

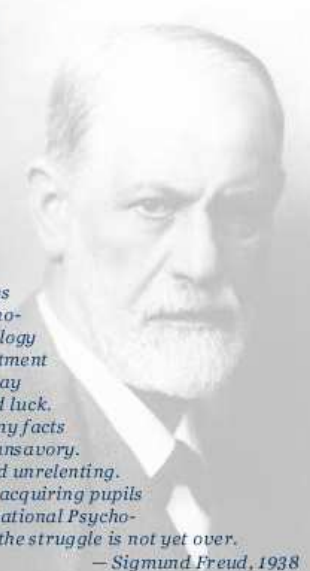
Sigmund Freud

Sigmund Freud is known as the great pioneer of exploring the human unconscious mind. His many theories on the workings of the human mind changed the way many people thought about human nature and led to new ways of treating illnesses.

Sigmund Freud was born on May 6th 1856 in Pribor, Czechoslovakia. He managed to study and research medicine at university, even though he came from an extremely poor family. He was able to earn money to pay for his education by translating and teaching. Freud's name was destined to be deeply associated with posterity, as he founded what was to be known as the "first Viennese school of psychoanalysis." Freud always considered himself first and

foremost a scientist rather than to the practice of medicine, which he received a degree in, in 1881. He married in 1886 which gave him six children. Freud also set up a private practice in the treatment of psychological disorders, giving him much of the clinical material on which he based his theories and his pioneering techniques. After a life of remarkable vigour and creative productivity, he died of cancer while exiled in England in 1939.

One of the most significant contributions Freud has made to modern thought is his conception of the dynamic unconscious. Freud suggested that declarations of free will are delusions, and that we are not entirely aware of what we think and often act for reasons that have little to do with our conscious thoughts. Freud proposed that awareness existed in layers and that there were thoughts occurring "below the surface." He came to the theory there were unconscious mental causes to mental illnesses. Freud proved that most of the time, these mental causes were often frightening experiences that a patient had gone through in the past. Once a person remembered this experience they were able to understand it, and with understanding they were able to improve. Freud called this method of treatment that he developed psychoanalysis. He got results from treatment through psychoanalysis, and whilst many of his patients improved, many other doctors refused to believe that there might be a mental cause for mental illness.

A black and white portrait of Sigmund Freud, showing him from the chest up. He has a full white beard and is wearing a dark suit, white shirt, and dark tie. He is looking slightly to the right of the camera with a serious expression.

I started my professional activity as a neurologist trying to bring relief to my neurotic patients. Under the influence of an older friend and by my own efforts, I discovered some new and important facts about the unconscious in psychic life, the role of instinctual urges and so on. Out of these findings grew a new science, psychoanalysis, a part of psychology and a new method of treatment of the neuroses. I had to pay heavily for this bit of good luck. People did not believe in my facts and thought my theories unsavory. Resistance was strong and unrelenting. In the end, I succeeded in acquiring pupils and building up an International Psychoanalytic Association. But the struggle is not yet over.

— Sigmund Freud, 1938

Freud came up with a psychodynamic theory, which derived from psychoanalysis. The key concepts of Freud's psychodynamic theory were:

1. Primarily concerned with internal psychological processes.
2. Importance of early childhood experiences
3. Existence of unconscious motivation
4. Existence of ego and superego
5. Existence of defence mechanisms

Psychodynamic theory is based on the premise that human behavior and relationships are shaped by conscious and unconscious influences. It is classically indicated in the treatment of unresolved conflicts in early life, as might be found in non-psychotic and personality disorders, but to date there is a lack of convincing evidence concerning its superiority over other forms of treatment. Freud used psychodynamic therapies to treat depressed people and focus on resolving the patient's conflicted feelings. These sorts of therapies are often reserved until the depressive symptoms are significantly improved.

Freud used hypnosis on some of his patients to understand and cure the human mind. After studying French professor Jean-Martin Charcot's work on the causes of hysteria, (a disorder which could cause paralyses and extreme fits,) Freud soon discovered that the symptoms of hysteria could be induced in non-hysterics by hypnotic suggestion. The symptoms of hysteria could be alleviated or transformed by hypnotic suggestion. This ran contrary to the prevalent belief that hysteria had physiological causes; it suggested that a deeper, unseen level of consciousness could affect an individual's conduct. One of Freud's classic examples of this is how he investigated there being a mental cause to mental illness for the case of patient Anna O.



Anna O

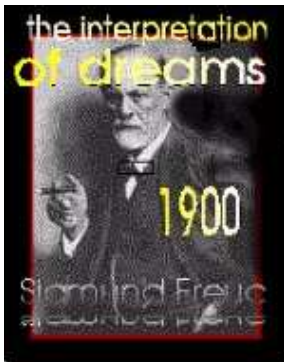
This patient displayed a rash of psychological and physiological symptoms: assorted paralyses, hysterical squints, coughs, speech disorders, and others. Under hypnosis, Freud and Josef Breuer, a fellow physician, traced many of these symptoms to memories of a period when she nursed her dying father's bedside. But one day she abandoned her father's bedside when she heard dance music drifting from a neighbour's house as she felt an urge to be there. During this time when she was at this party instead of looking after her father, he died. Immediately she was stuck with guilt and self-reproach. She covered this internal conflict with a

nervous cough, and from that day on, coughed reflexively at the sound of rhythmic music.

However, Freud soon abandoned hypnosis in favour of conscious psychoanalysis. Firstly, Freud used a technique of free association, where he asked patients to talk about anything that crossed their minds, regardless of how apparently unimportant or potentially embarrassing the memory threatened to be. With this technique, Freud was able to notice particular things that bothered his patients and analyze what they said. He was able to help patients remember their past experiences. Unfortunately, Freud found that despite a subject's every effort to remember, a certain

resistance kept him from the most painful and important memories. He eventually came to understand that certain items were completely repressed, and off-limits to the conscious realm of the mind. Freud's eventual practice of psychoanalysis focused not so much on the recall of these memories as on the internal mental conflicts which kept them buried deep within the mind.

Sigmund Freud's most famous work was *The Interpretation of Dreams*, published in 1900. Freud was fully aware of the importance of dreams and described them as the 'royal road' to understanding the unconscious.



According to Freud, dreams are spy-holes into our unconsciousness. Fears, desires and emotions that we are usually unaware of make themselves known through dreams. To Freud dreams were fundamentally about wish-fulfilment. Even negative dreams are a form of wish-fulfilment; the wish being that certain events do not occur. Very often such dreams are interpreted as a warning. Freud believed that although our dreams contain these important messages, they are encoded and disguised. The unconscious mind does not speak any verbal language therefore it must communicate via

symbols. Freud then distinguished between the "manifest content" of dreams and the "latent content" of dreams. Manifest dreams are what we actually dream, and latent dreams are the unfulfilled wish that the dream represents. Freud went further and suggested that very often our conscious mind actively tries to reject the messages of our dreams and we repress this knowledge. Dreams are often an expression of a repressed wish that we would rather not admit to. Freud concluded that some dreams indicate psychic conflict that can in turn be at the core of mental disturbance.

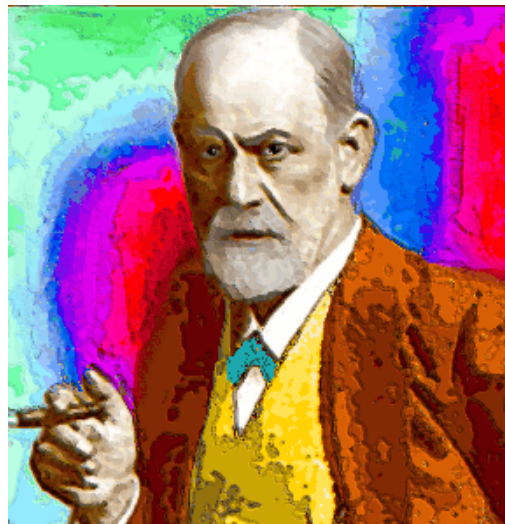
Freud made many contributions to psychology such as how personality develops. He understood the mind as constantly in conflict with itself, and understood the conflict as the primary cause of human anxiety and unhappiness. Freud's investigations into internal conflicts led him to an eventual division of the mind into three parts, three conflicting internal tendencies, id, ego and super-ego. Id represents basic drives, instincts and genetic predisposition, Ego represents the ability to balance the conflict between natural drives and societal dictates, and Super-ego represents society and culture that is internalized. Freud said that a person's personality is formed as a result of the interaction of Id, Ego and Super-ego. These three parts of the mind function in different levels of unconsciousness.

Freud also tried to make some gender developments. In his era there was not the ready platform from which to debate gender issues that exists today. He had to build from the limited experiences of his own practice in a small area of Vienna. He confessed to understanding men better than women, and his oedipal theories always sat better with male than with female development. His notions of gender and sexuality were deeply culturally bound, yet Freud argued that identity formation was precarious and unstable. He stated that gender development was a journey involving delicate negotiation between desire and identification, fleshed out in the relationship between the child and its parents. He struggled with notions of masculinity and femininity, at times affirming traditional traits of male aggression and female passivity, and at times acknowledging the inadequacy

of such formulations. Freud was at pains to separate sexuality from gender, refusing to associate effeminacy invariably with homosexuality. Although his attitude to homosexuality was at times contradictory, he never saw it as a perversion, and affirmed the capacity of homosexual men and women to train as analysts.

Freud's development of aggression came from working on his theories of human behaviour being motivated by sexual and instinctive drives known as the libido. The repression of such libidinal urges is displayed as aggression. Examples of the expression of aggression as explained by Freud are his work on childhood aggression. For boys, Freud said that around the age of five they begin to develop an intense sexual desire for their mother as they come to regard her as the provider of food and love and so want to pursue an intimate and close relationship. The father is viewed as a competitive rival and the goal they both try to attain is the mother's affection. To resolve the conflict between a boy and his father, the boy learns to reject his mother as a love object and will eventually identify with his father. A boy comes to understand that an intimate relationship with his mother is essentially inappropriate. For girls, Freud developed the female oedipal complex, which is a similar theory for the childhood aggression of girls. A girl, around the age of five develops penis envy in attempts to relate to her father and rejects her mother. A similar internal conflict arises in the young girl, which is resolved after regarding her father as an inappropriate love object and ultimately identifying with her mother. These examples of Freud's psychoanalytic theory demonstrate the idea that aggression is an innate personality characteristic common to all humans and that behaviour is motivated by sex drives.

According to Freud, aggression in children is instinctual and should be resolved in adulthood. Therefore, over the course of development, after a child had rejected the opposite sex parent, he or she will enter a period of latency in which they commonly reject all boys or all girls. Once puberty is reached, attention shifts to the genital region as an area of pleasure. Freud asserted that once this stage is reached, both men and women would search for an appropriate member of the opposite sex to fulfil sexual urge. Thus, Freud states that in individuals where the childhood conflicts have been successfully resolved, all aggression has been removed by adulthood in the pattern of development.



As you can see, Sigmund Freud was an extremely important psychologist and has developed the science of psychoanalysis greatly, covering so many aspects of human life. Many of his treatments and theories are used today in our society, such as free association and couch - psychoanalysis, to help cure mental disorders and illnesses. Not only has Freud's work influenced the fields of psychiatry and psychology, but it has also had an impact on other areas such as art and literature.