

Concepts of personality development

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Outline

- Define personality.
- Identify the relevance of knowledge associated with personality development to in Medicine.
- Describe structures of human personality and their significance on human behavior
- Discuss the major components of the following of the developmental theories:
 - a. Psychoanalytic theory—Freud
 - b. Interpersonal theory—Sullivan
 - c. Theory of psychosocial development—Erikson
 - d. Theory of object relations development—Mahler

Introduction

The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, fifth edition, Text Revision (DSM-V-TR) and American Psychiatric Association (APA) defines personality traits as “enduring patterns of perceiving, relating to and thinking about the environment and oneself that are exhibited in a wide range of social and personal contexts”.

In short personality is the combination of character, behavioral, temperamental, emotional, and mental traits that is unique to each specific individual.

Clinicians must have basic knowledge of human personality development in order to:

- Understand maladaptive behavioral responses commonly seen in patients.

- Identify behaviors associated with various stages through which individuals pass, thereby specifying what is appropriate or inappropriate at each developmental level.
- To appreciate that infancy and early childhood are the major life periods for the origination and occurrence of developmental change.
- To understand that people continue to develop and change throughout life, thereby suggesting the possibility for renewal and growth in adults.
- Developmental stages are identified by age and behaviors can then be evaluated for age appropriateness.
- Ideally, an individual successfully fulfills all the tasks associated with one stage before moving on to the next stage (at the appropriate age).

Structure of the Personality

Freud organized the structure of the personality into three major components: the id, ego, and superego. They are distinguished by their unique functions and different characteristics.

1. Id

The id is the locus of instinctual drives—the “pleasure principle.” Present at birth, it endows the infant with instinctual drives that seek to satisfy needs and achieve immediate gratification. Id driven behaviors are impulsive and may be irrational.

2. Ego

The ego, also called the rational self or the “reality principle,” begins to develop between the ages of 4 and 6 months. The ego experiences the reality of the external world, adapts to it, and responds to it.

Structures of Personality CT

- As the ego develops and gains strength, it seeks to bring the influences of the external world to bear upon the id
- Therefore, A primary function of the ego is one of mediator, that is, to maintain harmony among the external world, the id, and the superego.

3. Superego

The superego is referred to as the “perfection principle.” It develops between ages 3 and 6 years, internalizes the values and morals.

- The superego is important in the socialization of the individual because it assists the ego in the control of id impulses.

Stages of Personality Development

Freud described formation of the personality through five stages of psychosexual development. Characteristics developed during these early years bore heavily on one's adaptation patterns and personality traits in adulthood.

1.Oral Stage : Birth to 18months

- During the oral stage, behavior is directed by the id, and the goal is immediate gratification of needs
- The focus of energy is the mouth, and behaviors include sucking, chewing, and biting.
- The infant feels a sense of attachment and is unable to differentiate the self from the person who is providing the mothering.
- With the development of the ego at age 4 to 6 months, the infant starts to view the self as separate from the mothering figure.₁₋₇

2. Anal Phase :18 months to 3years

The major task in the anal stage is gaining independence and control, with particular focus on the excretory function.

- The way parents and caregivers approach the task of toilet training may have far-reaching effects on the child in terms of values and personality characteristics
- When toilet training is strict and rigid, the child may choose to retain the feces, becoming constipated. Adult retentive personality traits influenced by this type of training include stubbornness, stinginess and miserliness.
- Toilet training that is more permissive and accepting attaches the feeling of importance and desirability to feces production. The child becomes extroverted, productive, and altruistic.

3. Phallic Stage: 3 to 6 Years.

In this stage, the focus of energy shifts to the genital area. Discovery of differences between genders results in a heightened interest in the sexuality of self and others.

- This interest may be manifested in sexual self exploratory or group-exploratory play. Freud proposed that the development of the *Oedipus complex* (males) or *Electra complex* (females) occurred during this stage of development.
- He described this as the child's unconscious desire to eliminate the parent of the same gender and to possess the parent of the opposite gender for himself or herself.
- Resolution of this internal conflict occurs when the child develops a strong identification with the parent of the same gender and parent's attitudes, beliefs, and value system.

4.Latency Stage: 6 to 12 Years

During the elementary school years, the focus changes from egocentrism to one of more interest in group activities, learning, and socialization with peers.

- Sexuality is not absent during this period but remains obscure and imperceptible to others.
- Children of this age show a distinct preference for same-gender relationships, even rejecting members of the opposite gender.

5.Genital Stage: 13 to 20 Years

In the genital stage, the maturing of the genital organs results in a reawakening of the libidinal drive.

- The focus is on relationships with members of the opposite gender and preparations for selecting a mate.

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- The development of sexual maturity evolves from self-gratification to behaviors deemed acceptable by societal norms.
- Interpersonal relationships are based on genuine pleasure derived from the interaction rather than from the more self-serving implications of childhood association

SUMMARY

- Personality is defined as the combination of character, behavioral, temperamental, emotional, and mental traits that are unique to each specific individual.
- Sigmund Freud, who has been called the father of psychiatry, believed the basic character has been formed by the age of 5.
- Freud's structure of the personality includes the id, ego, and superego.
- Freud classified all mental contents and operations into three categories: the conscious, the preconscious, and the unconscious.

Further Reading

1. American Psychiatric Association (APA). (2000). Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders (4th ed.). Text revision. Washington, DC: American Psychiatric Publishing.
2. Marmer, S.S. (2003). Theories of the mind and psychopathology. In R.E. Hales & S.C. Yudofsky (Eds.), Textbook of clinical psychiatry (4th ed.). Washington, DC: American Psychiatric Publishing.



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Thank you!