

The psychodynamic approach

Approach and theorists

Key aspects of the approach or theory relating to children's development and behaviour

Application of the approach for childcare practitioners and educators in schools and settings

Psychodynamic:

Freud

Key words:

- Unconscious
- Defence
- Id
- Ego
- Superego
- Psychosexual development

- Unconscious motives and desires drive our actions.
- When upsetting memories find their way into our consciousness, we develop **defence mechanisms**. Personality or self consists of three parts: the **id**, the **ego** and the **superego**.
- The id is the part of the self with which we are born. It is biologically driven and includes our instincts and drives.
- The ego is part of the self that develops as we learn that there are limits on what is acceptable and we must wait to have our needs satisfied.
- There are stages of psychosexual development identified by Freud where a child must solve an inner conflict in order to progress to the next stage.

Freud believed that personality formed during the first years of life and parents or caregivers' interactions with children have a long-lasting impact on children's emotional states. He was the first theorist to recognise that children pass through stages in their development. Freud directly influenced other developmental theorists, such as Erik Erikson. His psychodynamic perspectives on children's development have influenced our understanding of play as a tool for expression and growth.

Freud inspired others to think of play as an indicator of how each child constructs a unique life history, resolves problems, expresses feelings and understands who they are. Freud's thinking continues to guide academic studies in a variety of areas, such as attachment theory.

Psychodynamic:

Bowlby and attachment theory

Key words:

- Attachment
- Key person
- Primary caregiver
- Insecure
- Secure

- Bowlby studied the importance of a child's relationship with their primary caregiver and the impact of this on emotional, social and cognitive development.
- Bowlby believed there was a link between an infant being separated from their mother/primary caregiver and difficulties in later childhood and adult life.
- Attachment theory studies the degree of attachment between the child and the caregiver and how certain the child is that the caregiver is able to meet their needs.

A key person helps those children in their group feel safe and cared for by responding sensitively to their feelings and behaviours, meeting emotional needs, giving reassurance and supporting the child's well-being. They are a point of contact for parents and build relationships with the child. The key person will observe the child regularly to assess development and identify developmental delays as well as if the child needs additional support. The key person will have input in planning activities based on each child's individual needs. Through the inclusion of a key person, children feel settled and happy and are more confident to explore.