

### ③ Freud's Psychosexual Stage Theory (Identification Theory)

Sigmund Freud developed a theory of how our sexuality starts from a very young ages and develops through various fixations. If these stages are not psychologically completed and released, we can be trapped by them and they may lead to various defense mechanisms to avoid the anxiety produced from the conflict in and leaving of the stage

According to Sigmund Freud, personality is mostly established by the age of five. Early experiences play a large role in personality development and continue to influence behavior later in life.

Freud's theory of psychosexual development is one of the best known, but also one of the most controversial. Freud believed that personality develops through a series of childhood stages during which the pleasure-seeking energies of the id become focused on certain erogenous areas. This psychosexual energy, or libido, was described as the driving force behind behavior.

If these psychosexual stages are completed successfully, the result is a healthy personality. If certain issues are not resolved at the appropriate stage, fixation can occur. A fixation is a persistent focus on an earlier psychosexual stage. Until this conflict is resolved, the individual will remain "stuck" in this stage. For example, a person who is fixated at the oral stage may be over-dependent on others and may seek oral stimulation through smoking, drinking, or eating.

### Oral stage

Age Range: Birth to 1 Year (18 months)

#### Erogenous Zone: Mouth

During the oral stage, the infant's primary source of interaction occurs through the mouth, so the rooting and sucking reflex is especially important. The mouth is vital for eating, and the infant derives pleasure from oral stimulation through gratifying activities such as tasting and sucking. Because the infant is entirely dependent upon caretakers (who are responsible for feeding the child), the infant also develops a sense of trust and comfort through this oral stimulation.

The primary conflict at this stage is the weaning process--the child must become less dependent upon caretakers. If fixation occurs at this stage, Freud believed the individual would have issues with dependency or aggression. Oral fixation can result in problems with drinking, eating, smoking or nail biting.

### Anal Stage

Age Range: 1 Year-3 years

#### Erogenous Zone: Bowel and Bladder Control

During the anal stage, Freud believed that the primary focus of the libido (sexual desire) was on controlling bladder and bowel (intestine) movements. The major conflict at this stage is toilet training the child has to learn to control his or her bodily needs. Developing this control leads to a sense of accomplishment and independence.

According to Freud, success at this stage is dependent upon the way in which parents approach toilet training. Parents who utilize praise and rewards for using the toilet at the appropriate time encourage positive outcomes and help children feel capable and productive. Freud believed that positive experiences during this stage served as the basis for people to become competent, productive and creative adults.

⇒ Positive reward - Positive change.

However, not all parents provide the support and encouragement that children need during this stage. Some parents' instead punish, ridicule or shame a child for accidents. According to Freud, inappropriate parental responses can result in negative outcomes. If parents take an approach that is too lenient, Freud suggested that an anal-expulsive personality could develop in which the individual has a messy, wasteful or destructive personality. If parents are too strict or begin toilet training too early, Freud believed that an anal-retentive personality develops in which the individual is stringent (strict), orderly (obedient), rigid and obsessive.

### The Phallic Stage

Age Range: 3 to 6 Years => sense develop for their sexual organs.

Erogenous Zone: Genitals (external sex organs)

During the phallic stage, the primary focus of the libido is on the genitals. At this age, children also begin to discover the differences between males and females.

Freud also believed that boys begin to view their fathers as a rival for the mother's affections. The Oedipus complex describes these feelings of wanting to possess the mother and the desire to replace the father. However, the child also fears that he will be punished by the father for these feelings, a fear Freud termed castration anxiety.

*Girl/ boy feel possess. for their mother*  
*Boy feeling jealous from his father.*  
 The term Electra complex has been used to describe a similar set of feelings experienced by young girls. Freud, however, believed that girls instead experience penis envy.

Eventually, the child begins to identify with the same-sex parent as a means of vicariously possessing the other parent. For girls, however, Freud believed that penis envy was never fully resolved and that all women remain somewhat fixated on this stage. Psychologists such as Karen Horney disputed this theory, calling it both inaccurate and demeaning (humiliating) to women. Instead, Horney proposed that men experience feelings of inferiority because they cannot give birth to children.

### Evaluating Freud's Psychosexual Stage Theory

- The theory is focused almost entirely on male development with little mention of female psychosexual development.
- His theories are difficult to test scientifically. Concepts such as the libido are impossible to measure, and therefore cannot be tested. The research that has been conducted tends to discredit Freud's theory.
- Future predictions are too vague. How can we know that a current behavior was caused specifically by a childhood experience? The length of time between the cause and the effect is too long to assume that there is a relationship between the two variables.
- Freud's theory is based upon case studies and not empirical research. Also, Freud based his theory on the recollections of his adult patients, not on actual observation and study of children. \*

Criticism Major criticism, his theory is scientifically not approved.

Since Dr. Freud's presentation of the theory of psychosexual development in 1905, no evidence has confirmed that extended breast-feeding might lead to an oral-stage fixation, nor that it contributes to a

person becoming maladjusted or to developing addictions (psychological, physiologic). The pediatrician Dr. Jack Newman proposed that breast feeding a child until he or she chooses to wean (2-4 years of age) generally produces a more psychologically secure and independent person. Contradicting the Freudian psychosexual development concept of oral-stage fixation, the *Duration of Breast-feeding and the Incidence of Smoking* (2003) study of 87 participants reported no causal relation between the breast-feeding period and whether or not a child matures into a man or woman who smokes

In Freudian psychoanalysis, the term oral stage denotes the first psychosexual development stage wherein the mouth of the infant is his or her primary erogenous zone. Spanning the life period from birth to the age of 21 months, the oral stage is the first of the five Freudian psychosexual development stages: (i) the Oral, (ii) the Anal, (iii) the Phallic, (iv) the Latent, and (v) the Genital. Moreover, because it is the infant's first human relationship biological (nutritive) and psychological (emotional) its duration depends upon the child-rearing mores (customs) of the mother's society.

### Terms Related to Identification Theory:

#### ⇒ Oedipus

Despite mother being the parent who primarily gratifies the child's desires, the child begins forming a discrete sexual identity "boy", "girl" that alters the dynamics of the parent and child relationship; the parents become the focus of infantile libidinal energy. The boy focuses his libido (sexual desire) upon his mother, and focuses jealousy and emotional rivalry against his father because it is he who sleeps with mother. To facilitate uniting him with his mother, the boy's id wants to kill father (as did Oedipus), but the ego, pragmatically (logically) based upon the reality principle, knows that the father is the stronger of the two males competing to possess the one female. Nevertheless, the boy remains ambivalent (unable to decide) about his father's place in the family, which is manifested as fear of castration by the physically greater father; the fear is an irrational, subconscious manifestation of the infantile Id.

#### ⇒ Electra

Whereas boys develop castration anxiety, girls develop penis envy that is rooted in anatomic (relating to the structure of the body) fact: without a penis, she cannot sexually possess mother, as the infantile id demands. Resultantly, the girl redirects her desire for sexual union upon father; thus, she progresses towards heterosexual femininity that culminates (finish) in bearing a child who replaces the absent penis.

### Psychological Defense

In both sexes, defense mechanisms provide transitory (temporary) resolutions of the conflict between the drives of the Id and the drives of the Ego. The first defense mechanism is **Repression** (suppression), the blocking of memories, emotional impulses, and ideas from the conscious mind; yet it does not resolve the Id-Ego conflict. The second defense mechanism is **Identification**, by which the child incorporates, to his or her ego, the personality characteristics of the same-sex parent; in so adapting, the boy diminishes his castration anxiety, because his likeness to father protects him from father's wrath as a rival for mother; by so adapting, the girl facilitates identifying with mother, who understands that, in being females, neither of them possesses a penis, and thus they are not antagonists. (rivals)