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**“Psychoanalytic approach to  
counselling”**

**P.G. Sem-3**

**Counselling Psychology**

# Psychoanalytic approach of counselling



- Psychodynamic counselling evolved from the work of Sigmund Freud (1856-1939). During his career as a medical doctor, Freud came across many patients who suffered from medical conditions which appeared to have no 'physical cause'.
- This led him to believe that the origin of such illnesses lay in the unconscious mind of the patient.
- Freud therefore started to investigate the unconscious mind, so that he could understand his patients and help them recover.

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- The primary goal of counselling within a psychoanalytic frame of reference is to make the unconscious conscious. Once brought to the conscious level, repressed materials can be dealt with in rational ways by using any method of counselling.

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- Psychodynamic counselling is based on Freud's idea that **true knowledge of people and their problems is possible through an understanding of three particular areas of the human mind.**
- These areas are:

## Cont...



- **The Conscious** – things that we are aware of, including feelings or emotions, such as anger, sadness, grief, delight, surprise, and happiness.
- **The Subconscious** – these are things that are below our conscious awareness but fairly easily accessible. They may include, for example, events that we have forgotten, but will easily remember when asked an appropriate question.
- **The Unconscious** – this is the area of the mind where memories have been suppressed and is usually very difficult to access. Such memories may include extremely traumatic events that have been blocked off and require a highly skilled practitioner to help recover.

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- **Freud maintained that the personality consists of three related elements:**
- **The Id** is the part of our personality concerned with satisfying instinctual basic needs of food, comfort and pleasure. It is therefore present from (or possibly before) birth.
- **The Ego** is defined as “the realistic awareness of self”. It is the logical and common sense side to our personality. Freud believed that the Ego develops as the infant becomes aware that it is a separate being from its parents.
- **The Superego** develops later in a child’s life, from about the age of three. The Superego curbs and controls the basic instincts of the Id, which may be socially unacceptable. It therefore acts as our conscience.

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- Freud believed that everybody experiences tension and conflict between the three elements of their personalities. For example, desire for pleasure (from the Id) is restrained by the moral sense of right and wrong (from the Superego). The Ego balances the tension between the Id wanting to be satisfied and the Superego being over strict.
- According to Freud, the process of development goes through a series of conflicts and resolutions and the outcome is the unique personality.



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- Freud describes a number of stages (5- stages) often called psycho-sexual stages through which the development of an individual progresses before the adult stage is reached. According to Freud the whole process of development is completed in the first few years of life. In view of this the years of early childhood are considered to be crucial. Whether a man is normal or abnormal, depends to a great extent how the parents and others have treated him and how smooth was his transition from one stage to another.

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- **Defense Mechanisms –**
- Defense mechanisms are the methods used by the ego to protect itself from experiencing anxiety that usually results either from recognizing unconscious impulses or blame for immoral acts.
- The specific reactions that are used to defend the self against threats of different kinds of frustration are called defense mechanisms.

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- Important defense mechanisms are-
- 1. Repression
- 2. Denial
- 3. Projection
- 4. Displacement
- 5. Regression
- 6. Sublimation

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- The techniques of psychoanalytic therapy are aimed at increasing awareness, fostering insights into the client's behavior, and understanding the meanings of symptoms.
- The six basic techniques of psychoanalytic therapy are used as counselling techniques-
- (1) Maintaining the analytic frame-work,
- (2) Free association,
- (3) Interpretation,
- (4) Dream analysis,
- (5) Analysis of resistance, and
- (6) Analysis of transference.

