

Sigmund Freud: The Father of Psychoanalysis

Sigmund Freud revolutionized our understanding of the human mind through his development of psychoanalytic theory. Born in 1856 in the Czech Republic and dying in London in 1939, Freud spent most of his life in Vienna where he developed groundbreaking theories about personality, mental processes, and human behavior.

This presentation explores Freud's biography, his conceptualization of mental life, the provinces of the mind (id, ego, and superego), the dynamics of personality, and the defense mechanisms he identified. Through understanding Freud's work, we gain insight into the foundations of modern psychology and the complex workings of the human psyche.

Early Life and Education

Birth and Childhood

Born in 1856 in the Czech Republic, Freud's early childhood, including his relationships with his mother, father, and two older half-brothers, significantly influenced his later theories. Though born elsewhere, he would spend nearly 80 years of his life in Vienna.

Study with Charcot

In 1885, Freud received a traveling grant from the University of Vienna and studied in Paris with the famous French neurologist Jean-Martin Charcot. During his 4-month stay, he learned the hypnotic technique for treating hysteria.

1

2

3

Medical Education

Freud entered the University of Vienna Medical School not because he loved medical practice, but because he was intensely curious about human nature. He initially preferred teaching and conducting research in physiology, which he continued even after graduation.

Professional Development

1

Collaboration with Breuer

While still a medical student, Freud developed a close professional association and personal friendship with Josef Breuer, a well-known Viennese physician 14 years his senior. Breuer taught Freud about catharsis, the process of removing hysterical symptoms through "talking them out."

2

Seduction Theory

Freud initially believed he had made an important breakthrough with his "discovery" that neuroses have their etiology in a child's seduction by a parent. However, in 1897, he abandoned this theory in favor of his notion of the Oedipus complex.

3

Personal Crisis

During the late 1890s, Freud experienced what various biographers have described as a severe psychoneurosis, cardiac issues, intense oedipal conflicts, or a "creative illness" characterized by depression, neurosis, and an obsession with his own death.

The Interpretation of Dreams



26 30d
The Interpretation of
of Dreams
Dreams.
FRUU.

Breakthrough Publication

Despite his personal difficulties, Freud completed his greatest work, "Interpretation of Dreams" in 1900. This seminal text laid the foundation for psychoanalytic theory and practice, though it didn't immediately receive the recognition Freud had hoped for.

Dream Analysis

In this work, Freud proposed that dreams represent unconscious wishes and desires, often stemming from repressed childhood experiences. He developed techniques for analyzing dreams as a window into the unconscious mind.

Renewed Confidence

Following the publication of "Interpretation of Dreams," Freud experienced renewed self-confidence. In the five years that followed, he wrote several important works that helped solidify the foundation of psychoanalysis.

Levels of Mental Life: The Unconscious

1 Beyond Awareness

According to Freud, the unconscious contains all those drives, urges, or instincts that are beyond one's awareness but nevertheless motivate most people's words, feelings, and actions. He believed the unconscious could only be proved indirectly.

2 Evidence of the Unconscious

Freud saw the unconscious as the explanation for the meaning behind dreams, slips of the tongue, and certain kinds of forgetting, called repression. These phenomena provided windows into unconscious processes.

3 Phylogenetic Endowment

Not all unconscious processes spring from repression of childhood events. Freud believed that a portion of people's unconscious originates from the experiences of their early ancestors, passed on through generations of repetition.



Levels of Mental Life: Preconscious and Conscious

The Preconscious

The preconscious level contains elements that are not conscious but can become conscious either quite readily or with some difficulty. Its contents come from two sources: conscious perception and the unconscious. Events that are not associated with anxiety but are merely forgotten make up the contents of the preconscious.

The Conscious Mind

Consciousness plays a relatively minor role in psychoanalytic theory. It can be defined as those mental elements in awareness at any given point in time. It is the only level of mental life directly available to us. Ideas can reach consciousness from two different directions.

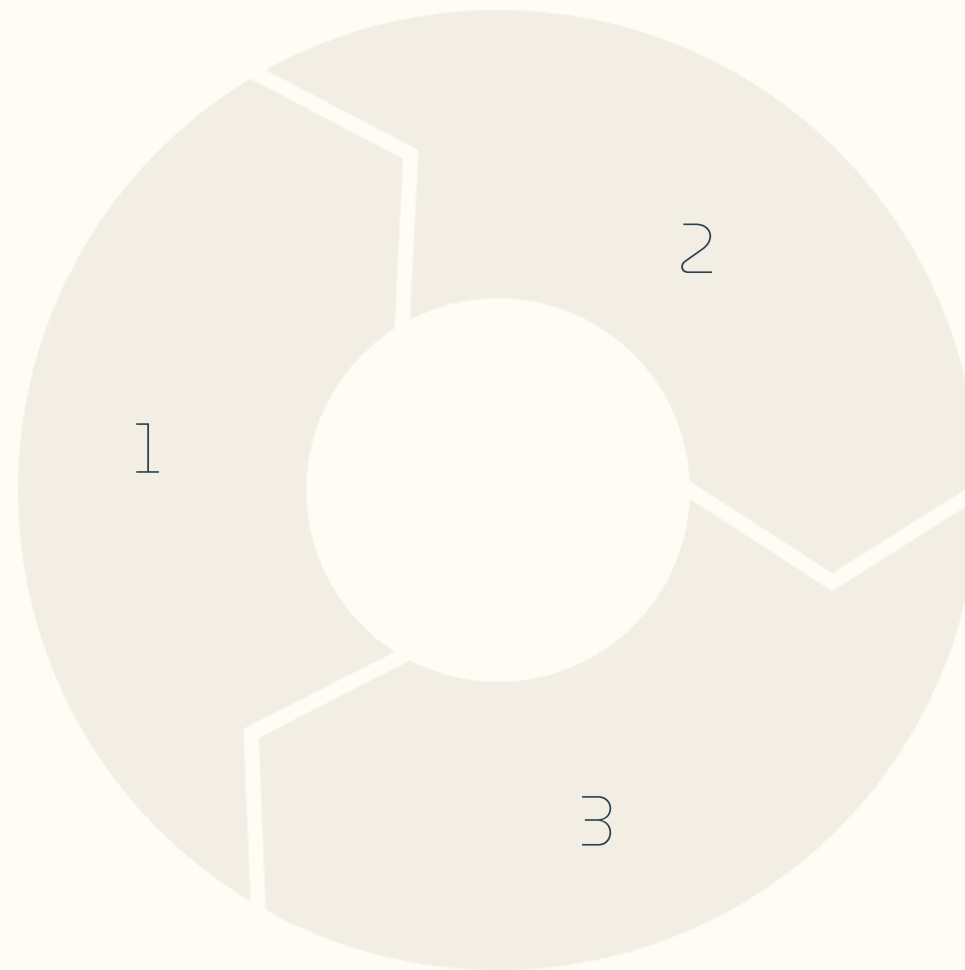
Sources of Conscious Elements

The first source is from a perceptual conscious system, turned toward the outer world and acting as a medium for the perception of external stimuli. The second source includes nonthreatening ideas from the preconscious as well as menacing but well-disguised images from the unconscious.

Provinces of the Mind: The Id

Primitive Mental Structure

The id (das Es or "it") is the most primitive part of the mind and is completely unconscious. It serves the pleasure principle and seeks constant and immediate satisfaction of instinctual needs.



Primary Process

As the region that houses basic drives, the id operates through the primary process. It blindly seeks to satisfy the pleasure principle without regard for reality or social norms.

Dependency on Secondary Process

The id's survival is dependent on the development of a secondary process to bring it into contact with the external world. This secondary process functions through the ego.

Provinces of the Mind: The Ego



Reality Principle

The ego, or "I" (das Ich), is governed by the reality principle, which it tries to substitute for the pleasure principle of the id. It weighs the costs and benefits of an action before deciding to act upon or abandon impulses.



Mediator

As the only region of the mind in contact with reality, the ego grows out of the id during infancy and becomes a person's sole source of communication with the external world. It mediates between the id, superego, and reality.



Executive Function

The ego becomes the decision-making or executive branch of personality. It makes rational decisions based on weighing the demands of the id and superego against the constraints of reality.

Provinces of the Mind: The Superego

1

Moral Guardian

The superego (das Über-Ich or "over-I") represents the moral and ideal aspects of personality.

2

Conscience

The conscience results from experiences with punishments for improper behavior and tells people what they should not do.

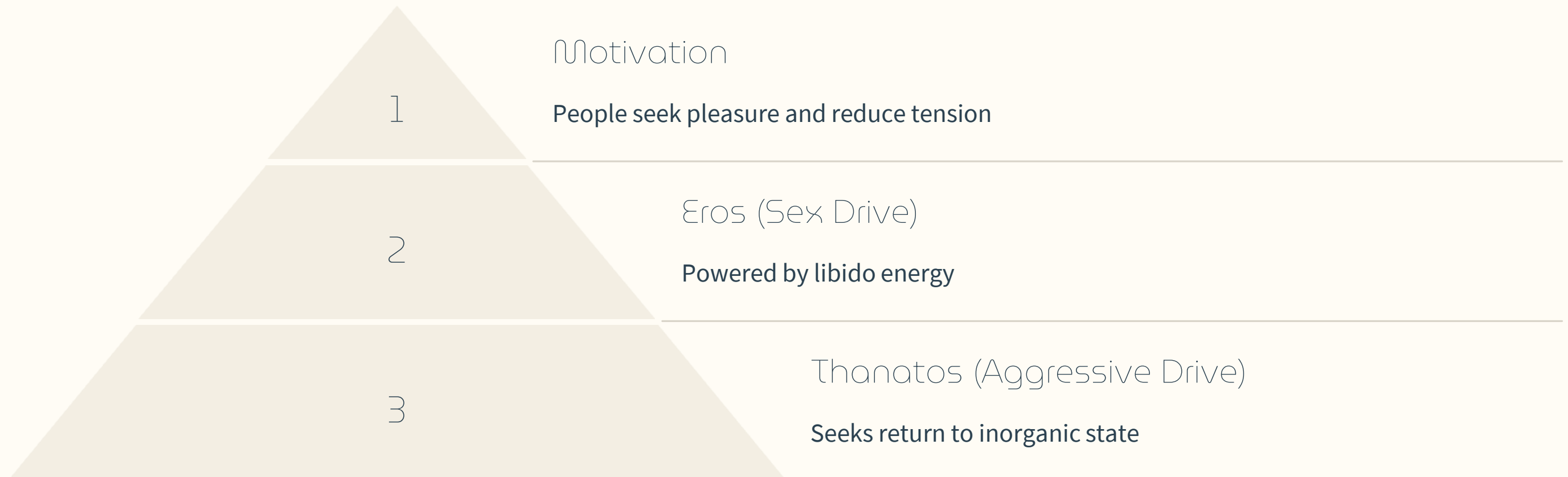
3

Ego-Ideal

The ego-ideal develops from experiences with rewards for proper behavior and tells people what they should do.

In Freudian psychology, the superego is guided by moralistic and idealistic principles, as opposed to the pleasure principle of the id and the realistic principle of the ego. It develops during childhood as a result of the internalization of parental and societal standards.

Dynamics of Personality: Drives



Freud postulated that people are motivated to seek pleasure and to reduce tension and anxiety. This motivation derives from psychical and physical energy that springs from their basic drives. Freud used the German word *Trieb* to refer to a drive or stimulus within a person.

According to Freud, the various drives can all be grouped under two major headings: sex (Eros) and aggression (Thanatos). Each drive has its own form of psychic energy: Freud used the word *libido* for the sex drive, but energy from the aggressive drive remains nameless.

The Sexual Drive: Eros



Primary Narcissism

Infants are primarily self-centered, with their libido invested almost exclusively on their own ego. This condition, which is universal, is known as primary narcissism. It represents the earliest manifestation of the sexual drive.



Secondary Narcissism

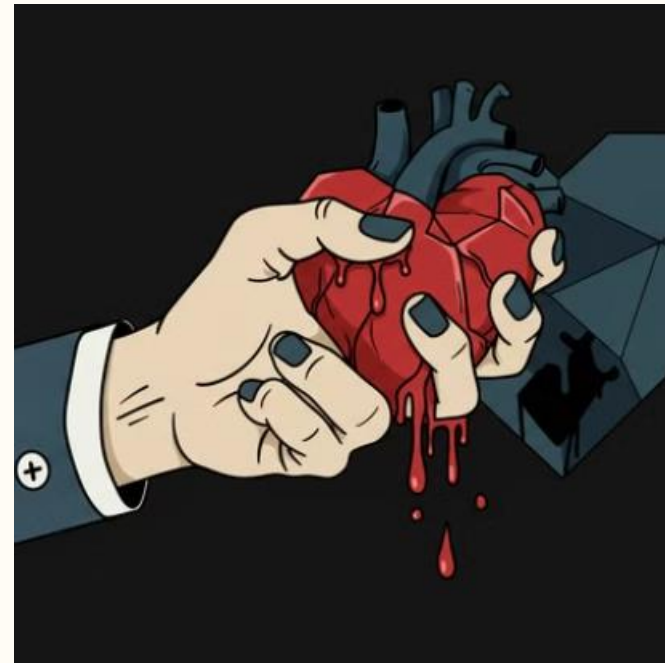
During puberty, adolescents often redirect their libido back to the ego and become preoccupied with personal appearance and other self-interests. This pronounced secondary narcissism is not universal, but a moderate degree of self-love is common to nearly everyone.



Mature Love

The aim of the sexual drive is pleasure, but this pleasure is not limited to genital satisfaction. Freud believed that the entire body is invested with libido, with the mouth, anus, and genitals being especially capable of producing sexual pleasure (erogenous zones).

Variations of the Sexual Drive



The sexual drive can take many forms beyond traditional expressions. Sadism is the need for sexual pleasure by inflicting pain or humiliation on another person. Masochism involves experiencing sexual pleasure from suffering pain and humiliation inflicted either by oneself or by others.

The flexibility of the sexual object or person can bring about further disguises of Eros. The erotic object can easily be transformed or displaced, leading to various expressions of sexuality. Both sadism and masochism possess generous components of the aggressive drive alongside the sexual drive.

The Aggressive Drive: Thanatos

1 Beyond the Pleasure Principle

Partially as a result of his unhappy experiences during World War I and partially as a consequence of the death of his beloved daughter Sophie, Freud wrote "Beyond the Pleasure Principle" (1920), a book that elevated aggression to the level of the sexual drive.

2 Return to Inorganic State

The aim of the destructive drive, according to Freud, is to return the organism to an inorganic state. This reflects a fundamental tendency toward self-destruction that exists alongside the life-preserving tendencies of Eros.

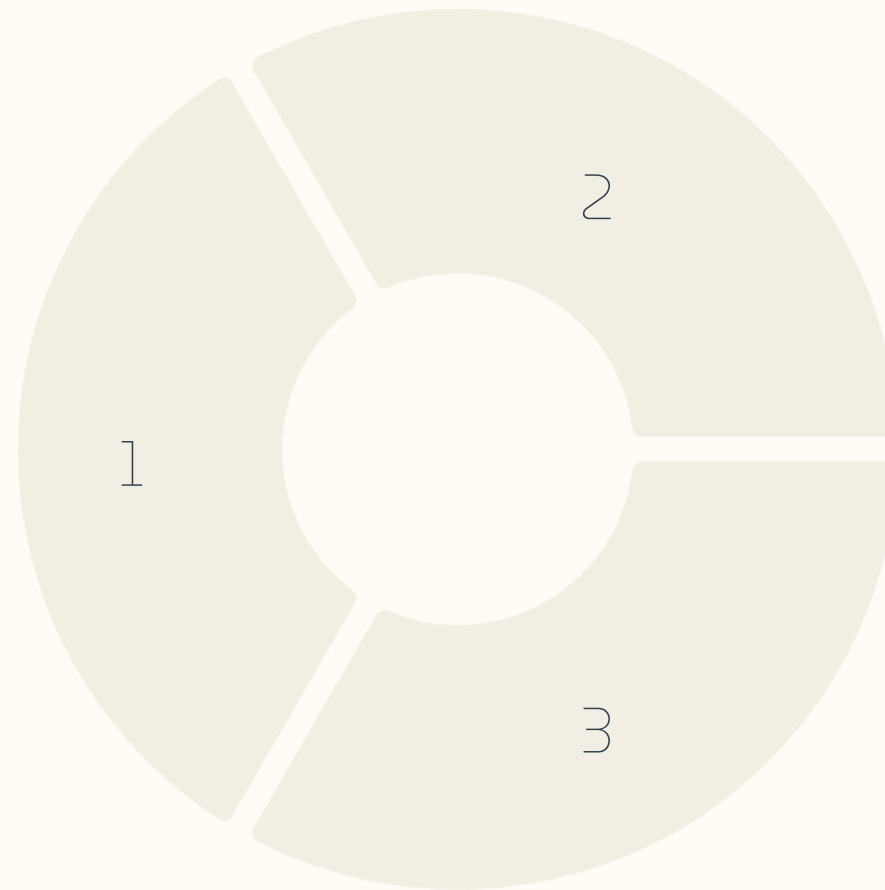
3 Social Barriers

The aggressive drive also explains the need for the barriers that people have erected to check aggression. Civilization itself can be seen as a series of structures designed to control and channel these destructive impulses.

Anxiety: The Engine of Defense

Neurotic Anxiety

Neurotic anxiety is defined as apprehension about an unknown danger. The feeling itself exists in the ego, but it originates from id impulses. When the ego feels threatened by unacceptable urges from the id, it experiences this form of anxiety.



Moral Anxiety

Moral anxiety stems from the conflict between the ego and the superego. It manifests as feelings of guilt, shame, and fear of punishment. This anxiety occurs when a person violates or considers violating their internalized moral code.

Realistic Anxiety

Realistic anxiety is closely related to fear and is defined as an unpleasant, nonspecific feeling involving a possible danger. It is a response to threats from the external world rather than from internal conflicts.

Sex and aggression share the center of Freudian dynamic theory with the concept of anxiety. Only the ego can produce or feel anxiety, but the id, superego, and external world each are involved in one of these three kinds of anxiety.

Defense Mechanisms: Overview

1926

Initial Concept

Freud first elaborated on the idea of defense mechanisms in 1926, introducing the concept as ways the ego protects itself from anxiety.

8

Major Mechanisms

The principal defense mechanisms identified by Freud include repression, reaction formation, displacement, fixation, regression, projection, introjection, and sublimation.

1946

Anna Freud's Contribution

Freud's daughter Anna further refined and organized the concept of defense mechanisms in her 1946 work, expanding on her father's theories.

Defense mechanisms are unconscious psychological operations that protect individuals from anxiety, unacceptable thoughts, and internal conflicts. They distort or deny reality to varying degrees and operate without conscious awareness.



Repression and Reaction Formation

Repression: The Foundation

The most basic defense mechanism, because it is involved in each of the others, is repression. Whenever the ego is threatened by undesirable id impulses, it protects itself by repressing those impulses; that is, it forces threatening feelings into the unconscious. In many cases the repression is then perpetuated for a lifetime.

Repression is particularly associated with traumatic or anxiety-producing experiences and thoughts that the conscious mind refuses to process. This mechanism forms the cornerstone of Freudian psychoanalytic theory.

Reaction Formation: The Opposite

One of the ways in which a repressed impulse may become conscious is through adopting a disguise that is directly opposite its original form. This defense mechanism is called a reaction formation. An example can be seen in a young woman who deeply resents and hates her mother.

Because she knows that society demands affection toward parents, such conscious hatred for her mother would produce too much anxiety. To avoid painful anxiety, the young woman concentrates on the opposite impulse—love. The stronger the original feeling, the more exaggerated the reaction formation may become.

Displacement and Fixation

Displacement: Redirecting Energy

Freud believed that reaction formations are limited to a single object. In displacement, however, people can redirect their unacceptable urges onto a variety of people or objects so that the original impulse is disguised or concealed. For example, a woman who is angry with her roommate may displace her anger onto her employees, her pet cat, or a stuffed animal.

Fixation: Developmental Arrest

Psychical growth normally proceeds in a somewhat continuous manner through the various stages of development. The process of psychologically growing up, however, is not without stressful and anxious moments. When the prospect of taking the next step becomes too anxiety provoking, the ego may resort to the strategy of remaining at the present, more comfortable psychological stage.

Clinical Implications

Both displacement and fixation have significant implications for personality development and psychopathology. Displacement can lead to phobias and other anxiety disorders, while fixation can result in persistent patterns of behavior that are characteristic of earlier developmental stages.

Regression and Projection

Regression: Moving Backward

Once the libido has passed a developmental stage, it may, during times of stress and anxiety, revert back to that earlier stage. Such a reversion is known as regression. Adults under severe stress may cry like children, throw temper tantrums, or otherwise show immature behaviors characteristic of earlier developmental periods.

Projection: Seeing Outside What's Inside

Projection can be defined as seeing in others unacceptable feelings or tendencies that actually reside in one's own unconscious. This mechanism allows people to express impulses by attributing them to others. An extreme type of projection is paranoia, a mental disorder characterized by powerful delusions of jealousy and persecution.

Defensive Function

Both regression and projection serve to protect the ego from anxiety. Regression provides comfort through returning to a time of less responsibility, while projection allows for the expression of unacceptable impulses without taking responsibility for them.

Introjection and Sublimation



Introjection: Taking In

Whereas projection involves placing an unwanted impulse onto an external object, introjection is a defense mechanism whereby people incorporate positive qualities of another person into their own ego. For example, an adolescent may introject or adopt the mannerisms, values, or lifestyle of a movie star.



Sublimation: Creative Redirection

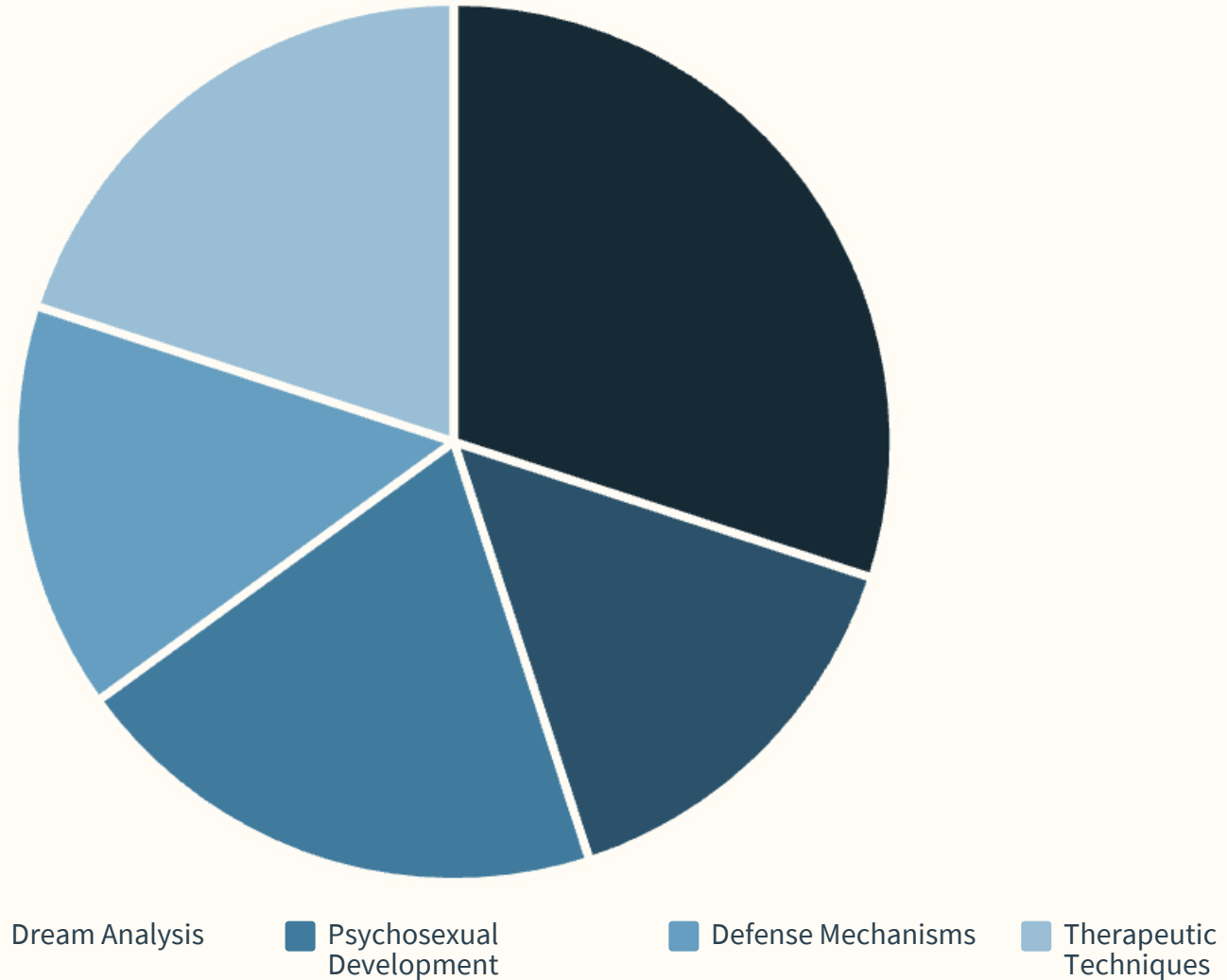
Sublimation is the repression of the genital aim of Eros by substituting a cultural or social aim. The sublimated aim is expressed most obviously in creative cultural accomplishments such as art, music, and literature, but more subtly, it is part of all human relationships and all social pursuits.



Adaptive Defense

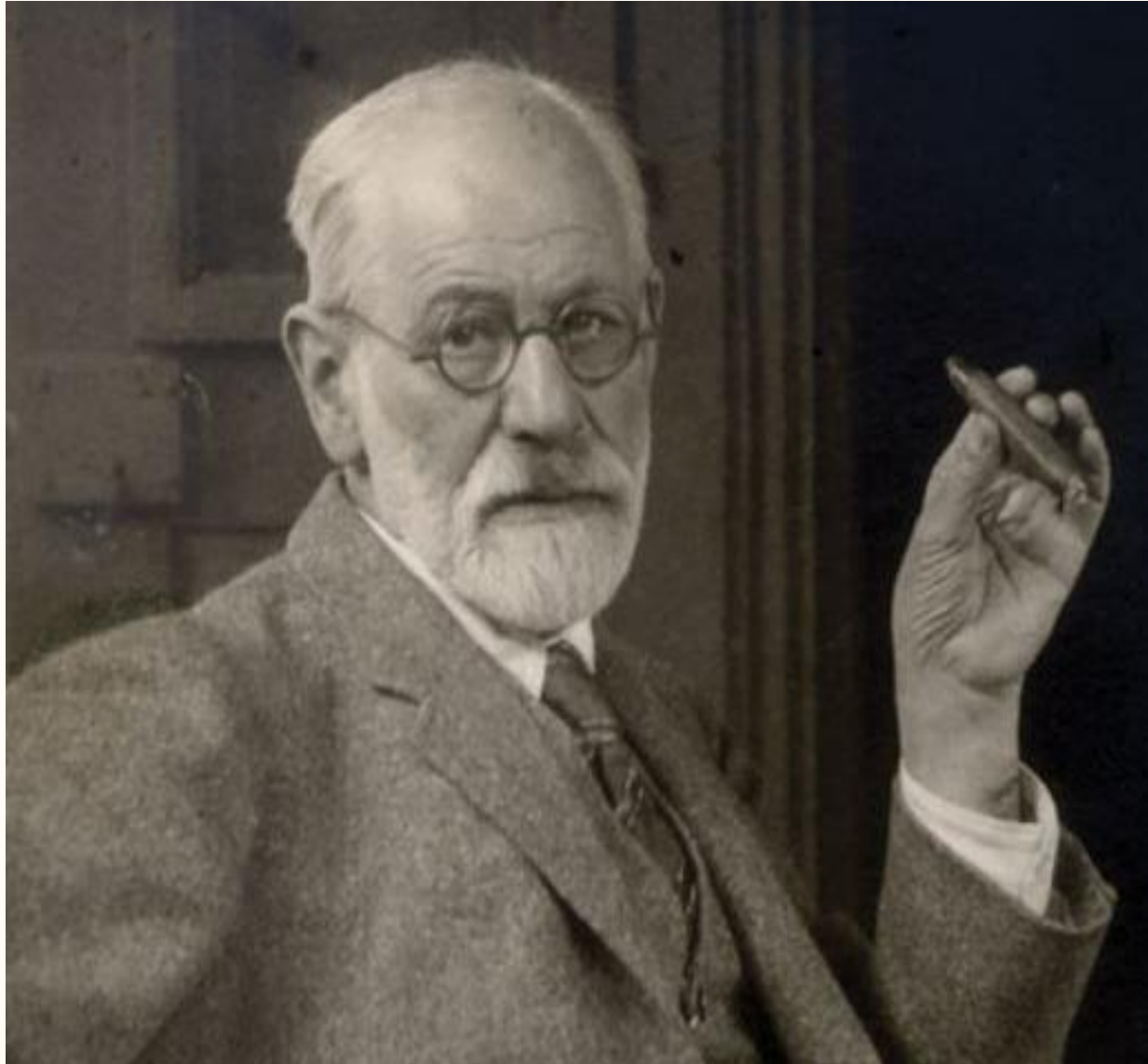
Of all the defense mechanisms, sublimation is considered the most constructive. Rather than simply blocking an impulse or redirecting it in a potentially harmful way, sublimation channels primitive energy into socially acceptable and even admirable activities.

Freud's Enduring Legacy



Sigmund Freud's theories have profoundly influenced not only psychology and psychiatry but also literature, art, philosophy, and popular culture. While many of his specific ideas have been modified or challenged by subsequent research, his core insights about unconscious motivation, psychological defense, and the importance of childhood experiences continue to shape our understanding of human behavior.

Freud's legacy lives on in the therapeutic techniques he pioneered, the vocabulary he introduced to discuss psychological phenomena, and his fundamental recognition that much of mental life occurs outside conscious awareness. His work opened new avenues for understanding the complexity of human motivation and behavior.

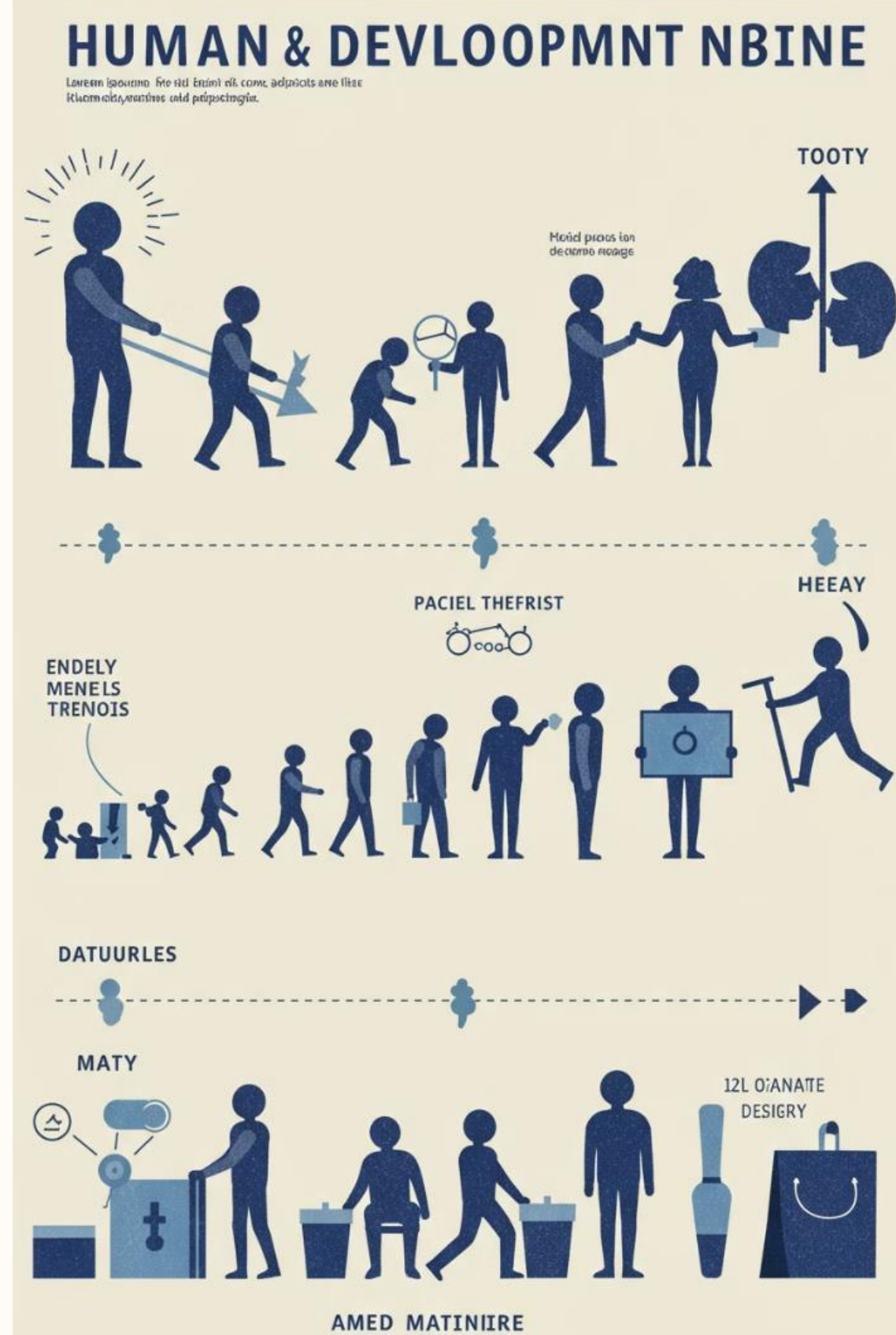


Freud's Psychoanalytic Theory

Sigmund Freud developed a comprehensive theory of personality development that emphasized the importance of early childhood experiences, unconscious processes, and psychosexual development. His work revolutionized our understanding of human psychology and laid the foundation for modern psychotherapy techniques.

Stages of Development

- 1** — Infantile Period
The first 4 or 5 years of life are the most crucial for personality formation according to Freud. During this stage, children go through pregenital sexual development.
- 2** — Latency Period
From the fourth or fifth year until puberty, both boys and girls usually go through a period of dormant psychosexual development, partly due to parents' attempts to discourage sexual activity.
- 3** — Genital Period
Beginning at puberty, this period signals a reawakening of the sexual aim and has basic differences from the infantile period.
- 4** — Maturity
A stage attained after a person has passed through the earlier developmental periods in an ideal manner, where consciousness would play a more important role in behavior.



The Infantile Period

One of Freud's most important assumptions is that infants possess a sexual life and go through a period of pregenital sexual development during the first 4 or 5 years after birth. Freud divided the infantile stage into three phases according to which the primary erogenous zones are undergoing the most salient development.

1

Oral Phase

During the oral phase, an infant is primarily motivated to receive pleasure through the mouth. Weaning is the principal source of frustration during this stage.

2

Anal Phase

The anal phase develops fully at about the second year of life, when toilet training is the child's chief source of frustration. This phase is divided into two subphases, the early anal and the late anal.

3

Phallic Phase

At approximately 3 or 4 years of age, children begin a third stage of infantile development, the phallic phase, a time when the genital area becomes the leading erogenous zone.

The Oral Phase



Pleasure Through the Mouth

During the oral phase, an infant is primarily motivated to receive pleasure through the mouth.

Weaning as Frustration

Weaning is the principal source of frustration during this stage.

Foundation for Later Development

This earliest phase sets the stage for later personality development according to Freud's theory.

The Anal Phase

1 Second Year Development

The anal phase develops fully at about the second year of life, when toilet training is the child's chief source of frustration.

3 Gift Offering

Frequently, children will present their feces to the parents as a valued prize. If parents reject the gift in a punitive fashion, children may adopt another method of obtaining anal pleasure— withholding the feces until the pressure becomes both painful and erotically stimulating.

2 Early and Late Subphases

This phase is divided into two subphases, the early anal and the late anal.

4 Anal Character Formation

This mode of narcissistic and masochistic pleasure lays the foundation for the anal character. This anal eroticism becomes transformed into the anal triad of orderliness, stinginess, and obstinacy that typifies the adult anal character.

The Phallic Phase

Age of Onset

At approximately 3 or 4 years of age, children begin a third stage of infantile development, the phallic phase, a time when the genital area becomes the leading erogenous zone.

Gender Dichotomy

This stage is marked for the first time by a dichotomy between male and female development, a distinction that Freud believed to be due to the anatomical differences between the sexes.

Source of Frustration

For both genders, suppression of masturbation is the principal source of frustration.

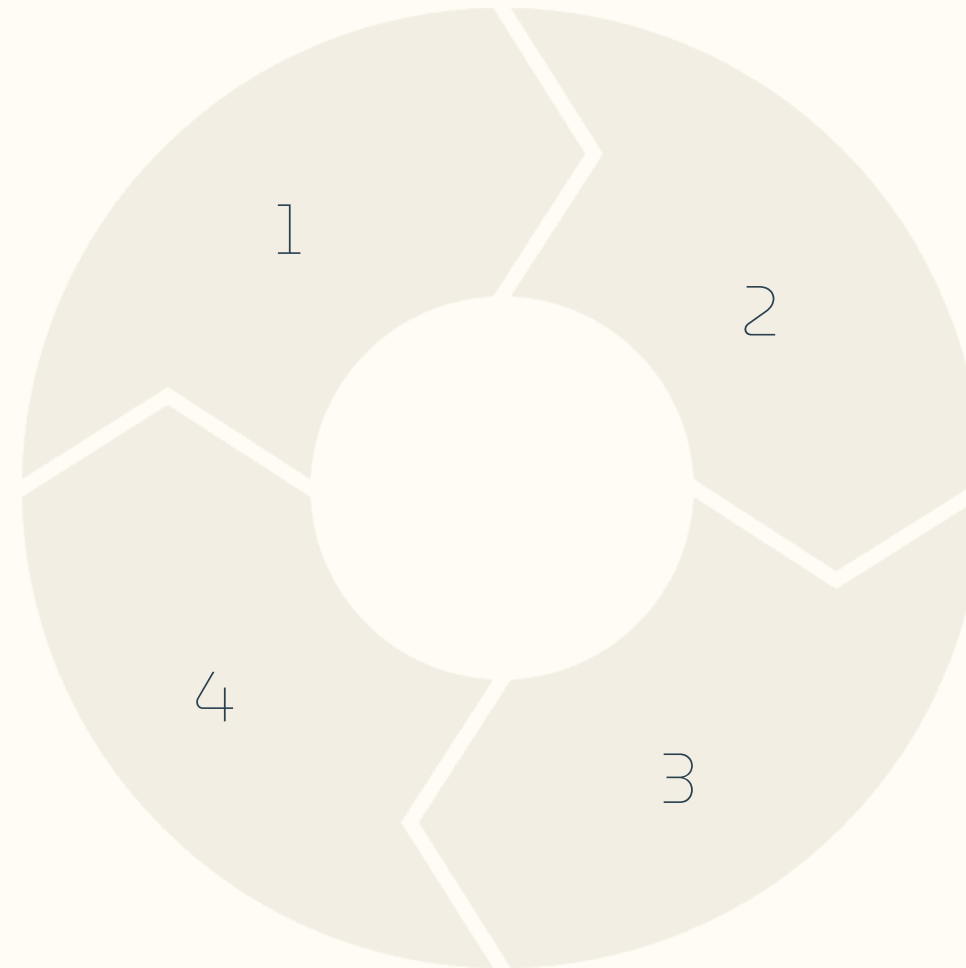
The Oedipus Complex

Sexual Feelings for One Parent

Young children experience the Oedipus complex in which they have sexual feelings for one parent.

Superego Formation

This results in a well-formed male superego.



Hostility Toward Other Parent

Simultaneously, they develop hostile feelings for the other parent.

Castration Complex

The male castration complex, which takes the form of castration anxiety or fear of losing the penis, breaks up the male Oedipus complex.

For girls, however, the castration complex, in the form of penis envy, precedes the female Oedipus complex, a situation that leads to only a gradual and incomplete shattering of the female Oedipus complex and a weaker, more flexible female superego.

Latency Period



Dormant
Development

Freud believed that, from the fourth or fifth year until puberty, both boys and girls usually, but not always, go through a period of dormant psychosexual development.



Parental
Influence

This latency stage is brought about partly by parents' attempts to punish or discourage sexual activity in their young children.



Temporary
Phase

This period serves as a bridge between the intense psychosexual development of early childhood and the reawakening that occurs at puberty.



Genital Period and Maturity

Puberty Signals

Puberty signals a reawakening of the sexual aim and the beginning of the genital period.

Diphasic Sexual Life

During puberty, the diphasic sexual life of a person enters a second stage, which has basic differences from the infantile period.

Continuation Through Life

The genital period begins at puberty and continues throughout the individual's lifetime. It is a stage attained by everyone who reaches physical maturity.

Psychological Maturity

In addition to the genital stage, Freud alluded to but never fully conceptualized a period of psychological maturity, a stage attained after a person has passed through the earlier developmental periods in an ideal manner. Consciousness would play a more important role in the behavior of mature people.

Applications of Psychoanalytic Theory

Freud was an innovative speculator, probably more concerned with theory building than with treating sick people. He spent much of his time conducting therapy not only to help patients but also to gain insights into human personality necessary to expound psychoanalytic theory.



Freud's Early Therapeutic Technique

1

Active Approach

Prior to his use of the rather passive psychotherapeutic technique of free association, Freud had relied on a much more active approach.

2

Dream Interpretation

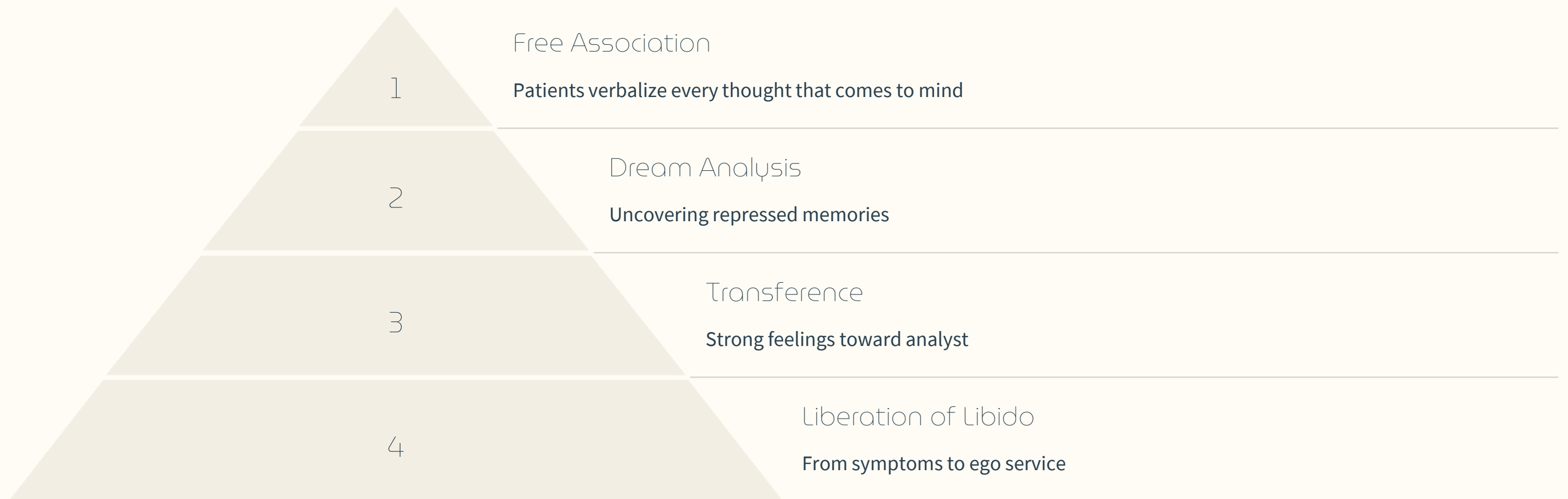
While using both dream interpretation and hypnosis, Freud told his patients to expect that scenes of childhood sexual experiences would come forth.

3

Shift in Understanding

Freud became increasingly convinced that neurotic symptoms were related to childhood fantasies rather than to material reality, and he gradually adopted a more passive psychotherapeutic technique.

Freud's Later Therapeutic Technique



The primary goal of Freud's later psychoanalytic therapy was to uncover repressed memories through free association and dream analysis. With free association, patients are required to verbalize every thought that comes to their mind, no matter how irrelevant or repugnant it may appear. In order for analytic treatment to be successful, libido previously expended on the neurotic symptom must be freed to work in the service of the ego.

This takes place in a two-phase procedure. "In the first, all the libido is forced from the symptoms into the transference and concentrated there; in the second, the struggle is waged around this new object and the libido is liberated from it." The transference situation is vital to psychoanalysis. Transference refers to strong sexual or aggressive feelings, positive or negative, that patients develop toward their analyst during the course of treatment.



Limitations of Psychoanalytic Treatment

Selective Memory Recovery

Not all old memories can or should be brought into consciousness.

Differential Effectiveness

Treatment is not as effective with psychoses or with constitutional illnesses as it is with phobias, hysterias, and obsessions.

Potential for Relapse

A patient, once cured, may later develop another psychic problem.

Complementary Approach

Recognizing these limitations, Freud felt that psychoanalysis could be used in conjunction with other therapies. However, he repeatedly insisted that it could not be shortened or modified in any essential way.

Dream Analysis

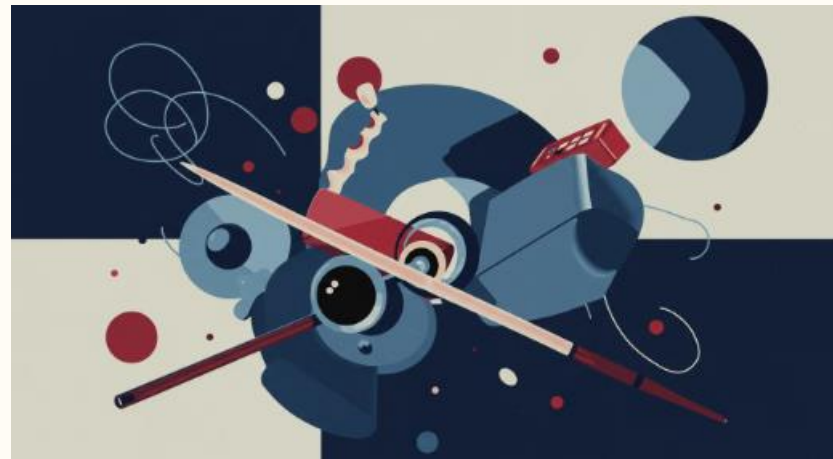
Manifest Content

The manifest content of a dream is the surface meaning or the conscious description given by the dreamer.



Latent Content

The latent content refers to its unconscious material.



Wish Fulfillment

The basic assumption of Freud's dream analysis is that nearly all dreams are wish fulfillments. Some wishes are obvious and are expressed through the manifest content, as when a person goes to sleep hungry and dreams of eating large quantities of delicious food. Most wish fulfillments, however, are expressed in the latent content and only dream interpretation can uncover that wish.

Traumatic Dreams and Repetition Compulsion

1 Exception to Wish Fulfillment

An exception to the rule that dreams are wish fulfillments is found in patients suffering from a traumatic experience.

2 Repetition Compulsion

Dreams of these people follow the principle of repetition compulsion rather than wish fulfillment.

3 Posttraumatic Stress

These dreams are frequently found in people with posttraumatic stress disorder who repeatedly dream of frightening or traumatic experiences.



Freudian Slips



Parapraxes

Freud believed that many everyday slips of the tongue or pen, misreading, incorrect hearing, misplacing objects, and temporarily forgetting names or intentions are not chance accidents but reveal a person's unconscious intentions.



Unconscious Revelations

In writing of these faulty acts, Freud used the German *Fehlleistung*, or "faulty function," but James Strachey, one of Freud's translators, invented the term parapraxes to refer to what many people now simply call "Freudian slips."

Related Research: Unconscious Mental Processing

2

Forms of Consciousness

Many scientists and philosophers have recognized two different forms of consciousness. First is the state of not being aware or awake, and second is the state of being aware.

The former is referred to as "core consciousness," whereas the latter is referred to as "extended consciousness." The brain stem, and the ascending activating system in particular, is the part of the brain most directly associated with core consciousness or unconsciousness in the sense of not being awake.

For instance, comas come from damage to this region of the brain stem and render a person unconscious. In contrast, being aware and able to reflect on one's knowledge and self is more a function of activity in the prefrontal cortex (the dorsal frontal cortex).

20

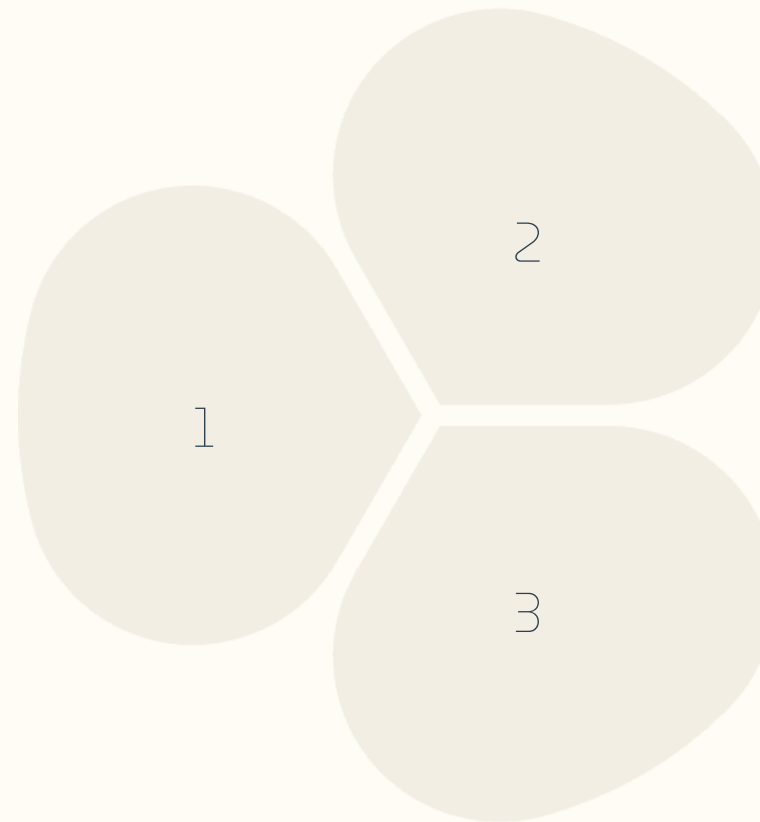
Years of Research

A major theme of cognitive psychology over the last 20 years has been the phenomenon of nonconscious mental processing, or what is referred to as "implicit," "nonconscious," or "automatic" thought and memory.

Research on Pleasure, Repression, and Defense Mechanisms

Pleasure and the Id

Findings from many different neuroscientific programs of research have established that the pleasure-seeking drives have their neurological origins in two brain structures, namely the brain stem and the limbic system. Moreover, the neurotransmitter dopamine is most centrally involved in most pleasure-seeking behaviors. In Freud's language, these are the drives and instincts of the id.



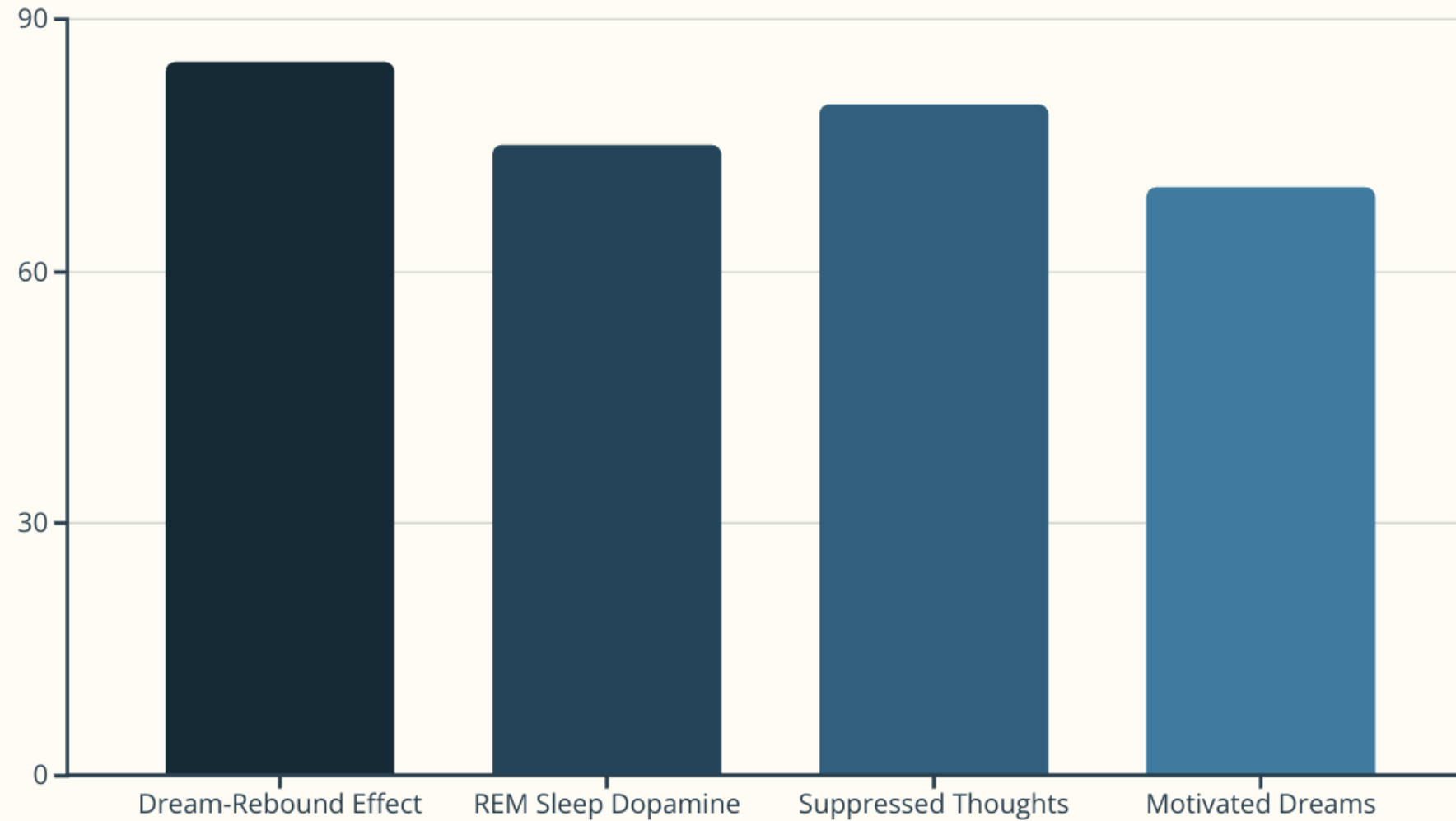
Repression Research

A study by Shevrin, Ghannam, and Libet examined the neurophysiological underpinnings of repression. More specifically, they addressed the question of whether people with repressive personality styles actually require longer periods of stimulation for a brief stimulus to be consciously perceived.

Defense Mechanisms

Some research on defense mechanisms has focused on the use of projection and identification in childhood and adolescence, whereas other work has investigated who is more likely to be a target of projection. From the neuropsychological perspective, Solms reports cases that explore the areas of the brain that may be implicated in the use and perseverance of defense mechanisms.

Research on Dreams



In the 1950s, when the phenomenon of rapid eye movement (REM) sleep was first discovered and found to be strongly associated with dreaming, many scientists began to discount Freud's theory of dreams, which was based on the idea that dreams have meaning and are attempts at fulfilling unconscious wishes.

Several empirical studies have confirmed Freud's claim in *Interpretation of Dreams* that "wishes suppressed during the day assert themselves in dreams." This has come to be known in the empirical literature as the "dream-rebound effect," wherein attempts to suppress unwanted thoughts prior to sleep lead to increased dreaming about that very target.

Researchers studying the neurochemistry of sleep—especially the rapid eye movement (REM) period where dreams are most likely to occur—report activation of the neurotransmitter dopamine. This is relevant to and consistent with Freud's theory that dreams are motivated and not just random neural activity. In sum, numerous lines of modern neuroscientific research appear to bear out some of Freud's key assumptions and ideas about dreams as motivated and as attempts to express suppressed and/or repressed ideas.

Critique of Freud

Understanding of Women

Freud acknowledged that he lacked a complete understanding of the female psyche. His views on femininity changed several times during his lifetime. During the early years of his career, Freud viewed male and female psychosexual growth as mirror images of each other, with different but parallel lines of development. However, he later proposed the notion that little girls are failed boys and that adult women are akin to castrated men.

Scientific Status

Although he repeatedly insisted that he was primarily a scientist and that psychoanalysis was a science, Freud's definition of science needs some explanation. When he called psychoanalysis a science, he was attempting to separate it from a philosophy or an ideology. He was not claiming that it was a natural science.

Research Support

Freud's most controversial ideas about sexual stages of development have garnered very little scientific support. Over the last 20 years, however, neuropsychanalytic research has been conducted that supports other key ideas set forth by Freud, namely the power of unconscious processes, the impact of childhood experiences on adult personality, the role of repression and meaning in dreams, and existence of defense mechanisms.

Falsifiability

Because much of the research evidence consistent with Freud's ideas can also be explained by other models, Freudian theory is nearly impossible to falsify.

Operational Definitions

Such terms as id, ego, superego, conscious, preconscious, unconscious, oral stage, sadistic-anal stage, phallic stage, Oedipus complex, latent level of dreams, and many others are not operationally defined; that is, they are not spelled out in terms of specific operations or behaviors.

View of Humanity

Freud's view of humanity was deterministic. His psychoanalytic theory is essentially pessimistic. Also, Freud's theory can be rated very high on causality over teleology. On the dimension of conscious versus unconscious, psychoanalytic theory leans heavily in the direction of unconscious motivation.