SIGMUND FREUD (PSYCHOANALYSIS)

The dictionary says that psychoanalysis is the psychology of the unconscious mind and the therapeutic method used to unlock the information in the unconscious is analysis.

Freud is called the father of psychoanalysis. He developed his psychoanalytic method of psychoanalysis using a technique that he called 'free association', working and developing this theory from 1892 - 1895. His basic theory was that neuroses in the individual are rooted in suppressed sexual desires and sexual experiences in childhood. Freud believed that humans are driven mainly by sex and aggression, the same basic instincts as animals and that society, and the individuals that make up that society, are in constant struggle against any expression of these.

Freud and Hypnosis

As part of his work Freud studied hypnosis with Joseph Breuer and developed the method of mental catharsis, where a patient 'talked out' his/her problems, reliving or remembering the circumstances under which these symptoms originated releasing and purging the accompanying emotions. Sometimes these emotions come through with quite a rush when there had been a blockage, causing what is known as an 'abreaction'. When working with patients under hypnosis Freud noticed there was an improvement in the patient when his/her ideas and impulses were brought into consciousness and that patients were usually able to talk freely under hypnosis. So he developed his theory of 'free association' helping the patients to bring that unconscious material into consciousness so that it could be understood.

Freud used hypnosis mainly with patients who had a hysterical personality and although he had short-term success with his patients he had not understood the principle of symptom substitution, which is an essential technique to use with hysterical patients. They need something to hang on to so will invent another problem, unless the symptom has been substituted during the hypnosis treatment to something that the patient feels is acceptable, but hopefully less debilitating. So he abandoned hypnosis, but failed to realise that when using his technique of 'free association', his patients were in an altered state of consciousness and therefore in a state of hypnosis.

Free Association

The technique of Free Association describes a mode of psychoanalysis where the patient speaks spontaneously his/her thoughts, ideas or words, without reservation, by saying whatever comes into his/her head so tapping into the unconscious mind. Sometimes the patient was unable to make free associations and Freud concluded that this was the minds’ defence mechanism, blocking off or denying repressed emotional situations that were too painful to keep in awareness in the conscious mind. Freud deduced that these were repressed disturbing sexual experiences.

Instincts

Instincts are our innate, inherited, unlearned and biologically useful behaviours. For Freud, instincts bridged the mental and organic spheres of the individual, but he did not see them as fixed motivators for behaviour.
**Id, Ego, Superego**

Freud believed that we have a tripartite mental apparatus that consists of the Id, the Ego, and the Superego.

- **The Id**
  
  The Id contains the psychic content related to the primitive instincts of the body, notably sex and aggression as well as all material inherited and present at birth. It is oblivious of the external world and unaware of the passage of time and functions on the pleasure-pain principle supplying energy for the development and continued function of mental life. Freud called the Id 'a cauldron of seething excitement'. It is a seething mass, primitive, repository of primitive and unacceptable impulses, completely selfish and unconcerned with reality or moral considerations or unorganised chaotic mentality. He felt the Id to be unreliable, not to be trusted.

- **The Ego**
  
  The Ego is literally the 'I', the system of rational and realistic functions of the personality. The Ego is one's perception of self. Its task is self-preservation, which it achieves by developing defence mechanisms. It gains control over the primitive demands of the Id, and influences the Id by what happens in the external world and replaces the pleasure principle with the reality principle with an objective appraisal of the world and one's place in it. It does this by insight - self-knowledge, by being able to plan and organise, by being able to choose a particular path, and not being overwhelmed by needs and desires.

- **The Superego**
  
  The Superego is the part of the Ego where self-observation and self-criticism and other reflective activities develop. The Superego behaves as a moral judge, criticising the thoughts and acts of the Ego, causing feelings of guilt and anxiety, when the Ego gratifies or tends to gratify the primitive impulses of the Id.

  Standards, restrictions and punishments imposed by authority figures are internalised into the superego. Freud's first use of the 'superego' related to his belief that obsessional ideas were self-reproaches for some sexual act performed with pleasure in childhood. Some people suffer from excessive conscience and rarely allow themselves pleasure.

So the human being needs to keep a balance of all three:

- the Id - maintaining basic instincts
- the Ego - the 'I' - maintaining the self of reality
- the Superego - maintaining our moral perception, belief and value systems.
The Libido
A quantitative measure of the energy of the sexual drive.

Bisexuality
Freud believed that all human beings are constitutionally psycho sexually bisexual. As evidence of this he points to the biological fact that males and females have vestiges of the organs of the other sex, and that the libido is asexual. Both the woman and man develop out of the child with a bisexual disposition.

Sublimation
Sublimation is part of the defence mechanism and in psychological terms is the channelling of what would be instinctual gratification, into new, learned behaviour, something that is more conforming to social values and behaviours and in a general sense is the redirection of energy from socially unacceptable behaviour to that which is acceptable: for example, finding an outlet for aggression in sport.

Ambivalence
Is where a person holds or has either of two contrary values, qualities or feelings, sometimes not being clear on their value, causing the person to be easily swayed by argument from a stronger force other than their own, for example prejudices, political views, etc.

Defence mechanisms
Defence mechanisms are unconscious methods of preventing repressed wishes associated with some real or imagined threat from rising into consciousness, often by denying or distorting some aspect of reality. These mental processes enable us to reach compromise solutions to problems we are unable to resolve any other way. Thus, internal drives, or feelings that threaten to lower our self-esteem or to provoke anxiety, are concealed from our conscious mind. Freud claimed that unconscious drives are often in conflict with one another and are the cause of mental disorders. Defence mechanisms are developed unconsciously to ward off internal and external dangers, and to protect the individual from being annihilated. Their purpose is thus to protect the Ego by diverting anxiety away from consciousness.

The functioning of the adult should be controlled by the perceptive and intelligent ego, and action by the ego ideally should satisfy the demands of the Id, Superego and reality. Defences are not necessarily pathological, even though the ego may not function adequately. They become pathological when they fail to ward off anxiety and when more defences have to be used to control the ego. Neurotic symptoms are then formed which interfere with pursuing a satisfactory way of living. Psychoses is where there is a complete breakdown of the defence system.

The principle defence mechanisms include:

- Compensation
  “I am the greatest” - we use this to cover our weaknesses
Material repressed into the unconscious by the conscious develops so much energy that it eventually breaks through as dreams, spontaneous images or neurotic symptoms. Compensation then acts as a link between the conscious and the unconscious.

- **Denial**
  
  “It hasn't happened”, “it's not really happening” - avoidance
  
  Employed to avoid becoming consciously aware of the painful thought, feeling or experience or event or part of self because the fact cannot be tolerated by the conscious mind. For example, when someone close dies.

- **Displacement**
  
  “He/she is to blame - not me”
  
  Shifting the affect from one mental image to another to which it does not really belong, in order to avoid anxiety. Channelling negative feelings onto a substitute. For example, a man coming home and having a row with his wife because of an incident at work.

- **Projection**
  
  “It's happened to you, not to me”
  
  The process by which one's own traits, emotions, dispositions, ideas, wishes and failings are attributed to others, who are then perceived as an external threat.

- **Rationalisation**
  
  “I would be different if…”
  
  The process one uses to make clear something that is confused, irrational and unclear, given an intellectual, rational explanation in an attempt to justify behaviour that might be unacceptable.

- **Reaction formation**
  
  “I never wanted to hit anyone in my life”
  
  A mechanism used to defend the ego against the anxiety of expressing a repressed wish, whereby we believe the opposite is true. This is closely associated with obsessive compulsive disorders. For example, a heavy drinker who gives up alcohol and becomes an ardent 'ban the drink' campaigner.
• **Regression**
  “I hate you - I hate you” (stamping of feet)

A return to an earlier level of functioning prompted by an unconscious desire to avoid anxiety and conflicts evoked at the present level of development - a remnant of the stages of development activated when under threat where previous anxiety is re-experienced. For example, a man or woman following an argument with a partner then returning to their mother.

• **Repression**
  “It never happened”

To put under, suppress, control, censor, exclude. Feelings are banished from consciousness in order to protect the EGO. This is the main cornerstone of psychoanalysis.

• **Sublimation**
  “I am dedicating my life to prayer instead of sex”
  The channelling of what would be instinctual gratification into new, learned behaviour, a redirection of energy.

In therapy the defence mechanisms are characterised by:

• **externalisation**
  “the fault is outside me”

• **blind spots**
  if I don't look, it will go away

• **excessive self control**
  I won't let anything upset me

• **being right**
  my mind is made up, don't confuse me with facts

• **elusiveness and confusion**
  don't pin me down
• Self-disparagement
  I am always wrong

• Playing the martyr role
  my suffering controls other people

**Displacement or Transference**

The displacement of feelings and attitudes applicable toward other persons (usually one's parents, but also siblings, a spouse, etc.) onto the analyst. Transference is termed either positive or negative, depending upon whether the person develops pleasant or hostile attitudes toward the analyst.

If transference is not recognised and worked through it may lead to a deterioration in the relationship and little progress is made in the therapy as transference means wanting to change the therapeutic relationship to something else. Analysis is considered to be complete only when the transference has been successfully resolved.

**The Psychosexual states of Freud**

Freud believed that all mental disturbances were caused through our primarily sexual nature being unfulfilled or repressed. He believed that we developed through certain stages, the oral, anal and phallic stages, and where these were not resolved properly then disturbances would arise in the personality.

• **Oral Stage From birth to 2 years**
  Is where the mouth is the main source of pleasure and centre of experiences and libido (sexual energy drive) is satisfied through oral contact with a variety of objects, biting and sucking. We know that the mouth is a very sensitive and sensual organ of the body. People who have an oral fixation (outmoded infantile behaviour) retain their mouth as the primary erotogenic zone, have a mother-fixation are prone to mood swings and tend to identify with others, rather than relate to them.

• **Anal Stage 2-4 years**
  Is the stage of muscular control over the bowel and bladder for retention and expulsion. Because this control appears to be so important to the parents bringing them pleasure, so this area of the body becomes deeply associated with pleasure, as a child always wants to please and gain approbation from parents. So when expulsion or retention is appropriately praised the child feels pleased.
• **Phallic stage 4-7 years**

Is connected with the Oedipus complex and is a stage when gratification is achieved through direct contact and awareness of the genital areas of the body. The Oedipal triangle is one of mother, father and child. Oedipus in Greek mythology fell in love with his own mother and kills his father. It is during this stage of psychoanalytical development that the love desire for the parent of the opposite sex reaches its climax, bringing in the conflicts of jealousy.

The resolution of the Oedipal conflict leads to the formation of the Superego (usually around the age of five) and internalisation of the prohibitions and taboos of society. Freud suggested that the Oedipus complex is never totally destroyed or resolved and persists in varying degrees throughout life and Freud related every social and psychological phenomena to the Oedipus complex.

• **The Genital Stage (from puberty onwards)**

Freud's final psychosexual stage is where sexual gratification is no longer limited to specific areas of the body but is achieved through sexual intercourse. At this stage young adults are beginning to question the values and belief systems of the family, making their own choices that can often be at variance with the parental view.

**Bibliography**


