

Psychology Module – Week 2: Major Psychological Approaches

Objectives:

By the end of this week, students should be able to:

- ✚ Identify and explain the major psychological approaches.
- ✚ Compare and contrast different perspectives in understanding human behavior.
- ✚ Apply psychological approaches to real-life scenarios.
- ✚ Recognize how different approaches influence research and therapy.

Lesson 1: What Are Psychological Approaches?

Psychological approaches are frameworks used to understand human thoughts, emotions, and behavior. Each approach provides a unique perspective on why people think and act the way they do.

Why It Matters:

It helps psychologists choose methods for research and therapy.

Guides strategies for personal growth and problem-solving.

Lesson 2: Major Approaches in Psychology

1. Biological Approach

Focuses on the brain, nervous system, and genetics.

Behavior is influenced by biological factors such as hormones, neurotransmitters, and brain structure.

Example: Stress increases cortisol levels, affecting mood and memory.

Activity: Research one mental disorder (e.g., depression, ADHD) and identify its biological causes.

2. Behavioral Approach

Studies observable behavior and environmental factors.

Learning occurs through reinforcement, punishment, and conditioning.

Example: A child learns to complete homework on time because parents give praise (positive reinforcement).

Activity: Observe a habit you or someone else has. Identify whether it is reinforced positively, negatively, or punished.

3. Cognitive Approach

Focuses on mental processes such as thinking, memory, and problem-solving.

Explains behavior through how people perceive, process, and store information.

Example: Students use mnemonic devices to remember lecture notes.

Activity: Write down steps for a complex task (e.g., making tea). Discuss how cognitive processes guide each step.

4. Humanistic Approach

Emphasizes personal growth, self-actualization, and free will.

People are inherently good and capable of making positive choices.

Example: Encouraging someone to pursue their passion for art or sports to achieve self-fulfillment.

Activity: Set a personal goal for the week and write a plan to achieve it, reflecting on your strengths.

5. Psychodynamic Approach

Focuses on unconscious motives, early childhood experiences, and inner conflicts.

Developed by Sigmund Freud, includes the concepts of id, ego, and superego.

Example: Fear of dogs may be linked to a childhood incident that is not consciously remembered.

Activity: Reflect on a recurring fear or habit. Write possible unconscious reasons behind it.

6. Evolutionary Approach

Behavior and mental processes have evolved to solve adaptive problems.

Example: Fear of snakes may be inherited because it helps humans survive.

Lesson 3: Comparing Psychological Approaches

Approach	Focus	Example	Key Concept
Biological	Brain & genetics	Stress hormones affecting mood	Neurotransmitters & hormones
Behavioral	Observable behavior	Rewards for completing tasks	Reinforcement & punishment
Cognitive	Mental processes	Memory strategies	Perception, thinking, learning
Humanistic	Personal growth	Pursuing a passion	Self-actualization & free will
Psychodynamic	Unconscious & childhood	Fears linked to past experiences	Id, Ego, Superego
Evolutionary	Adaptation & survival	Phobias of dangerous animals	Natural selection

Reflection Questions:

1. Which approach best explains your behavior in stressful situations?
2. Can two approaches be combined to understand a single behavior? Give an example.

Lesson 4: Applying Psychological Approaches in Daily Life

Workplace: Cognitive approaches help improve productivity by designing better tasks.

School: Behavioral approaches guide classroom management and learning strategies.

Personal Growth: Humanistic psychology encourages self-reflection and goal setting.

Mental Health: Psychodynamic and biological approaches are used in therapy and medication planning.

Activity:

Scenario Analysis: Read the following scenario:

Maria gets anxious before exams. She studies irregularly but feels stressed every test.

Identify which psychological approach could explain Maria's behavior. Suggest one strategy from that approach to help her.

Lesson 5: Mini Project / Practical Exercise

“Understanding Yourself Through Approaches”

1. Choose one daily habit or behavior.
2. Analyze it from at least two psychological approaches.

For example, studying late at night:

Behavioral: You're reinforced by good grades.

Cognitive: You plan and organize your study schedule mentally.

3. Write a reflection (1–2 pages) on how understanding these approaches can help improve the behavior.

Summary

- Psychology has multiple approaches that explain behavior and mental processes from different perspectives.
- Biological, Behavioral, Cognitive, Humanistic, Psychodynamic, and Evolutionary are the main approaches.
- Understanding these approaches helps in research, therapy, education, and personal growth.
- Applying these approaches in daily life improves decision-making, relationships, and self-awareness.