

Freud Notes

Sigmund Freud was born in the Austrian town of Freiberg on May 6, 1856. After a life of constant inquiry, he committed suicide after requesting a lethal dose of morphine from his doctor while exiled in England in 1939, following a battle with oral cancer.

When he was four years old his family moved to Vienna, the town where he would live and work for most of the remainder of his life.

He received his medical degree in 1881 and became engaged to marry the following year. His marriage produced six children—the youngest of whom, Anna, was to herself become a distinguished psychoanalyst. After graduation, Freud promptly set up a private practice and began treating various psychological disorders.

Considering himself first and foremost a scientist, rather than a doctor, he endeavored to understand the journey of human knowledge and experience.

Freud became greatly influenced by the work of his friend and Viennese colleague, Josef Breuer.

Inspired by Breuer, Freud posited that neuroses had their origins in deeply traumatic experiences that had occurred in the patient's past. He believed that the original occurrences had been forgotten and hidden from consciousness. His treatment was to empower his patients to recall the experience and bring it to consciousness, and in doing so, confront it both intellectually and emotionally. He believed one could then discharge it and rid oneself of the neurotic symptoms. Freud and Breuer published their theories and findings in *Studies in Hysteria* (1895).

Legacy

Freud's many theories—including those about "psychic energy," the Oedipus complex and the importance of dreams—were no doubt influenced by other scientific discoveries of his day.

Freud's work has been both rapturously praised and hotly critiqued, but no one has influenced the science of psychology as intensely as Sigmund Freud.

- Oral (0-1 years of age): During this stage, the mouth is the pleasure center for development. Freud believed this is why infants are born with a sucking reflex and desire their mother's breast. If a child's oral needs are not met during infancy, he or she may develop negative habits such as nail biting or thumb sucking to meet this basic need.
- Anal (1-3 years of age): During this stage, toddlers and preschool-aged children begin to experiment with urine and feces. The control they learn to exert over their bodily functions is manifested in toilet-training. Improper resolution of this stage, such as parents toilet training their children too early, can result in a child who is uptight and overly obsessed with order.
- *Phallic (3-6 years of age)*: During this stage, preschoolers take pleasure in their genitals and, according to Freud, begin to struggle with sexual desires toward the opposite sex parent (boys to mothers and girls to fathers). For boys, this is called the *Oedipus complex*, involving a boy's desire for his mother and his urge to replace his father who is seen as a rival for the mother's attention. At the same time, the boy is afraid his father will punish him for his feelings, so he experiences castration anxiety. The *Electra complex*, later proposed by Freud's protégé Carl Jung, involves a girl's desire for her father's attention and wish to take her mother's place.
- *Latency (6-12 years of age)*: During this stage, sexual instincts subside, and children begin to further develop the superego, or conscience. Children begin to behave in morally acceptable ways and adopt the values of their parents and other important adults.
- Genital (12+ years of age): During this stage, sexual impulses reemerge. If other stages have been successfully met, adolescents engage in appropriate sexual behavior, which may lead to marriage and childbirth.