

Freud's psychosexual stages of development

Sigmund Freud's psychosexual stages describe how personality development occurs during infancy and childhood.

At each stage, libido builds up in a specific body part, such as the mouth or anus. 'Libido' is Freud's term to represent 'sexual energy', with 'sexual' being a broad term for anything pleasurable.

Each psychosexual stage is named after the body part (or erogenous zone) that is the focus of the libido during that specific life stage. Pleasure is gained from discharging the libido, allowing a child to move to the next stage of development.

If a child experiences anxiety at a specific stage (for example, due to a caregiver preventing them from discharging their libido) then the child may become fixated on this stage, leading to specific behaviours occurring in adulthood.

1 Oral stage (0–1 year)

The erogenous zone is the mouth.

Sucking and swallowing discharge the libido. When we are born, we are entirely id. However, the ego begins to develop during this stage.

Adult oral fixation may be due to weaning occurring too early, and later may lead to gum chewing, smoking and over-eating.

2 Anal stage (1–3 years)

The erogenous zones are the anus and bladder.

Holding onto and eliminating faeces/urine discharges the libido.

Adult anal fixation may be due to overly harsh or lax toilet training, and can lead to obsessive organisation or, conversely, excessive disorganisation.

3 Phallic stage (3–6 years)

The erogenous zones are the genitals.

Masturbation discharges the libido. The superego begins to develop.

Adult phallic fixation may be due to the child developing an unusual relationship with their caregivers and may lead to low self-esteem and promiscuity.

4 Latency stage (6 years–puberty)

No specific erogenous zone.

Dormant sexual feelings begin to develop.

Adult latency fixation may lead to immaturity and poor relationship-building skills.

5 Genital stage (puberty–adult)

The penis/vagina is the erogenous zone.

Sexual feelings mature.

Adult genital fixation may lead to difficulties in forming healthy sexual relationships.

SPECIFICATION LINKS

- psychodynamic approach
- Freud

PsychologyReviewExtras



Go to www.hachettelearning.com/psychologyreviewextras for a printable pdf of this centrespread.