

Forms of Emotional Appeal Used in a Persuasive Essay

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In a persuasive essay, your goal is to reason effectively with your readers and to motivate them to believe, change or act. For you to be persuasive your essay must not only be logical; it must also appeal to the reader's emotions. It must appeal to the reader's common sense, hopes, pride and sense of right and wrong. To accomplish this you must build credibility, make logical appeals and focus on the reader's needs. There are four basic forms of emotional appeals you can use in your essay.

Survival

The most basic human need, according to psychologist Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs, is survival. Your essay should support the readers' emotions about avoiding threats and having the necessities they need to survive. For example, if you are writing about affordable housing for the elderly, this is a basic necessity for those seeking such housing. Show your readers how this fundamental need will be satisfied if they follow your suggestions.

Belonging

The second basic human need is belonging. Appeal to this emotional need by showing your readers how they will gain acceptance and become part of a group by doing what you advise in your essay. Use positive language to show the advantages and benefits if they accept your claims and how they will gain favor in whatever group you are describing.

Achievement

Being good at something and getting recognition for achievements is the third basic human need on Maslow's hierarchy of needs scale. Appeal to your readers' emotions by showing them how they will realize self-fulfilment and gain status and appreciation by believing in or doing what you are promoting in your essay. Give recognizable examples of others who have achieved recognition for similar actions.

Helping Others

According to Maslow's hierarchy of needs, the most complex basic human need is to help others. Appeal to the readers' sense of value and social obligation. Show them how they can make the world a better place by doing what you suggest in your persuasive essay. For example, if you are writing about affordable housing for the elderly and your essay will be read by legislators, appeal to their emotional need to help their constituents.

References

Manual for Writers of Term Papers, 6th Edition; Kate L. Turabian; 1996
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Verne Meyer, John Van Rys, Dave Kemper, Pat Sebranek; 2004