

Freud's Stages of Psychosexual Development

libido

- Freud believed that personality developed through a series of childhood stages in 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.

- Psychoanalytic theory suggested that 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.

fixation

- If these psychosexual stages are completed successfully, a healthy personality is the result.
- If certain issues are not resolved at the appropriate stage, fixations 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.

The Oral Stage Age Range: Birth to 1 Year

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**.

Oral

- The primary conflict at this stage is the weaning process(withdrawing mother's milk)-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.

The Anal Stage

- **Age Range: 1 to 3 years**
- **Erogenous Zone: Bowel and Bladder Control**
- During the anal stage, Freud believed that the primary focus of the libido was on **controlling bladder and bowel 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.

Anal....

- 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.
- 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.

Anal.....

- 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 stingent, orderly, rigid, and obsessive.

The Phallic Stage

- **Age Range: 3 to 6 Years**
- **Erogenous Zone: Genitals**
- 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**.

Phallic.....

- 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 to women.
- **Instead, Horney proposed that men experience feelings of inferiority because they cannot give birth to children, a concept she referred to as *womb envy*.**

The Latent Period

- **Age Range: 6 to Puberty**
- **Erogenous Zone: Sexual Feelings Are Inactive**
- During the latent period, the libido interests are suppressed.
- The development of the ego and superego contribute to this period of calm.
- The stage begins around the time that children enter into school and become more concerned with peer relationships, hobbies, and other interests.
- The latent period is a time of exploration in which the sexual energy is still present, but it is directed into other areas such as intellectual pursuits and social interactions.

The Genital Stage

- **Age Range: Puberty to Death**
- **Erogenous Zone: Maturing Sexual Interests**
- During the final stage of psychosexual development, the individual develops a strong sexual interest in the opposite sex.
- This stage begins during puberty but last throughout the rest of a person's life.
- Where in earlier stages the focus was solely on individual needs, interest in the welfare of others grows during this stage.
- If the other stages have been completed successfully, the individual should now be well-balanced, warm, and caring.