
* 5. They seem somehow to recognize each other, and to come to almost instant intimacy and mutual understanding even upon first meeting.
* 6. They are *more* responsive to beauty, or rather they tend to beautify all things.
* 7. They are *more* holistic about the world than are the practical self-actualizers (who are also holistic in this same sense). Mankind is one, and such limiting concepts as the “national interest” or “the religion of my fathers” or “different grades of people or of IQ” either cease to exist or are easily transcended.
* 8. Overlapping this statement of holistic perceiving is a strengthening of the self-actualizer’s natural tendency to synergy—intrapsychic, interpersonal, intracultural.
* 9. They transcend the ego (the Self, the identity) more often and more easily.
* 10. Not only are such people lovable, but they are also more awe-inspiring, more “unearthly”, more easily revered as a great man or a great woman.
* 11. Transcenders are far more apt to be innovators, discovers of the new, of what actually *could* be, what exists *in potential*.
* 12. They can be more ecstatic, more rapturous than the happy and healthy ones, yet maybe more prone to a kind of cosmic-sadness over the stupidity of people, their self-defeat, their blindness, their cruelty to each other, their shortsightedness.
* 13. Transcenders can more easily live in both the Deficit and Being realms simultaneously than can the merely healthy self-actualizers because they can sacralize everybody so much more easily. The factually “superior” transcending self-actualizer acts always to the factually “inferior” person as to a brother, a member of the family who must be loved and cared for no matter what he does because he is after all a member of the family.
* 14. Peak-experiencers and transcenders find mystery is *attractive* and challenging rather than frightening. In contrast, most people pursue knowledge to lessen mystery and thereby reduce anxiety. The self-actualizer is apt to be bored by what is well known, however useful this knowledge may be, and encountering new knowledge to be awed before the tremendousness of the universe. At the highest levels of development of humanness, knowledge leads to a sense of mystery, awe, humility, ultimate ignorance, and reverence.
* 15. Transcenders are less afraid of “nuts” and “kooks”, and are also more able to screen out the apparent nuts and kooks who are *not* creative contributors.
* 16. Transcenders tend to be more “reconciled with evil” in the sense of understanding its occasional inevitability and necessity in the larger holistic sense. Since this implies a better understanding of apparent evil, it generates *both* a greater compassion with it *and* a less ambivalent and more decisive, more unyielding fight against it.
* 17. Transcenders are more apt to regard themselves as *carriers* of talent, *instruments* of the transpersonal, temporary custodians so to speak of a greater intelligence or skill or leadership or efficiency. This means a certain particular kind of objectivity or detachment toward themselves that to nontranscenders might sound like arrogance, grandiosity, or even paranoia. Transcendence brings with it a transpersonal loss of ego.
* 18. Transcenders are more apt to be profoundly “religious” or “spiritual” in either the theistic or nontheistic sense, excluding their historical, conventional, superstitious, institutional meanings.
* 19. Transcenders find it easier to transcend the ego, the self, the identity, i.e., to go beyond self-actualization. Nontranscending self-actualizers are primarily strong identities, people who know who they are, where they are going, what they want, what they are good for, using themselves well and authentically and in accordance with their own true nature.
* 20. Transcenders have more end experiences than their more practical brothers do, more of the fascinations that we see in children who get hypnotized by the colors in a puddle, or by raindrops dripping down a windowpane, or by the smoothness of skin, or the movements of a caterpillar.
* 21. Transcenders are somewhat more Taoistic; everything look more miraculous, more perfect, just as it *should* be. It therefore breeds less impulse to *do* anything to the object that is fine just as it is, less needing improvement, or intruding upon.
* 22. Transcenders tend to be “Postambivalent”, filled with total wholehearted and unconflicted love, acceptance, expressiveness, rather than the more usual mixture of love and hate that passes for “love” or friendship or authority.
* 23. With increasing maturity of character, higher forms of reward and metareward other than money and acknowledgment steadily *increase* in importance.

Comments about my experience in taking this self-assessment:

1. Maslow, A. H. (1971). Theory Z. In A. H. Maslow, *The Farther Reaches of Human Nature*, 270-286. New York: Penguin Books. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)