

The psychodynamic perspective originated with the work of Sigmund Freud. This view of psychology and human behavior emphasizes the role of the unconscious mind, early childhood experiences, and interpersonal relationships to explain human behavior, as well as to treat mental illnesses.

PSYCHODYNAMIC APPROACH

According to Freud (1925) behaviour is motivated by internal or psychological forces, and abnormality is caused by an imbalance in the internal forces that motivate behaviour. He believed that mental illness arises from unresolved conscious conflicts, and these usually occur in early childhood (e.g. the Oedipus complex).



Much thanks to Freud's work and influence, psychoanalysis became one of the earliest major forces within psychology. Freud conceived of the mind as being composed of three key elements: the **id**, the **ego**, and the **superego**.

- The id is the part of the psyche that includes all the primal and unconscious desires.
- The ego is the aspect of the psyche that must deal with the demands of the real world.
- The superego is the last part of the psyche to develop and is tasked with managing all of our internalized morals, standards, and ideals.

While the psychodynamic perspective is not as dominant today, it continues to be a useful psychotherapeutic tool.



Freud's theory of personality

What is it?

What Motivates it?

The "Id"

Unconscious and innate drives and desires

The basic state of a baby

The pleasure principle – the drive to seek pleasure and immediate satisfaction

The "Ego"

Our conscious self

Develops around 1 year old as we have to deal with reality – the outside world

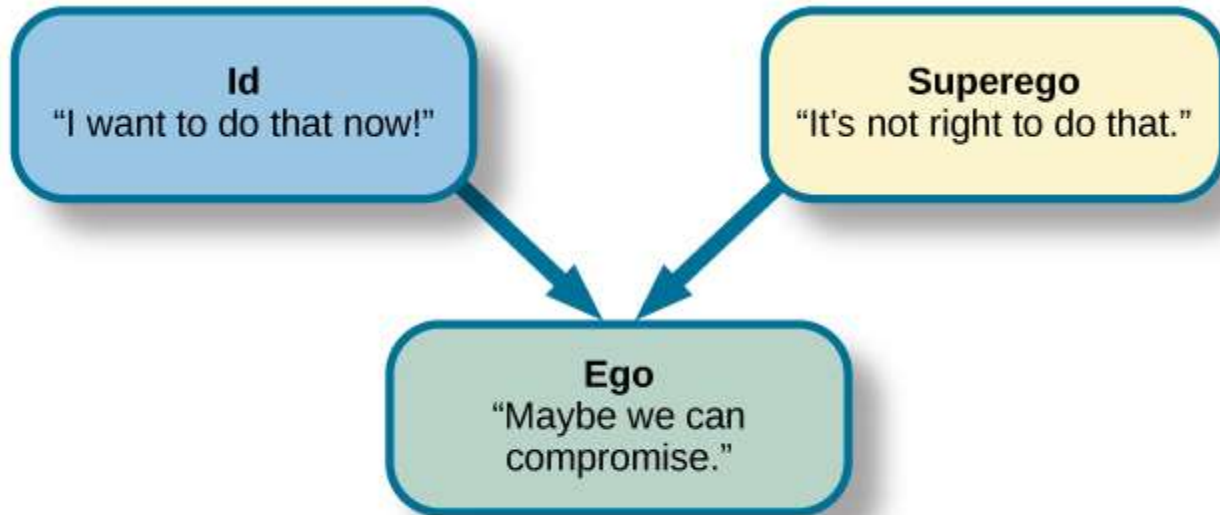
The reality principle – to accommodate the demands of your environment

The "Super-ego"

Our conscience and sense of right and wrong

Develops around age 5

To live up to an ideal of how we should be according to the outside world



Strength & Weaknesses of this Approach:

STRENGTHS

- Many observations of psychodynamic therapists appear to be borne out in everyday life, e.g., defence mechanisms
- Many people with psychological disturbances do recollect childhood traumas
- Freudian theory provides a comprehensive framework to describe human personality
- Freud 'rehumanised' the distressed, making their suffering more comprehensible to the rest of society
- By developing a method of treatment, Freud encouraged a more optimistic view regarding psychological distress. Mental illness could, in some cases at least, be treated!



Weaknesses

- The main limitation of the Psychodynamic Model is that it cannot be scientifically observed or tested. Abstract concepts.
- Any evidence recovered from a patient must be analysed and interpreted by a therapist. This leaves open the possibility of serious misinterpretation or bias because two therapists may interpret the same evidence in entirely different ways.
- Psychoanalysis is time-consuming and expensive. It may not even work: in a comprehensive view of 7000 cases, Eysenck (1952) claimed that psychodynamic therapy does more harm than good.
- Sexist – unbalanced, Electra Complex for example not thorough / vague in detail. Reflective of Cultural bias of the time Freud worked (women were not considered as equal to men)