# Freud: Id, Ego, Superego and the Psyche

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**Core Content**

##### Summary

     Sigmund Freud, a renowned Austrian neurologist and psychoanalyst, introduced a groundbreaking theory of the human psyche, which revolutionized our understanding of the mind. At the core of Freud's psychoanalytic framework are three distinct components: the id, the superego, and the ego.

##### Id

     According to Freud, the id is the most primitive and instinctual part of the psyche, representing our deepest and most basic desires and impulses. It is driven by the pleasure principle, which seeks immediate gratification of our desires and needs. The id operates on the unconscious level and is not subject to the constraints of reality or morality. It is in constant conflict with the other parts of the psyche, such as the ego and the superego, which represent more rational and socially controlled aspects of our personality. Infants and young children are mostly influenced by the id.

##### Superego

     The superego is the part of the psyche that represents our internalized moral and ethical code and serves as a source of guilt and shame. It acts as the moral compass of the psyche, it is formed by the internalization of the values and rules of society, as well as by the individual's own experiences and interactions with authority figures. The superego operates on the unconscious level and works to suppress the impulses of the id and to bring them in line with the individual's sense of right and wrong. It is in constant conflict with the id and the ego. The superego can be both positive and negative, it can be a source of feelings of self-worth and pride but also can lead to feelings of guilt, shame, and anxiety.

##### Ego

     According to Freud, the ego is the part of the psyche that mediates between the demands of the id and the demands of the external world. The ego operates on the conscious and preconscious levels and is in charge of decision-making, problem-solving, and the ability to interact with the world. It uses the reality principle, and it tries to find a balance between the id's pleasure-seeking impulses and the demands of the external world. The ego is also responsible for maintaining a sense of self and personal identity. It is shaped by the individual's experiences and interactions with the external world and is constantly in flux as the individual grows and develops.

     When functioning effectively, the ego integrates the desires of the id with the moral constraints of the superego, enabling individuals to navigate life's challenges and make choices that are both satisfying and socially acceptable. However, imbalances or disruptions in this delicate interplay can lead to psychological conflicts, neuroses, and nonadaptive behaviors.

     Although the id, superego, and ego can sometimes conflict, they ultimately work together to maintain psychological stability.

**Core Content**

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     During early infancy, the id is dominant as it operates on the pleasure principle, seeking immediate gratification of basic needs and desires. The superego is relatively undeveloped at this stage.

     As the child grows and interacts with caregivers, the superego begins to form through the internalization of societal values, cultural norms, and parental influences. The superego acts as an internal moral compass, setting standards and ideals that guide behavior and instigate feelings of guilt or shame when violated.

     The ego starts emerging during early childhood and becomes more prominent as a child learns to navigate the demands of reality and balance the conflicting desires of the id and the moral constraints of the superego. The ego develops strategies such as problem-solving, decision-making, and reality-testing to manage conflicts and find compromises that satisfy both the id and the superego.

     Throughout adolescence, the relationship between these three components continues to evolve. The superego becomes more influenced by societal expectations and peer pressure, while the ego faces the challenges of identity formation and establishing a sense of self.

     In adulthood, the balance between the id, superego, and ego becomes more stable, with the ego ideally acting as a mediator and balancing the competing demands of the other two components. However, conflicts can still arise, and the individual may grapple with unresolved issues from childhood or societal pressures that impact their psychological well-being.

     It is important to note that while Freud's theory emphasizes the influence of early childhood experiences, subsequent psychodynamic theories have expanded the understanding of development and the ongoing influence of the id, superego, and ego throughout the lifespan.

     In summary, the relationship between the id, superego, and ego is not static but transforms as individuals develop and mature, reflecting the interplay between innate drives, societal influences, and the evolving sense of self.

### Link to education

For teachers, it is important to understand the underlying emotions and motivations of their students. Understanding the psychoanalytic theory could help the teacher aid the students in understanding the concept for themselves. Teachers can also use this theory to help students understand certain literary characters or people from history.

### Vocabulary

###### **Psyche:** the totality of an individual's mind, encompassing their thoughts, emotions, perceptions, and behaviors

###### **Id:**the primitive and instinctual part of the mind that operates on the pleasure principle, seeking immediate gratification of desires and impulses

###### **Ego:**the psychological component that mediates between the demands of the id, superego, and reality, striving to balance instinctual drives and societal expectations

###### **Superego:**the moral conscience of an individual, embodying societal and parental values and imposing guilt and judgment on behavior

Additional Resources:

A free textbook-like resource on the relevance and psychoanalysis. Many different topics surround the psychoanalytic theory.

<https://www.sciencedirect.com/topics/neuroscience/psychoanalytic-theory>

Goes in depth about the different approaches.

<https://apsa.org/content/psychoanalytic-theory-approaches>

Read this online at <https://books.byui.edu/science_of_learning/DMqBZgjm>