

## **Outline & Evaluate the Psychodynamic Model of Abnormality.**

Freud and others developed the psychodynamic model. It is the idea that conscious thoughts, feelings and behaviours are determined by unconscious processes, and that being mentally healthy requires a good balance between the id (desires), the superego (morality) and the ego (reality). This is reflected in the Theory of Personality explanation. The second explanation put forward for this approach is Psychosexual Development. It has five stages and these are Oral, Anal, Phallic, Latency and Genitals and are based on the idea that repressed problems often go back to childhood. Repressed desires or traumatic memories in the unconscious can upset the imbalance of the personality. The person develops psychological symptoms as a way of dealing with imbalances in the personality.

Freud thought that childhood was very important for the development of personality and that all abnormal behaviours are linked to childhood. He developed five stages of Psychosexual Development. At each stage, Freud thought that the child's libido (lust) was focused on a particular body area. The libido refers to a type of life force energy. There are different ages associated with each stage. The Oral stage usually happens between the ages of zero and eighteen months. The focus of pleasure is the mouth e.g. eating and sucking on a dummy. Some people become fixated on this stage and start to overeat to comfort themselves or start smoking. This could be due to feeding difficulties or separation from a primary care giver. Their adult personality can become dominated by orality. Ainsworth also found a link between childhood attachment style and adult relationships.

The Anal stage happens usually between the ages of two and three years. The focus of pleasure is the anus. The child's issue at this stage is on faeces and toilet training. If the stage is not resolved it can lead to an "anal character". If parents are too harsh and strict with toilet training then the child may try to "hold back". This can lead to an "anal retentive" personality. The adult character may be stubborn, tight with money, hoard possessions or be obsessive. On the other hand, the parents may be too lenient with toilet training. This leads the child to develop a "messy" personality. For example the adult person may become too generous and give all their money away or have a messy bedroom.

The Phallic stage happens usually between the ages of three and six years. The focus of pleasure is the genitals. This is the stage at which gender identity develops, and the superego. These develop because of the Oedipus complex. Freud thought that every little boy wanted to have sex with his mother and kill his father to get him out of the way. There is rivalry

between the little boy and his father for his mother's affections. Freud thought that with the sexual focus on the genitals at the Phallic stage, the little boy of three to six years would naturally focus these feelings on his mother. At the same time the boy feels guilty for these feelings because of the superego and worries that his father will cut off his penis. At the same time the ego tries to resolve this by making the boy realise that he should identify with his father. This way he can be like his father and no longer feel guilty for hating him. This is however, not scientifically proven as it is based on no evidence. Freud conducted all of his case studies on adults but never on child Patients. It was mainly middle class Viennese women so can be seen as ethnocentric. Freud also developed the Electra complex to explain this stage in relation to girls but it does not explain it fully it is seen more as an after thought. Nevertheless, Freud believes that if the Phallic stage is not successfully resolved, this can lead to being incapable of loving others or being vain and proud. Later research has suggested that if the child identifies with the opposite sex parent, this can lead to homosexuality.

The Latency Period happens usually between six years and puberty. There is no focus on a specific body area. Rather the child focuses on school and friends. However, this time has been researched less than many of the other stages.

The Genital stage happens from adolescence onwards. The focus is on the genitals. A healthy individual who has resolved the Oedipus complex can move into this stage and make opposite sex friends. They also have healthy heterosexual relationships. However, these stages are not set in stone as each child is different. It also focuses too much on infant sexual desires.

The theory of personality explanation was created by Freud through clinical work with mentally disordered patients. Freud believed that problems arose directly from the dynamics of the personality (psyche), rather than from physical causes. According to Freud, the psyche consists of three interrelated systems. The id is the unconscious, instable set of instincts with which people are born. The Id is pleasure-orientated and completely selfish. The Ego is the conscious, rational part of the psyche that has to arbitrate between the demands of the id and the superego. The Superego is the moral part of the personality concerned with right and wrong. The superego develops through the process of the socialising when people learn the moral standards and expectations of their culture. The id and the superego, therefore, are in direct conflict and need to be managed in a rational way. The well adjusted person develops a strong ego that is able to cope with the demands of each by allowing both the id and the superego expression at appropriate times. If, however, the ego is weakened, then either the id or the superego may dominate the personality. If the id impulses emerge unchecked, then they

are expressed in destructiveness and immorality such as excessively pleasuring oneself. A too-powerful superego rigidly restricts the person of even socially acceptable pleasures. According to Freud this would create neurosis, which, disorders, such as phobias and obsessions. In order to balance the demands of the id and the superego, the ego employs defence mechanisms. These distort or deny reality and are essential ways of protecting the ego from distress and allowing the person to cope with life. However, this explanation relies on ideas like the unconscious mind, which are very difficult to test or prove but is equally difficult to disprove.

Psychological disturbance, therefore, results from the inability of the ego to manage conflict within the psyche. Freud states that these internal conflicts occur on an unconscious level, so that we are unaware of them. Traumatic or confusing events in childhood, therefore, are pushed into the unconscious as a way of repression because they are too painful for the ego to bear. Distressing feelings around these events do not disappear simply because they are repressed. They find expression in dreams and irrational behaviour and may eventually erupt and express themselves in psychological disorders. Anorexia may result from sexual abuse in childhood. The sufferer develops a fear of sex or growing up. Self-starvation keeps them in a child like state. There is some evidence to suggest that childhood experiences affect adult mental health. For example, many people who are abused go on to develop psychological problems.

If the problems stem from repressed memories or conflicts stemming from childhood, then these must be brought to consciousness and dealt with if the person is going to get better. In psychoanalysis, the therapist investigates the client's unconscious through free association, dream analysis and projective tests. They identify the unconscious conflicts and help the client to bring them to the surface (catharsis). They then help the client to work through and deal with their repressed feelings. These treatments work quite well for mild disorders e.g. anxiety or depression. However, it takes a long time on average it takes two or more years so is time consuming and expensive. It can also result in the formation of false memories which may make things worse, not better. For example, in cases of abuse. A great disadvantage of these treatments is that they encourage the client to become dependent on the therapist and this may not be necessarily good for them.

In conclusion this approach ignores biological and cognitive factors involved in abnormal behaviour. From twin studies it was shown that identical twins had more of a concurrence to develop eating disorders and schizophrenia than non identical twins.