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The authors

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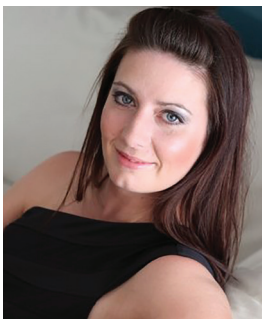

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The authors wish to acknowledge the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples of this nation. We acknowledge the traditional owners of the country throughout Australia and their continuing connection to the land, culture and community. We acknowledge the traditional custodians of the lands on which we live, learn, and teach, and where this book was written. We acknowledge the cultural diversity of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and pay respect to Elders past, present and emerging. We celebrate the continuous living cultures of First Australians and acknowledge the important contributions Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have and continue to make in education.

Preface

This workbook has been written for students and educators undertaking Stage 2 Psychology in 2022. There are five topics as prescribed by the Science Understandings in the new SACE Subject Outline. Each topic also includes a full description of the content the authors have interpreted from the SACE subject outline, real world application activities, case studies, informative and coloured diagrams and questions aimed at checking for understanding. Key terms have been highlighted in bold and included as a glossary which will be available on the digital platform.

SCIENCE INQUIRY SKILLS

Science Inquiry Skills have been considered throughout each topic and provide opportunities for students to apply their SIS knowledge and understanding in context, analyse data and formulate conclusions. All Science Inquiry Skills questions throughout the workbook have been colour coded in red and are identifiable with the brain symbol. Building on the SIS skills, sample Deconstruct, and Design tasks have been provided for teacher consideration. These may be adopted, adapted or reconstructed to suit student contexts.

Science Inquiry Skills are embedded throughout the five topics of the Stage 2 course and can be taught as a standalone topic using the SIS chapter which can be found at the end of the workbook.

LINKING SYMBOL

This linking symbol has been used throughout the text to show where there are similarities in concepts between the topics, as well as to provide a link back to the Science Inquiry Skills topic. Teachers and students are encouraged to seek transfer of their learning and be able to apply their theoretical understanding of a psychological concept in one topic, to an application in a different topic.

SCIENCE AS A HUMAN ENDEAVOUR

Science as a Human Endeavour (SHE) concepts and activities are provided throughout the workbook and are identifiable by the use of a green heading, and the globe icon. These activities can be used as a strategy to get students familiar with identifying the key elements of science: communication and collaboration between scientists, governments and other agencies, the development of new technologies and theories, the influence of other areas and considerations, and the application and limitations in psychology. As there is a performance standard related to science in society in Assessment Type 3 (External Exam) students and teachers are encouraged to seek out and practice SHE related question to be able to meet the Performance standard and demonstrate they are able to critically explore and understand in depth the interaction between science and society.

CHECKING FOR UNDERSTANDING

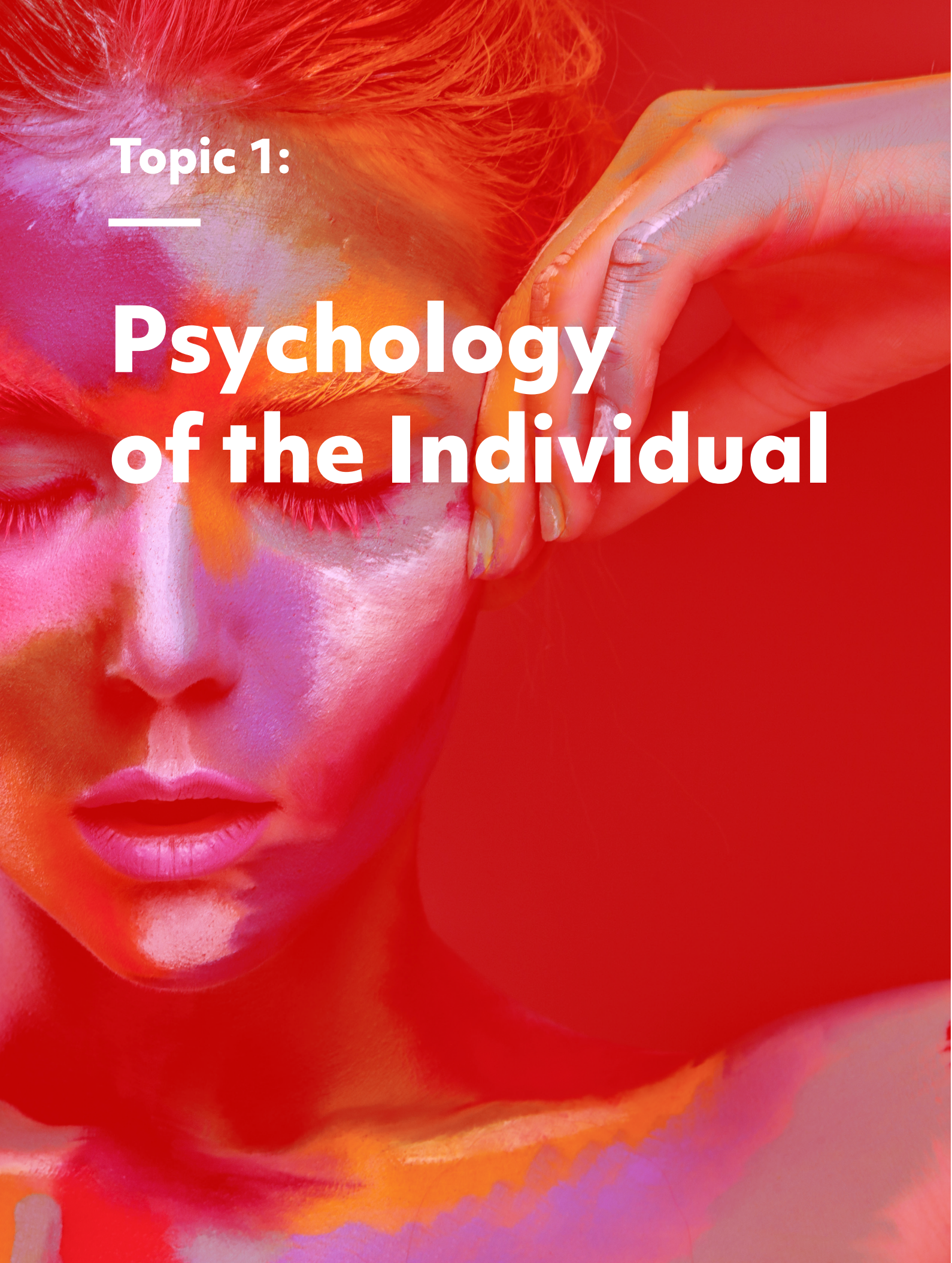
Checking for understanding questions in the workbook allow students to build their confidence in addressing and applying their knowledge and understanding to a range of questions that target the SACE Performance Standards. Questions ask students to recall, apply and describe their knowledge of the concepts addressed in the topic to both real world and hypothetical examples.

HELPFUL ONLINE RESOURCES

Within each topic 'helpful online resources' can be found and accessed using a QR code, or clicking the link in the digital version of the book. Online resources include links to You Tube clips, readings, articles and interactive activities aimed at providing further depth into each topic.

WEBSITE LINKS DISCLAIMER Although all of the websites recommended in the workbook were relevant and operational at the time of publication, their the authors or the publisher can accept any responsibility for an changes that many have occurred to these websites since. Likewise we are unable to accept responsibility for any malicious software these websites may include and whether particular applications included will operate properly on various platforms.

We hope that you find this resource helpful, and that it demonstrates the interconnection between all the different facets of Psychology and how they relate to our own lives. The authors and publisher wish you all the best for your studies in Stage 2 Psychology.



Topic 1:

Psychology of the Individual

1.1 CONCEPTS OF PERSONALITY PSYCHODYNAMIC APPROACH

- **Describe the psychodynamic approach to personality.**
- **Discuss the strengths and weaknesses of Freud's psychodynamic approach.**

2022 Subject Outline | Stage 2

Personality refers to the characteristics of feelings, cognitions and behaviours that make each of us unique, all of which can be shaped in response to biological and environmental factors. Personality theory helps to explain individual differences in response to life experiences and motivational factors behind behaviour such as engagement in crime, job performance or health outcomes.

Most theories of personality agree that personality remains relatively consistent, however personality traits can change over time and quite often for the better. Significant changes in personality are generally the result of illness or injury. The study of personality includes a range of concepts and perspectives including psychodynamic, humanistic and trait theory alongside various personality assessment and applications.

Have you ever wondered why we do the things we do, or wondered what role your childhood plays in shaping the adult you become? If so, Freud's theory, which falls under the umbrella of Psychodynamic theory, may be of interest.

Psychodynamic theory

Psychodynamic theory was first developed by Sigmund Freud (1856 to 1939), an Austrian neurologist. His theory emphasizes the role of unconscious psychological processes such as fear, wishes and desires, and contends that childhood experiences are crucial in shaping personality. Freud developed Psychoanalysis which he used with his patients in attempt to cure mental illness and was the only one of his time to systematically listen to and analyse every word his patients ever told him to truly understand the inner world (unconscious) and the influence this had on one's psychological wellbeing and driver of behaviour. As you read through his theory you will understand why early psychodynamic theories were controversial, however, Freudian theory was the first model to have a breakthrough into mainstream mental health with talking therapy as an acceptable model of treatment.

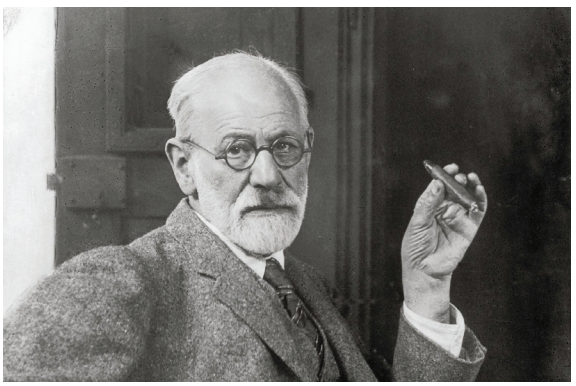


Figure 1.1.1: Freud is famously portrayed with his glasses and cigar in hand.

HELPFUL ONLINE RESOURCES

Further reading:
Personality and Aging
https://tinyurl.com/83r3s38f

KEY CONCEPTS OF FREUD'S PSYCHODYNAMIC APPROACH

CONCEPT 1

The human psyche (mind) comprises three levels: **conscious (ego), preconscious** and the **unconscious (id)**. The conscious level holds the information that we are aware of at any given time, what you are doing and thinking in this moment, feelings, and perceptions.

The **preconscious** level is the information that we are aware of but is not currently in our conscious thoughts, for example, who your year 7 teacher was or what you had for breakfast. Preconscious material can easily come into the conscious merely by thinking about it (retrieving); this is considered as information laid just beneath the surface (see Figure 1.1.2).

Freud believed the **unconscious** level of the mind was the keeper of our darkest wishes, fears, unacceptable sexual desires, instincts, and trauma-based memories. Much of our behaviour is driven by unconscious psychological processes and shapes our personality. The unconscious level is considered to serve as the self-protector of the psyche, repressing all the information that could cause psychological distress if it were to move to the conscious mind. The psyche according to Freud, is like an iceberg indicating that our conscious mind is only the tip of the iceberg with most of the information relating to our drive and personality lying deep beneath the surface.

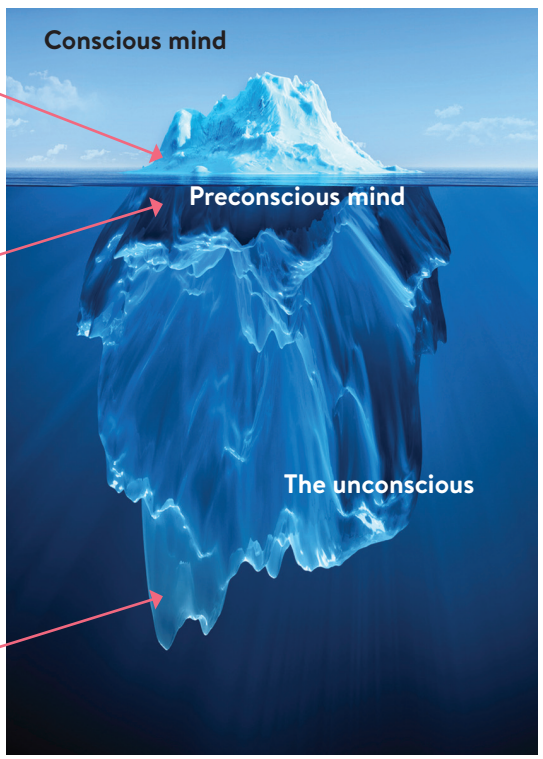
THE UNCONSCIOUS MIND

The conscious. The small amount of mental activity we know about.

The preconscious. Things we could be aware of if we wanted or ried.

The unconscious. Things we are unaware of and can not become aware of.

The id is part of the unconscious mind and comprises the two instincts: Eros and Thanatos.



Thoughts
Perceptions

Memories
Stored knowledge

Instincts -
Sexual and aggressive

Fears
Unacceptable sexual desires
Violent motives
Irrational wishes
Immoral urges
Selfish needs
Shameful experiences
Traumatic experiences

Freud compared the mind to an iceberg

Figure 1.1.2: The levels of the mind according to Freud.

Whilst it is difficult to access the scientific nature of the existence of the unconscious, Bargh & Morsella, (2008) suggest that many of our mental activities—memories, motives, feelings, and the like—are largely inaccessible to our consciousness. Look at the links below to learn more and consider more contemporary views on the Unconscious mind.

HELPFUL ONLINE RESOURCES

The Unconscious Mind Research by Bargh and Morsella 2008. **https://tinyurl.com/5dun6a7**

Freudian Theory and Consciousness: A Conceptual Analysis **https://tinyurl.com/4ddn6z6x**

Freud (1900) considered dreams to be the *royal road to the unconscious,* as it is in dreams that the ego's defences are lowered so that some of the repressed material comes through to awareness, albeit in distorted form. Dreams perform important functions for the unconscious mind and serve as valuable clues about how the unconscious mind operates and influences behaviour. He also made a distinction between the dream material presented (manifest content) and the hidden meaning behind the dream (latent content). Freud believed that the psyche disguises the true nature of distress or confronting material in dreams and presents it in a more acceptable and less confronting way, e.g. dreaming of a snake (manifest content) coming to get you rather than a person (latent content) in your life who causes you to feel threatened.

Figure 1.1.3: Manifest content of dreams.

Freud would argue further support for the existence of the human psyche and particularly the unconscious due to a phenomenon known as the "Freudian slip'. Can you recall a time where you called your teacher, mother! or meant to say one thing and said another? (Freudian slips). Freud believed that this was the unconscious mind revealing itself. According to Freud the reason behind calling your teacher mother is because you unconsciously associate something similar between your mum and your teacher. Click on the link below to watch some very funny clips of Freudian slips.

HELPFUL ONLINE RESOURCES

Follow this link to learn more about Classic Freudian slips: **https://tinyurl.com/55epa8wb**

CONCEPT 2

Freud later developed his theory to include the concept of the psyche having three interactive structures known as the Id, Ego, Super-ego. These structures develop through childhood and serve to satisfy our basic urges throughout life and corresponds with the conception of the levels of the psyche previously discussed. Freud noted through the work with his patients that conflict occurred between these structures thus reinforcing his theory that early childhood experiences play a crucial role in the successful development of personality. According to Freudian theory, unresolved conflict between the Id, Ego and Super-Ego results in the development of abnormal psychopathology.

ID

Based on the pleasure principle

ID exists from birth

Driver of instinctive and primitive urges

Demands immediate gratification

The Unconcsious motivator of **libido** (sexual drive) and the aggressive drive (Thantos)

Completely selfish and does not consider others

EGO

Based on the reality principle

Develops within the first few years of life

Mediator between the demands of the ID and morals of the superego

Responsible for the development of a balanced personality

The component of the personality considered one's true self

SUPEREGO

Based on the morality principle

The last structure to develop

Informs us of the obligations and expectation in society

Develops through the process of socialisation, family and culture (by 5 years)

Responsible for the sense of guilt and shame

Aligns to the preconscious

The diagram highlights key features of each structural component:

The **id** is the driver of our instinctive and primitive urges and has no time to wait for needs or desires to be met, hence it is based on the pleasure principle. The id is brought into line through socialisation and development of the ego and superego. However, where the id is the prominent component, the dominant personality characteristics can be impulsiveness, selfish, reckless, disorganised and often lacking morals. In young children this often displayed in aggressive behaviours, inability to reason with peers and in extreme cases may result in Oppositional defiant disorder (ODD) or conduct disorders (CD). Characteristics of the controlling id in the adult may result in narcissistic personalities or where the adult has previously met the diagnostic criteria of conduct disorder as a child, an adult may be diagnosed as adult antisocial personality disorder (ASPD).

The **super-ego** is the only component within the structure that considers whether something is right or wrong, hence being the driver of morals and principles. It is often referred to as our conscience. If the Super-ego is the dominant component, it often results in personality characteristics

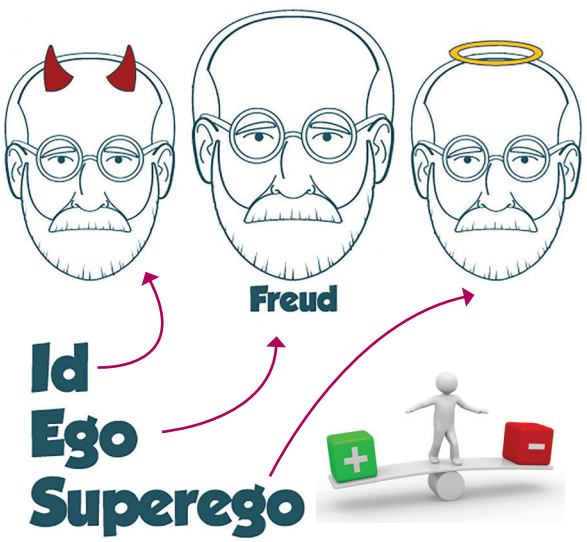


Figure 1.1.4: Cartoon depiction of Freud's Id (with the horns), ego (with the halo) and the superego keeping the id and ego in balance.

such as being very strict, overcontrolling, rigid and often neurotic. The dominance of the super-ego is also responsible for an individual's sense of guilt in comparison to the weak super-ego which can result in abnormal psychopathology where individuals are more susceptible to developing depression, anxiety, OCD to mention a few.

The **ego** is the rational part of our personality and is responsible for mediating between the instinctual desires and wish for instant gratification of the id and the requirements of the superego to be moral and uphold the expectations and rules of society. The development of a healthy personality relies on the ego being the dominant component of the structure.

According to Freud, the id and superego are in constant conflict based on their opposing demands which often results in a sense of anxiety or threat to the ego. The ego resolves this by unconsciously utilising **defence mechanisms** which help to protect the ego from the unpleasant emotions and distress.

Defence mechanism	Description	Example
Repression	Threatening memories or thoughts are pushed to the unconscious	Not remembering trauma-based experiences from childhood
Regression	Reverting to a childlike state when confronted with an overwhelming or unmanageable situation	Throwing a tantrum or slamming doors because you don't get your own way
Projection	Attributing your own unacceptable feelings and thoughts onto others as if they own them and not you	Accusing your partner of cheating because you have and knowing they haven't
Denial	Refusing to accept or acknowledge the reality of a situation	Continuing to spend money despite being in debt
Displacement	Redirecting feelings and actions onto a substitute target	Taking your frustration of your parents out on your friends or siblings
Rationalisation	Justifying unwanted outcomes with excuses or faulty reasoning	The teacher did not cover the material on the exam
Sublimation	Replacing unacceptable feelings with socially acceptable behaviours	Being aggressive on the sport field

Table 1.1.1: Defence mechanisms.

CHECKING FOR UNDERSTANDING

Scenario	Defence mechanism
Jo is finding it hard to see the instructions on labels but refuses to wear their glasses.	
Charlie came home from work angry and has slammed every door in the house.	
Brooklyn has decided to join the boxing club to deal with their anger issues.	
A soldier who has returned from war has no recollection of many events.	
Telling everyone you failed the test because you were busy studying for 3 different tests at the same time.	
River accuses the salesclerk of being racist and complains about 'them people'.	
Kym throws their hockey stick away every time they miss a goal.	

Freud suggested that we all use defence mechanisms as a strategy for reducing threatening and anxiety provoking emotions and temporarily can serve us well. However, when defence mechanisms are used excessively, they can be counter-productive in the development of a healthy personality.

HELPFUL ONLINE RESOURCES

Follow this link to read an amusing review of Freud's defence mechanisms: https://tinyurl.com/put97kpn

CONCEPT 3

Freud believed that childhood experience plays a significant role in shaping personality and hence our behaviour as adults. This led to the development of Freud's most controversial and criticised theory of personality, ***psychosexual development***. Freud outlined five developmental stages which are focused on different erogenous zones that are pleasure seeking. Each stage is unique, and should a child become over or under gratified it would cause them to become **fixated** which results in maladaptive behaviours as adults and prone to mental illness. The table below summarises the five psychosexual stages and potential fixations associated with each stage.

FREUD'S PSYCHOSEXUAL STAGES

Psychosexual stage	Erogenous zone	Focus	Fixation
Oral stage (Birth - 18 months)	Mouth	Feeding and weaning	Over/under eating, smoking, nail biting, excessive talking.
Anal stage (18 months - 3 years)	Anus	Toilet training	**Anal expulsive** - messy, over shares **Anal retentive** – obsessively tidy and orderly, rigid, authoritarian.
Phallic (3/4- 7years)	Genitals	Sexual identification Oedipus complex Electra complex	Narcissistic behaviour, exhibitionist, vanity, compulsive sexual behaviour, aggressive.
Latency stage (6/7 years – puberty)	Dormant sexual urges	Learning, same sex relationships	Inability to form fulfilling relationships as an adult, immaturity.
Genital stage (puberty +)	Genitals	Intimate relationships	NIL

Table 1.1.2: Freud's Psychosexual stages.

ORAL STAGE

Pleasure comes from a focus on the mouth and involves the process of feeding and weaning. Fixation is thought to occur due to over or under stimulation which results in a range of maladaptive behaviours as an adult, otherwise known as an Oral personality. Oral fixations are attributed to a range of psychological disorders such as drug and alcohol abuse (addiction), eating disorders and other behavioural obsessions seeking constant oral stimulation such as smoking, nail biting, over/under eat and often engaging in sarcasm. Depending on when the fixation occurs, oral personalities tend to be either optimistic, generous, and gregarious or aggressive, ambitious, and selfish, the latter demonstrating the **id** being the dominant component. (Definition of oral personality | Dictionary.com, 2021)

ANAL STAGE

During the **anal stage**, the focus is on the anus and pleasure comes from defecating and learning to control the bowels and bladder. Fixation can result

from harsh or lax toileting from the caregiver and can have longer term implications for the child in adulthood. Harsh potty training can result in the child developing an **anal-retentive** personality which tends to become obsessively tidy, orderly, and rigid. As a young person, they are often considered to have perfectionist traits and may be more susceptible to OCD and other anxiety-based disorders as an adult. An example of harsh toilet training may occur where a child is made to sit on the potty until they have satisfied the parent that they have performed satisfactorily, i.e., they have emptied their bowels and/or bladder or perhaps the child has been yelled at for defecating on the floor and told what they have done is disgusting.

On the other hand, when a caregiver has been too lenient with toilet training, a child may develop an **anal-expulsive** personality. The anal-expulsive adult tends to be messy, disorganised, often rebellious. An example may be where a child has lost control of their bowels or bladder on the floor and the parent has assured the child it is ok but has not rushed to clean it up, or perhaps allows the child to run around the home without a nappy or pants and being free to toilet whenever and wherever it happens to occur. Freud believed that the nature of the conflict during the experience of toilet training had a direct influence on the future adult's relationship with authority.

THE PHALLIC STAGE

During the phallic stage, focus is on the genitals and children become aware of the anatomical differences between male and female genitalia. Freud believed that during the phallic stage conflict occurs as the child experiences a desire for their parents' affection. This phenomenon is known as the **Oedipus complex**. Boys unconsciously view their father as competition for the mother's affection as it is obviously different to the type of affection given between the mother and son. This conflict causes jealousy and resentment for the same sex parent and boys then fear their father as they believe they will be castrated as punishment for striving for their mother's affection and the desire to replace their father. Boys believe that the female's penis has been removed as punishment and serves as a warning for boys to learn to suppress their desire for the mother.

Figure 1.1.5: Picture demonstrating subtle indication of the Oedipus complex.

Freud believed that females experience a similar conflict referred to as the **Electra complex** whereby the daughter has the desire for her father and wishes to remove the mother to establish the relationship between the daughter and father. Freud believed that these feelings and desires caused daughters to experience anxiety due to the conflicting desire of the Id and morals of the Superego. At one stage, Freud theorised females would experience penis envy and blame the mother for them not providing them with one which caused further resentment. However, Freud rejected this latter term, stating that the feminine Oedipus complex is not the same as the male Oedipus because, "It is only in the male child that we find the fateful combination of love for the one parent and simultaneous hatred of the other as a rival" (Laplanche et al 1973).

Fixation in the phallic stage tends to present personality traits such as exhibitionist, vanity, narcissistic, controlling and occasionally compulsive sexual behaviour. Females fixated in the phallic stage are thought to seek out older men for romantic relationships, can be flirtatious and seductive. Successful completion of the phallic stage is where the child learns to identify with the same sex parent meaning they internalise and replicate the behaviours and characteristics of the same sex parent; this is known as a process of **identification**.

Freud suggested that the desire for the opposite sex parent is rooted in the instinctive and primitive

HELPFUL ONLINE RESOURCES

You can read more on the Oedipus and Electra complex here: https://tinyurl.com/s4539mps

https://tinyurl.com/2cw99jay

Further reading on Psychoanalytic perspectives on same sex relationships can be found here: https://tinyurl.com/tber7xwr

urges of the **id**, however, the **super-ego** attempts to suppress the desires leaving the ego to resolve the conflict by means of **repression** to ensure that the healthy development at this stage occurs.

Once a child progresses through the phallic stage, they experience a stage of dormant sexual urges according to Freud, known as the **Latency stage**. Around the age of six years old until puberty, the focus is on the development of same sex relationships, engaging in hobbies and intellectual interests. Children learn to navigate their position in society developing social skills and values from their peers. The development of self-confidence is often crucial in this stage in addition to beginning to form an understanding and acceptance of their gender role and sense of identity as an individual. Freud did not believe that fixation in the latency stage was possible given the dormant sexualised energy. However, his daughter Anna Freud proposed that fixation can occur in the latency stage which due to the delayed completion of the Oedipus complex. As a result, fixation would present as children struggling with peer relationships, rebelling against authority and parents with the potential of demonstrating early delinquent behaviours. Due to the already developed super-ego, the child begins to develop more complex emotions such as guilt and shame. As adults the presenting personality challenges would arise in having difficulty in developing meaningful and lasting relationships.

The final psychosexual stage that children progress through is the **genital stage** which starts around puberty where the focus is on the genitals. The genital stage sees the re-emergence of sexual urges which is directed into forming intimate relationships with opposite sex.

Try to remember the five Psychosexual stages using the acronym OAPLG: Old Age Pensioners Love Guinness or Golf!

Figures 1.1.6: Old Age Pensioners Love Guinness.

Figure 1.1.7: Old Age Pensioners Love Golf.

EVALUATION

Freud's theory has long been known for being both widely misunderstood and controversial, yet it is still the key theory presented in most undergraduate and post-graduate programs to provide underpinning knowledge of Psychodynamic theory.

Whilst controversial, Psychodynamic theory continues to influence and shape psychological science with wider application to a variety of disciplines such as developmental psychology, social psychology, sociology, and neuroscience. The principles of psychoanalysis are the underlying basis for psychotherapy and talking based treatments today. The Psychodynamic approach has been further developed by Neo-Freudians such as Carl Jung, Melanie Klein, Alfred Adler, Eric Erickson, and Anna Freud (daughter of Sigmund Freud). They tend to agree with Freud regarding the role of the unconscious and early experiences shaping personality but apply their own unique perspectives with less emphasis on sexual drives and more focus on socio-cultural implications regarding the development of personality.

From a scientific perspective Freud's theory cannot be **empirically tested** due to the subjective nature of his work. Most of Freud's theory was based on case studies such as Little Hans and Anna O, meaning there is no means to test the reliability of the data collected and it may be further compromised by interpretation bias. The retrospective data (accounts of one's experience) also compromise the reliability of the data. Whilst case studies provide unique opportunities to study complex human phenomenon, the subjective nature of his studies and unique method of conducting his research makes it impossible to apply **generalisations** to the wider population. Freud's theory of personality and psychopathology is biologically deterministic at the expense of excluding social and cultural factors. In essence we have no choice to become what we are based on pre-determined genetic vulnerabilities.

While psychodynamic theory has historically been challenged based on lacking scientific rigor, some concepts have strong empirical support such as the existence and importance of the unconscious. Robinson & Gordon, 2011, suggest that evidence for the importance of unconscious influences is so compelling that it has become a central element of contemporary cognitive and social psychology. Psychodynamic and social cognitive approaches to personality assessment converge now more so than at any time in the history of experimental psychology.

HELPFUL ONLINE RESOURCES

You can read more about Neo-Freudians here: https://tinyurl.com/4ayjx5k5

SCIENCE AS A HUMAN ENDEAVOUR: REAL WORLD APPLICATION

Eric Kandel (1998) developed neuropsychoanalysis, an integration of psychodynamic and neuropsychological concepts that has enhanced researchers' understanding of numerous aspects of human behaviour and mental functioning (Solms & Turnbull, 2011). Some of the first efforts to integrate psychodynamic principles with findings from neuroscience involved sleep and dreams, and contemporary models of dream formation now incorporate principles from both domains (Levin & Nielsen, 2007). Neuroimaging techniques such as functional magnetic resonance imagery (fMRI) have begun to play an increasingly central role in this ongoing psychoanalysis–neuroscience integration as well (Gerber, 2007; Slipp, 2000). (Psychodynamic Perspective | Abnormal Psychology, 2021)

Stretch and challenge activities

How might bipolar disorder be explained using this approach?

Development and Application: How has the Psychodynamic approach been applied to produce innovative solutions to modern approaches in understanding psychopathology?

1.2 CONCEPTS OF PERSONALITY HUMANISTIC APPROACH

- Describe the humanistic approach to personality.
- Discuss the strengths and weaknesses of Maslow's humanistic approach.

2022 Subject Outline | Stage 2

Humanistic Psychology

Humanistic psychology is a positive, proactive perspective of psychology that came about during the early 1950s as a reaction to the work of psychoanalytic researchers such as Freud and Jung, and behaviourist researchers such as Skinner who had dominated psychological research in previous decades. Psychoanalysis as we have just learned was focused on unconscious motivations that shape our behaviour, whereas behaviourism focused on learning through classical and operant conditioning to explain how and why people behave the way they do. Refer to Topic 5 for more information about behaviour theory.

Humanist researchers felt that both psychoanalysis and behaviourism were too pessimistic. Instead of focusing on psychopathology and what goes wrong with people, Maslow (1943) formulated a more positive account of human behaviour which focused on what goes right. He was interested in human potential, and how we fulfill that potential. Abraham Maslow and Carl Rogers were interested in looking at the whole individual and researched into concepts such as free will, self-efficacy, personal choice and self-actualization. The humanistic approach strives to help people fulfill their potential and maximize their well-being, rather than focusing on the most tragic of emotions or overcoming dysfunction as a result of what was wrong.

We don't need to think of these schools of thought as competing with one another. In fact, there are many other ways of looking at psychology, including a biological perspective as we will see in the Trait approach shortly. Each branch of psychology has contributed significantly and differently to our understanding of how people think, feel and behave. Which perspective you personally subscribe to is up to you.

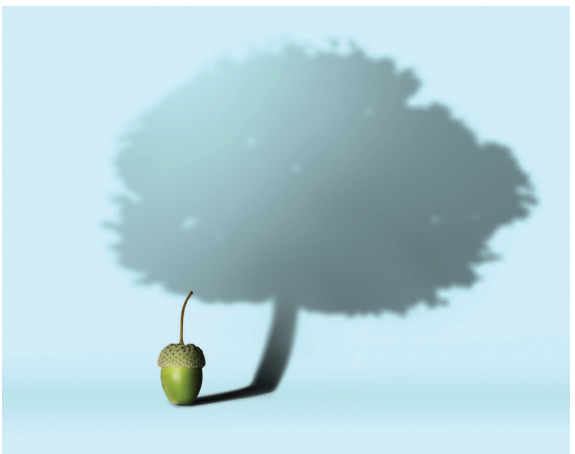


Figure 1.2.1: Maslow's hierarchy of needs shows that everyone can reach their full potential, just like a tiny acorn can grow into a mighty oak tree.

ABRAHAM MASLOW (1908 – 1970)

How is that a tiny acorn can grow into a massive oak tree? If you had to answer this question without conducting any research, your first response is likely to include sunshine, water, nutrients, soil, care, time and a strong root system holding the tree firmly in the ground.

Maslow was mainly concerned with an individual's innate drive towards achieving their highest level of capability.

Figure 1.2.2: Abraham Maslow (1908 - 1970).

To come up with his approach to understanding the personality of individuals, Maslow studied historical figures he believed to be exceptional in their careers. He studied the personalities of people he considered were healthy, creative and productive, including Abraham Lincoln, Thomas Jefferson, Albert Einstein and Eleanor Roosevelt. He also studied the personalities of some of his own colleagues and contemporary leaders he thought had exceptionally good mental health.

What he observed was that people he considered self-actualised, that is they were reaching their potential and remaining mentally healthy, shared similar characteristics.

CHARACTERISTICS OF SELF-ACTUALISERS

Maslow identified common characteristics such as being concerned for others, accepting themselves, creativity, loving, compassionate and open in those he studied. Self-actualised people tended to have a good sense of humour, the ability to develop close friendships and they found enjoyment and mission in their work.

Maslow found people often described peak experiences during which they felt such an intense degree of satisfaction that they seemed to transcend themselves. They actively engaged in activities that would bring about this feeling of unity and meaningfulness. Despite this fact, most of these individuals seemed deeply rooted in reality, and were active problem-seekers and solvers. They developed a level of acceptance for what could not be changed and a level of spontaneity and resilience to tackle what could be changed. He believed that we are all born with the potential to grow and achieve optimal health and functioning, just like the acorn.

HIERARCHY OF NEEDS

To explain how humans grow to reach their potential, just like the oak tree, Maslow developed a hierarchy of needs from the most basic physical needs to the most advanced needs of self-actualisation. The hierarchy of needs, much like the healthy food chart is shown as a pyramid to represent that we need more of the things at the bottom, and less of the things at the top, but is also hierarchical. Beginning at the bottom, Maslow believed that people's successful fulfilment of the lower levels was required in the development of personality.

First physiological needs must be met, before safety needs, then the need for love and belonging, esteem and finally self-actualisation.

Maslow categorised these areas of need into deficiency needs and growth needs. Much like the oak tree, if there is a deficiency in the basic needs, then the individual will seek to repair or return to that level until it is satisfied.

Maslow believed that the lower four levels of physiological, safety, love and belong and esteem were deficiency needs, without which an individual is unable to thrive.

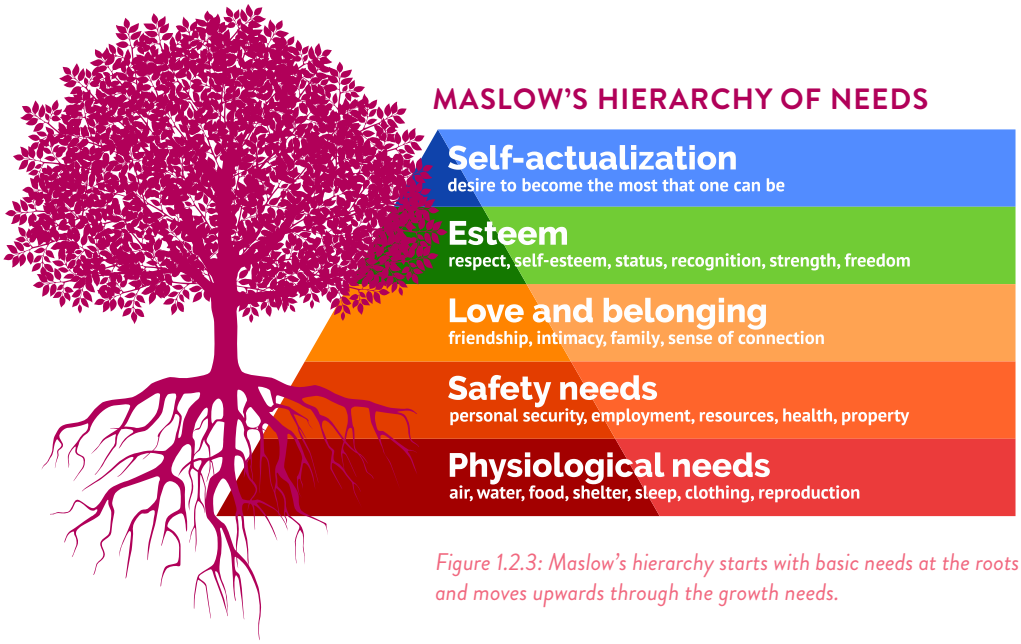


Figure 1.2.3: Maslow's hierarchy starts with basic needs at the roots and moves upwards through the growth needs.

CHECKING FOR UNDERSTANDING

Think about yourself for a moment, then think about your personal wellbeing and mental health in relation to school.

Describe your happiness, engagement and wellbeing in relation to your schoolwork.

Now think about your personality. What words would you use to describe your personality when interacting with friends, other students in your classes, and your teachers?

Consider your personality when you are tired, stressed or unwell. How would you describe your personality under these conditions?

Apply Maslow's hierarchy of needs to the personality characteristics you have described in the 2 previous questions. Explain the links between the evidence of your changes in personality to the levels of Maslow's hierarchy.

PEAK EXPERIENCES

Maslow suggested that one of the best ways to think of peak experiences is to think of the most wonderful experiences of your life—those moments of ecstasy and complete and utter happiness. You might experience such enjoyment when being creative, whether that is cooking, painting, reading a book, or playing music or appreciating nature on a bushwalk, stargazing or watching a sunset. Peak experiences may occur during religious experiences, playing sport, exercising and achieving important goals either by yourself or collaboratively with others. Altruistic behaviours such as helping another person in need or overcoming a barrier to achieve something yourself can all bring about the thoughts and feelings associated with peak experiences.

HELPFUL ONLINE RESOURCES

Listen to Maslow talk about peak experiences:
https://tinyurl.com/2x8ndt6f

Maslow's expanded Hierarchy of Needs:
https://tinyurl.com/5jkrz7cy

CHECKING FOR UNDERSTANDING

Choose a 'peak experience' you have had or might have in the future.

Describe how this peak experience felt, or might feel in terms of your thoughts, feelings and behaviours during the experience.

THE EXPANDED HIERARCHY OF NEEDS

Ever interested in continuing his research and theories of personality, Maslow's original (1943, 1954) five-stage model has been expanded to include cognitive and aesthetic needs (Maslow, 1970a) and later transcendence needs (Maslow, 1970b).

Transcendence needs – a person is motivated by values which transcend beyond themselves (altruism, mystical experiences, spiritual experiences, service to others, religious faith)

Self-actualisation needs – realising personal potential, seeking personal growth and peak experiences

Aesthetic needs – appreciation and search for beauty in the world around

Cognitive needs – seeking knowledge and understanding, curiosity, exploration and meaning

Esteem needs – 2 categories of self esteem 1. Esteem in oneself (dignity, achievement, mastery, independence) 2. The need to be accepted and valued by others (status, recognition, prestige)

Love and belonging needs – friendship, intimacy, trust, acceptance, giving and receiving affection, affiliation as part of a group (family, work, friends, hobby groups)

Safety needs – protection from harm, protection from the weather, security, stability, freedom from fear and bullying

Physiological needs – air, food, drink, shelter, warmth, sex, sleep

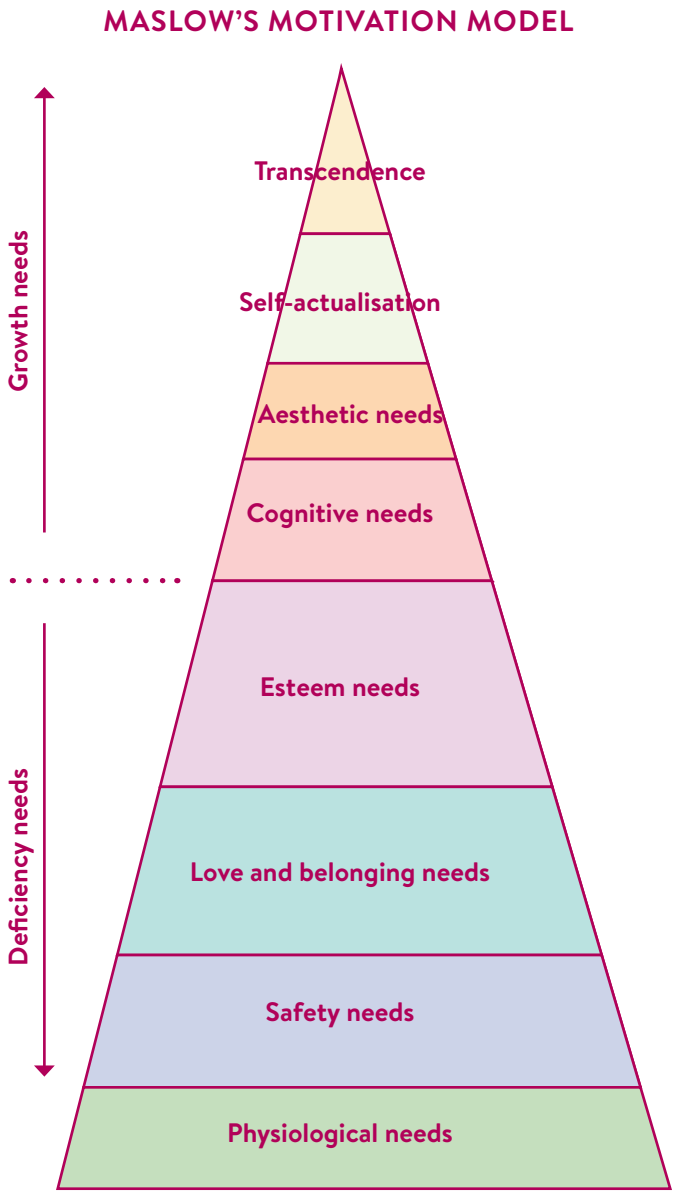


Figure 1.2.4: Maslow's expanded Hierarchy of needs includes 3 additional levels.

BEHAVIOURS THAT LEAD TO SELF-ACTUALISATION

Although people self-actualise in their own ways, they tend to share certain characteristics. Self-actualisation does not mean perfection, in fact Maslow theorised that only 2% of people will actually achieve self-actualisation, so is interesting to note that this theory is based on a concept that most people will never achieve. Despite the high level of expectation it is important to remember the basis of the theory, which is that people are on a journey towards self-actualisation (they may just

never get there) The following behaviours are commonly seen in people with actualising tendencies.

- Living life like a child – appreciation, fun, full absorption and concentration on what you are doing.
- Being open to trying new things instead of sticking to known or safe paths.
- Listening to your own feelings of right and wrong, and evaluating experiences for yourself rather than being influenced by tradition, others, peers or people in authority.
- Being honest and avoiding 'game playing' or 'manipulative behaviours'.
- Being prepared to challenge other thinking and potentially being unpopular if your views don't align with the majority.
- Taking responsibility and working hard.
- Recognising when you are in the wrong, identifying when you are being defensive apologising and having the courage to overcome defensiveness.

CRITICAL REFLECTION

Whilst as a high school student Maslow would not consider you to be close to self-actualising yet, reflect upon the behaviours described above. Which of these behaviours do you identify in yourself? Which of these behaviours are an area for development for you?

CRITICAL EVALUATION

The most significant limitation of Maslow's research is his chosen research method. Maslow read biographies and writings of 18 people he admired, respected and believed had self-actualised. From these historical and contemporary people, he developed his list of qualities that these people had in common and opposed to most other people he had observed. His list of people primarily included educated white males who were highly influential. Although Maslow (1970) did study self-actualised females such as Eleanor Roosevelt and Mother Theresa, they comprised a small portion of his sample.

Another criticism of Maslow's hierarchy of needs is the concept that the lower needs must be met before a person can move through the deficiency needs and up to the growth needs. Consider cultures or countries where large numbers of people live in poverty, it is clear that people are still capable of higher-level needs such as love, belonging, despite not having physiological needs met.