

## Sigmund Freud

Sigmund Freud was a pioneer in charting personality and emotional growth. For Freud, human psychology and human sexuality are inextricably linked. In fact, Freud made the assertion that far from lying dormant until puberty, the libido (sex or life drive) is present at birth. Freud believed that libidinal energy and the drive to reduce libidinal tension were the underlying dynamic forces that accounted for human psychological process.

Freud hypothesized five distinct stages of psychosexual development. In each stage, children are faced with a conflict between societal demands and the desire to reduce the libidinal tension associated with different body parts. Each stage differs in the manner in which libidinal energy is manifested and the way in which the libidinal drive is met. Fixation occurs when a child is overindulged or overtly frustrated during a stage of development. In response, the child then forms a personality pattern based on that particular stage, which persists into adulthood.

The first stage (0-one year) is the **oral stage**. During this stage, gratification is obtained primarily through the putting of objects into the mouth by biting and sucking. Libidinal energy is centered on the mouth. An orally fixated adult would likely exhibit excessive dependency.

During the **anal stage** (one-three years), the libido is centered on the anus and gratification is gained through the elimination and retention of waste materials. Fixation during this stage would lead to either excessive orderliness or sloppiness in the adult.

From about ages three to six, the child passes through the **phallic** or **Oedipal stage**. The central event of this stage is the resolution of the Oedipal conflict for male children and the Electra conflict for female children. The male child envies his father's intimate relationship with his mother and fears castration at his father's hands. He wishes to eliminate his father and possess his mother, but the child feels guilty about his wishes. To successfully resolve the conflict, he deals with his guilt feelings by identifying with the father, establishing his sexual identity, and internalizing moral values. Second, the child to a large extent de-eroticized, or sublimates his libidinal energy. This may be expressed through collecting objects or focusing on schoolwork. Freud did not elaborate much on the Electra complex, although he theorized a similar process for females. It should be mentioned that females cannot have castration fear, but they are thought to have penis envy.

Once the libido is sublimated, the child has entered the stage called **latency**, which lasts until puberty is reached.

For Freud, the final stage is the **genital stage**, beginning in puberty and lasting through adulthood. According to Freud, if prior development has proceeded correctly, at this point the person should enter into healthy heterosexual relationships. But if the sexual traumas of childhood have not been resolved, such behaviors as fetishism may result. Freud's theories are controversial and have been debated through the years.

<b>Stages</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b>Oral</b>	Libidinal energy centered on the mouth; fixation can lead to excessive dependency
<b>Anal</b>	Toilet training occurs during this time; fixation can lead to excessive orderliness
<b>Phallic</b>	Oedipal conflict is resolved during this stage
<b>Latency</b>	Libido is largely sublimated during this stage
<b>Genital</b>	Begins at puberty; if previous stages have been successfully resolved, the person will enter into normal hetero sexual relations