

## Freud's psychodynamic approach attempts to explain what drives or motivates

personality development. He suggested that an individual is driven to satisfy biological urges and these motives cause us to interact with the environment, so that early experiences play an important role.

Freud identified three different parts of the mind, which are based on our level of awareness; conscious, preconscious, and subconscious mind.

The conscious mind is where we are currently in focus of attention at the moment. The preconscious consists of things which we are aware, but we are not paying our full attention. These thoughts can easily be brought into the conscious mind if chosen to do so. It is possible to control our awareness to a certain extent. The subconscious level consists of content that is out of direct reach of the conscious mind. The subconscious thinks and acts independently. One of Freud's key findings was that much behaviour is driven directly from the subconscious mind. This has the alarming consequence that we are largely unable to control our behaviour.

Freud also went on to describe the human personality as being structured into three parts, the Id, Ego and Superego. He explained that an individual's feelings, thoughts, and behaviours are the result of the interaction of the id, the superego, and the ego. This creates conflict which in turn creates anxiety, which leads to Defence Mechanisms.

The Id contains our primitive drives and works largely on the pleasure principle, where its two main goals are seeking pleasure and avoiding pain. It has no real perception of reality and seeks to satisfy its needs through what Freud called the primary processes that dominate the existence of infants. For example hunger and self-protection, which demands immediate satisfaction. The energy for the Id's actions comes from the libido. The id has 2 major instincts. The 1<sup>st</sup> being Eros, the life instinct that motivates people to focus on pleasure-seeking activities (e.g., sexual urges). The 2<sup>nd</sup> is called Thanatos, the death instinct that motivates people to use aggressive urges to destroy.

Unlike the Id, the Ego is aware of reality and operates using the reality principle. It recognizes what is real and understands that certain behaviours have consequences. This includes the effects of social rules that are necessary in order to live and socialize with other people. It also uses secondary processes (e.g., perception, recognition, judgment and memory) that are developed during the 1<sup>st</sup> two years of childhood. The Ego role is to somehow balance the demands of the Id and Super ego with the constraints of reality in mind. The Ego controls higher mental processes such as reasoning and problem solving, which it uses to solve the Id-Super ego dilemma, finding ways to safely satisfy the Id's basic urges within the constraints of the Super ego.

The Super ego contains our values and social morals, which often come from the rules of right and wrong that we learned in childhood (around the age of 2-5 years) and are stored in the conscience. The Super ego is a counterbalance to the Id, and seeks to strain the Id's pleasure-seeking demands, particularly those for sex and aggression.

One disadvantage to Freud's theory is that it is based on recollection of an individual's childhood. This is not likely to be reliable given the known accuracy of memory over long periods of time, not to mention the influences of emotional factors on memory. Another limitation of this theory is that it cannot be scientifically tested to see if it is true or false. Therefore it cannot be proved that this theory is valid.

Freud's account of personality allowed him to place interpretations of personality and behaviour that could not be disproved. For example he would argue that a person behaved in a certain way because of something that happened in their childhood. If the person agreed then this showed Freud to be right. If the person disagreed, Freud could argue that this shows that the patient was showing signs of repressing certain experiences.