

CHILD DEVELOPMENT THEORISTS

Today we will review the basic theories of Erik Erikson, Sigmund Freud, Arnold Gesell, Lawrence Kohlberg, Abraham Maslow, and Jean Piaget.

ERIKSON (ERIK)

Erik Erikson developed eight specific stages of personality from birth to old age. He believes that the personality develops continuously throughout the life cycle. The individual's personality is in constant motion; it is always redeveloping itself.

1. Developing a sense of trust versus mistrust--**INFANCY**--The degree to which a child comes to trust or mistrust others is determined to a great extent on the quality of care received. Babies that receive love and attention develop confidence and trust in people. Babies that are neglected and abused become insecure and mistrustful.
2. Developing a sense of autonomy versus shame--**2-4 YEARS**--During this stage, children experience freedom or self-direction. If parents recognize the child's need to exercise these skills at the child's own pace, the child will develop a sense of autonomy; if the parents ignore or discourage this stage, the child will begin to doubt himself/herself.
3. Developing a sense of initiative versus guilt--**4-6 YEARS**--At this age, a child has control of his/her body and initiates motor activities as well as fantasy and language activities. If told that his/her activities are senseless or futile, a sense of guilt develops about having initiated them. They also begin to learn social skills (cooperating, leading, and following).
4. Developing a sense of industry versus inferiority--**SCHOOL AGE**--If growing curiosity is encouraged, the child will develop a sense of industry; if his/her sense of industry is discouraged, the child will feel inferior. They learn that work is worthwhile and meaningful. They learn to discipline themselves and to get along with others.
5. Developing a sense of identity versus role confusion--**ADOLESCENCE**--Identity is determined by the ability of the individual to bring together all the things learned about himself/herself and integrate these different roles into a whole that shows continuity with the past while preparing for the future. Adolescents begin to mature and to view the world differently. They have a strong need to establish an identity and require good role models. If one's identity is not found, an individual can find himself/herself preoccupied with appearance in the eyes of others, conforming and feeling an overall failure.
6. Developing a sense of intimacy versus isolation--**YOUNG ADULTHOOD**--Intimacy is the ability to share with and care about another person without fear of losing oneself in the process. This sort of intimacy makes possible a good marriage or a genuine and enduring friendship. Young adults that succeed in this stage have accepted themselves for who they are and as worthwhile people. If there is difficulty in finding close personal relations because the special self has not found itself, there comes a feeling of isolation and loneliness.

7. Developing a sense of generativity versus self-absorption--ADULTHOOD--Generativity is a concern for family as well as people beyond the immediate family group. Lack of this concern may result in self-absorption or making personal needs one's primary concern.
8. Developing a sense of integrity versus despair--AGING--Integrity results from an individual's ability to look back on life with satisfaction. Those who cannot and who have regrets in life have a sense of despair.

FREUD (SIGMUND)

Freud's theories have influenced many theorists over the years. Freud's most known studies are the three theoretical components of personality and the psychosexual stages.

THREE THEORETICAL COMPONENTS OF PERSONALITY

Freud believed that humans have unconscious driven motives. These drives are the ID, the EGO, and the SUPEREGO.

1. ID--This is the pleasure principle. The id is the source of our unconscious impulses toward gratification of our needs. Basically the id wants whatever seems satisfying and enjoyable, and it wants it NOW!
2. EGO--This is the reality principle. The role of the ego is to mediate between unbridled demands of the id and the limits imposed by the real world and the superego. The ego operates according to how the superego thinks it should be.
3. SUPEREGO--This is the selection of right from wrong principle. The superego is like a relentless conscience that distinguishes right from wrong.

PSYCHOSEXUAL THEORY

During the first five to six years of life, children go through stages in which they have a sexual interest that focuses on particular parts of the body, namely the mouth and the anus. Freud believed that how a child experiences the various conflicts in each stage determines his/her basic personality. Therefore, by age five or six, Freud believed the personality was fixed. Then between the ages of seven to eleven, children go through a stage of sexual latency in which they have dormant or no sexual interests or focuses. As a person enters adolescence, they enter the genital stage. This stage lasts throughout adulthood. Following is a brief description of Freud's psychosexual stages:

1. ORAL stage--The mouth is the principle region of dynamic activity during infancy. In the beginning, the child's activities are dominated by the mouth zone. A mouth seeks, nurses, bites, tastes, wails, and coos. The child's first loves and needs are expressed by way of the mouth. The child learns to know the world solely through the mouth. Two modes of oral activity, incorporation of food and biting, are the prototypes for many later character traits that develop.

2. **ANAL stage**--During this stage, the anus is the focus of pleasurable sensations in the baby's body. Toilet training, which is normally initiated during the second year, is the most important activity.
3. **PHALLIC stage**--During this stage of personality development, the genitals, or more specifically the phallus or the penis, are the most important body parts. Boys are extremely proud of their penises. Girls are said to be envious of the penis and wonder why they do not have one. Children of both sexes fantasize about relationships with their parents, for which they feel guilty.
4. **LATENCY stage**--During the ages between seven and eleven the child is more placid. Their sexual needs are relatively quiet. This stage is more of an interlude in which children put their energy into learning skills.
5. **GENITAL stage**--During adolescence, and also throughout adulthood, the genitals are the focus of pleasurable sensations. During this stage, individuals seek sexual stimulation and satisfaction. The adolescent begins to love others for altruistic motives and not simply for selfish or narcissistic reasons. Sexual attraction, socialization, group activities, vocational planning, and preparations for marrying and raising a family begin to manifest themselves. The principle biological function of the genital stage is that of reproduction. Freud believed the goal of a healthy adult was to love and to work.

GESELL (ARNOLD)

Arnold Gesell's theory is concerned with the physical development of children. Gesell observed hundreds of children and came up with the physical developmental age-norms. He determined the normal sequence of development and at what age children should be able to do certain things, like sit up, roll over, crawl, walk, grasp objects, etc. These age-norms are still used today by the medical profession, the psychology professions, and child-related fields. These age norms give us a standard by which to monitor a child's development.

KOHLBERG (LAWRENCE)

Lawrence Kohlberg's theory is based on how children develop morally. His theory has three levels of moral development: preconventional, conventional, and postconventional.

1. **Preconventional:** Children begin life with no sense of right or wrong. However, children learn quickly that certain behaviors are punished and other behaviors are rewarded. Therefore, they avoid behaviors that are punished and strive for behavior or acts that are rewarded.
2. **Conventional:** At approximately age 9, children learn to behave according to a sense of what others need or want. They will follow rules that have been established and respect authority. The children are now acting in regards to right and wrong. Basically, children have learned the typical or conventional ways of acting based on what is right and what is wrong.
3. **Post Conventional:** Around the age of 16, individuals mature morally. They respect human rights and develop individual principles to guide their behavior. The motivation to act a certain way comes from within. They have progressed beyond just following the rules.

MASLOW (ABRAHAM)

Abraham Maslow's theory is a humanistic theory in which each person has his/her own inner nature and a strong motivation to express that nature. However, the basic survival needs, which all living organisms have, must be met. Therefore, Maslow created the hierarchy of needs. The hierarchy of needs begins with food, water, and shelter. It then moves to a high level of more exclusive human needs. If a person's lower needs are not met, then that person must spend time and energy trying to meet these basic needs, therefore, stunting the normal drive for love, esteem, and self-fulfillment.

1. Physiological needs: air, food, drink, rest
2. Safety needs: security, stability, freedom from fear and anxiety
3. Love and belonging: affection, intimacy from friends and family
4. Esteem needs: self-respect, respect for others
5. Self-actualization needs: doing what one is suited for and capable of doing

Review the transparency of Maslow's chart

PIAGET (JEAN)

Jean Piaget's theory has four major stages that are concerned mainly with children's cognitive or mental development. He believed that children at different ages think differently. His four stages are as follows:

1. **Sensorimotor:** This stage occurs between birth and age two. It has six sub stages in which children learn and experience the world by using their senses (sight, sound, touch, smell, and taste). They combine the use of their senses with their motor skills, hence the term sensorimotor. During this stage, the child will learn complex behaviors. The child is egocentric, or believes that the world and the people in it revolve around him/her. By the end of this stage, the child will have learned to experiment, to solve problems, and to pretend.
2. **Preoperational:** This stage occurs between ages 2-7. The child begins to form concepts and use symbols. This allows the child to communicate and gain language development. The child can imitate actions that he/she has observed beforehand. The child is not interested in logical explanations but is interested in discovering things for himself/herself. The child becomes increasingly less egocentric, but he/she still believes that other people think the same as he/she does.
3. **Concrete Operational:** This stage occurs between ages 7-11. This is a time when children learn to reason and use simple deductive logic to arrive at conclusions. The child is able to imagine what another person might be thinking or feeling and, therefore, his/her thinking becomes more flexible. However, the situation or his/her thinking must involve concrete objects or be based on real life circumstances.
4. **Formal Operational:** This stage occurs between ages 11-15. This stage is the highest level of mental development, according to Piaget's theory. Children can think abstractly as well as accurately draw conclusions. They can look to the future or recall the past. They can distinguish between realistic and unrealistic possibilities. In this stage, individuals can conceptualize "if..., then..." situations. According to Piaget, some people, even adults, never master all the intellectual skills associated with this stage of development.