

Video Guide

FREUD: THE HIDDEN NATURE OF MAN

28 minutes, color, 1970

Few people have had the influence on how people think as has Sigmund Freud (1856-1939). He asked and then answered this very important question: "How do people come to be what they are? " During his early adult years people were viewed by society as moving to perfection. Mental illness was viewed as being caused by physical problems and the treatment of the mentally ill was through physical means. Freud's explorations of the unconscious mind shattered this self-image of the perfection of people and changed the course of the treatment of the mentally ill.

Freud's patients (his sample) were primarily middle and upper class woman who were suffering intensely, had paralysis, vomited, had hallucinations, and had disturbances of speech and sight. Yet no physical cause could be found. Freud discovered that these symptoms decreased when the patient could talk about painful memories, primarily from their earliest years. He developed the psychoanalytic method of treatment which included free association, allowing the patient to say whatever came into her mind, and the analysis of dreams to help patients understand the sources of their problems.

Freud believed that underlying our calm and rational exteriors are powerful unconscious forces of sex and aggression which can bind and blind our actions. Freud further suggested that we have less control over our urges than usually is thought and that our personality is shaped during the first five years of life. Freud challenges us to be realistic and preserve the self from the savage powers of the unconscious. This limited sort of freedom comes about through knowledge of our irrational urges.

Freud's contributions to psychology involves: (1) his psychoanalytic theory of personality and (2) psychoanalysis for treating mental illness. Freud's psychoanalytic theory of personality consists of "three interacting agencies: the id, the ego, and the superego."

1. "The id is a pool of biological drives, or instincts, with which the infant is born . . . The tendency of the id is to devote itself to the immediate reduction of tension is called the pleasure principle. The id is the energy source for the ego and superego.
2. "The ego, which develops after the age of approximately six months, is the 'executive agency' of personality. First, it mediates between the id and reality; later it mediates between the id and the superego. The ego controls the individuals's actions and manipulates the environment according to the reality principle, which is based on the organism's concern for safety.
3. "The superego is the personality's conscience, concerned with the pursuit of moral goals. The superego emerges from the resolution of the Oedipus complex in males to the Electra complex in females, as the child internalizes the moral standards of the parent of the same sex. The superego impels the individual not toward realistic goals but toward an ego idea of moral perfection." (Baum and Linder, *Psychology Today*, 1979, p. 421)

A second part of Freud's theory of personality consists of the idea of the unconscious. "Freud proposed three states of consciousness or awareness: the conscious, the preconscious and the unconscious. In the conscious state, we are aware of things around us and our thoughts. The preconscious state consists of memories or thoughts that are easily available with a moments reflection--what we had for breakfast, for example, or our parents' first names. "In contrast, the unconscious contains memories and thoughts which we cannot easily tap. Some of these are unavailable because they are infantile, pre-verbal ideas which have never become conscious and may be difficult for our conscious, rational state to accept. Others have been pushed from consciousness (repressed) because they are unwanted and disturbing. All of the id and much of the ego and superego are unconscious. " (Morgan, C . , King, R. and Robinson, N., *Introduction to Psychology*, 1979, pp. 5 19-520). Freud believed that dreams, jokes, slips of the tongue, and selective forgetting demonstrated the existence of unconscious id urges

slipping out. For example, dreams have a surface meaning which is no more than what the dreamer recalls. But Freud further analyzed dreams for their hidden meaning. Freud stressed that adult personality was greatly shaped by events of infancy and childhood.

Abnormal behavior results because the balance among id, ego, and superego is disturbed. Often the abnormal behavior does not show up until years after the imbalance occurred. Psychoanalysis is the method (developed by Freud) for treating abnormal behavior. The goal of psychoanalysis is to help the patient understand and deal with his/her unconscious conflicts, confused thoughts, and repressed feelings which are brought to the surface. Free association and dream analysis are two of the techniques used by psychoanalysts. During free association the patient says whatever comes to mind. To allow this process to occur more easily Freud had patients recline on a couch while Freud sat behind the patient taking notes and suggesting interpretations of the materials which slowly would come up from the unconscious. In general, patients see their psychoanalyst three to five days a week for an hour per day for several years. Psychoanalysis is a difficult process, involves a lot of effort from both patient and psychoanalyst, and takes a patient who is intelligent and highly motivated.

In this film you will be given vivid examples to help you better understand Freud's views. Watch to understand. Then evaluate what you understand.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Describe Freud's dream and both the surface and hidden meanings.
2. What is the Oedipus complex and why is it important?
3. Describe the three aspects of personality (Id, Ego, Superego) and explain how the examples with David clarify our actions.
4. What are two parts of psychoanalytic treatment? dream analysis, free association? Explain each.
5. Describe your reactions to Freud's ideas.