

# Personality Development and Communication

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# Principles and Practice of Youth in Development Work

## Unit 1 : Personality Development

### Unit Introduction

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Welcome to this unit on Personality Development. In this session we would be looking at attempts to describe personality. We shall do this by studying a few selected theories on personality. These are described under five categories indicated below.

The term personality may not be new to you. You may have heard statements like *'he has a weak personality'* or *'she has a commanding personality'* or *'he is a likeable fellow'* etc. in your conversations about other people. You may have noticed that the intended meaning of the term personality varies from person to person. It has been defined in many ways and yet no definition has found universal acceptance. In this session we are going to discuss personality as a psychological concept. It would help us to understand better the way people behave.

People who study personality examine how people differ in the ways they behave and express themselves. For example, they study the way people walk, talk, dress themselves, how they express emotions etc. Then they attempt to determine the causes of such differences between people. It is the behaviour and expressions of an individual taken collectively that gives a distinct identity or personality to that person. Everyone is different, yet we have things in common too. The idea of a distinct identity of a person in comparison to others lends itself to another expression - that of the 'self-concept'. The 'self' is an internal image each person has about himself or herself built up through comparison with the personality of others. You will learn about the 'Self' in a later session.

## Learning Outcomes of this unit

After completing this session, you will be able to

- Orient yourself to the concept of personality
- Become aware of factors that influence personality development
- Appreciate how studies on personality enable us to understand others better
- Distinguish between different types of theories on personality
- Outline the basis of a few selected theories on personality
- List factors that play a role in the development of personality

## Theories of Personality

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If you read any text book on psychology dealing with personality, you are bound to come across many theories. In this session we are going to look at only a few of them. The aim is to give you an outline of how the concept of personality developed and to give attention to the more important factors which could influence personality development. A theory is accepted on the basis of experimental evidence that supports it. We would be unable to discuss such evidence at great depth within the scope of this session. However, where relevant, brief indications are given as to the status of acceptance of a theory presented.

### Personality domains

This theory dates back to the second century BC and is attributed to a physician by the name of Galen. According to him, the human psyche has three domains; the *cognitive* or intellectual, the *conative* or intentional and the *affective* or emotional. The conative and affective domains formed the driving forces of human behaviour while the cognitive domain acted as a guide. Today, the conative domain has been renamed as the behavioural dimension.

### Physiological type theories

These theories believed that personality types can be categorised according to physical characteristics. Accordingly, an individual must fall into one of a few rigid personality classes determined on the basis of physiological characteristics. Such a rigid classification is no longer accepted today. However, two selected physiological type theories are outlined below to enable you to understand the development of the concept of personality.

### Humoral theory

This theory was based on the idea that the body contained different humours or fluids: blood, phlegm, black bile and yellow bile. Each individual had a higher proportion of one fluid than of the others. This was thought to yield four different personalities. *Cheerful and energetic* with greater proportion of blood, *calm and placid* with phlegm, *melancholic* with black bile and *hot-tempered* with yellow bile. Accordingly everyone had to fit in to one of these four personalities. The theory is no longer accepted.

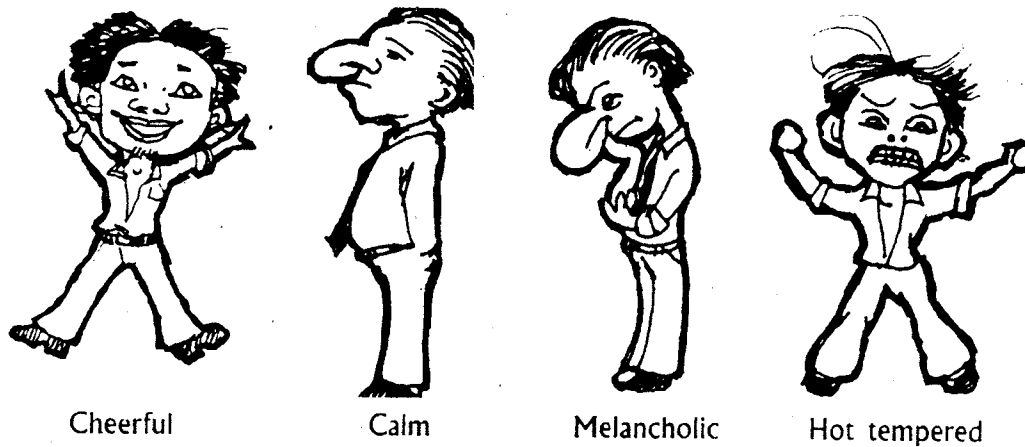


Figure 1.2 An artist's impression of body types

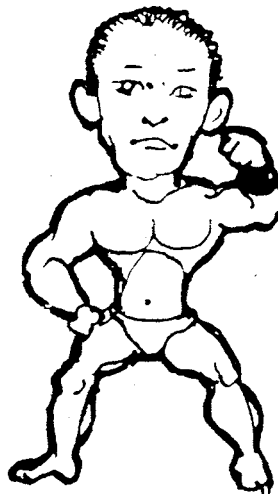
### Morphological (body type) theories

These theories tried to distinguish types of personalities on the basis of *body shape* (somatotype). Two such theories became well known. One was developed by the German psychiatrist Ernst Kretschmer in 1921. He argued that specific mental illnesses were associated with specific body shapes. According to him, frail and thin people (asthenic type) were prone to schizophrenia (split personalities). Plump and rounded people (Pyknic type) suffered from manic depression. Strong and muscular people (athletic type) rarely suffered from mental illness.

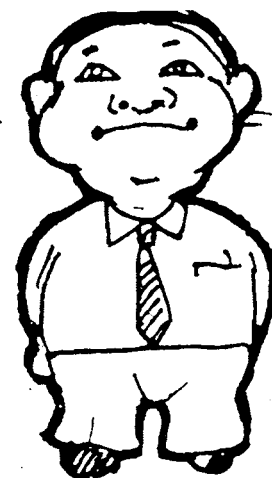
In the 1930s, William H. Sheldon in the United States developed an elaborate system for assigning body type to people based on body shapes outlined by Kretschmer. According to him, *ectomorphs* were thin and frail people. They tended to be introverts with restrained character. *Mesomorphs* were robust muscular people. They were hearty but insensitive. *Endomorphs* were plump and rounded people. They were jolly and easy-going. Today, these theories do not enjoy acceptance.



Ectomorph



Mesomorph



Endomorph

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## Psychoanalytic theories

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These originated with the work of the Austrian neurologist Sigmund Freud during the first four decades of the 20 century. The psychoanalytic approach is concerned with unconscious wish-fulfilment of an individual and memories of early experience. Evidence for such theories come from stories told by patients. Therefore no experimental manipulation to test them can be carried out. Despite this weakness, concepts from the psychoanalytic studies are still respected today.

### Freud

Freud demarcated the adult personality into three basic components: the id, the *ego* and the *super-ego*. A young infant has only an id. It is the impulsive part of the personality demanding the satisfaction of every desire. As the child grows older, it realises that some things are simply not possible or would not happen. He begins to compromise with reality. The part of the mind responsible for this compromise is the ego. It balances the demands of the unconscious mind with what is practically possible. As a child matures, he develops a part of the mind which acts as an internal parent. It guides him with ideas of what is proper, of duty, obligations and conscience. This part is called the super-ego. Ego performs a balancing act between the impulsive demands of the id and the total

control of the super-ego. Freud believed that pleasure experiences or sexual energy (*libido*) of early life was all important to determine the development of the personality.



### Activity 1.1

Group work of 5-10 persons recommended. Select a facilitator for the group. Over a period of about a week, observe how

an infant (birth-6 months)

a child (about 5 years)

an adolescent (13-15 years)

cope up with his/her needs such as hunger or need for toys or pocket money to buy sweets etc. Observe satisfaction of needs as well as dissatisfaction. Each member could then report observations at a group meeting. Discuss the change in self-control with age. Recall personal experiences as well. You may also have opportunity to discuss variation in the degree of control between different individuals of the same age group.

## Jung

The Swiss psychiatrist Carl Gustav Jung was an early adherent of Freud's theory. Later he began to question the emphasis Freud gave to sexual experiences in personality development. He believed that spiritual and religious processes were more important than sex drive in personality development. He also focused more on individual differences. He distinguished between two reaction styles: '*introversion*' and '*extroversion*'. Introversion is preoccupation with one's inner world at the expense of social interaction. Extroversion is a preference for social interaction to satisfy inner desires. He accepted Freud's id, ego and super-ego but added another dimension to the personality called the '*collective unconscious*' which was shared by all humans.

## Adler

The Austrian psychiatrist Alfred Adler was also an early follower of Freud. Later he too began to question the emphasis of sexual drive in personality development. His view was that behavioural changes occurred in a person as compensation for a *physical or mental inadequacy* identified by that person as a deficiency. Shortness of stature for example could produce domineering behaviour. Adler gave prominence to *family influence* in personality development. For example the position in the family by birth order was considered a significant factor in determining character.

## Erikson

The American psychoanalyst Erik H. Erikson proposed three factors in addition to Freud's sexual drive as important in personality development. He proposed that the influence of *psychological, social and biological factors* should be integrated with sexual drive in understanding personality. He presented eight stages of progressive development where each stage was dominated by a pair of opposing attitudes called the dimension. These stages are given in Figure 1.3.

Table 1.1 Erikson's developmental stages

Stage	Dimension	Source of Emergence
1. early infancy: 1st year of life	trust vs. mistrust	quality of care, comfort and meeting needs
2. late infancy : 2nd and 3rd years of life	autonomy vs. shame	child's need to explore and experiment
3. early childhood : 4th and 5th years of life	initiative vs. guilt	response of parents to self initiative
4. middle childhood : 6th to 11th years of life	industry vs. inferiority	Encouragement in efforts to do some task eg studies
5. adolescence :	identity vs. role confusion	ability to cope with sexual needs
6. early adulthood :	intimacy vs. isolation	relationship with peers
7. middle adulthood :	generation vs. stagnation	concerns beyond family
8. late adulthood :	self-acceptance vs. despair	looking back on life

According to Erikson, the environmental influences are greatest during early stages of growth. The opposing attitudes of a dimension are in conflict with each other at each stage and the inability to resolve this conflict may affect personality development.



### Activity

Group work of 5-10 persons recommended. Select a facilitator for the group. Individually, match one's own experiences with the stages described by Erikson. Decide whether you agree or disagree with the description. Members could then discuss the stages one by one and hear each member's reaction. You might not remember the first three stages and may not have reached the older stages of life. The discussion would help you to appreciate whether a theory is universally applicable or not.

## Trait theories

The more recent approach to personality studies is based on experiments and quantitative data. Many investigators focus on the study of individual characteristics or 'traits' such as sociability, impulsiveness, meticulousness, truthfulness etc. Theories based on such studies are called '*psychometric*' theories because they tend to measure the trait of a person by referring to standard scales or *inventories* developed for such purposes. The measurement is mostly based on *self-report* that require people to describe themselves using a given scale. Let us take an example to clarify this concept. Let's select a trait such as 'expressing anger'.

Each person is expected to select the most appropriate description for himself or herself. Using a large number of such traits and self-reports, one's personality can be established; this is usually by reference to standard charts evolved from studies made.

### The scale of measurement could be

- N - not at all
- O - occasionally
- F - frequently, about 50% of the time
- M - most of the time, about 75% of the time
- H - highly characteristic of me

earlier using a large sample of people. One can design such assessments where quantitative values may be assigned to descriptions in order to facilitate quantitative analysis. An example of assigning values to replace the letters (N, O, F, M, H) used in the earlier example could be as follows:

N	O	F	M	H
-2	-1	0	+1	+2

The total score for the list of traits with reference to a standard chart would then identify the category of personality. In a later session, you would get an opportunity to carry out a scoring activity and to understand better how it could be done.

The difficulty however is to determine what to study from thousands of traits that one can think of and list. Investigators have therefore tried to prioritize traits that are important in the study of personality. In this session we shall discuss only a few selected trait theories in order to understand their nature.

## Eysenck

Hans J. Eysenck, a psychologist from the United Kingdom, developed his theory using a large number of questions on behaviour such as impulsiveness, anxiety, intolerance etc. In 1947 he administered his questionnaire to 700 soldiers in London, who were being treated for neurotic disorders. Using general trends that emerged from their answers, he defined two personality dimensions. They were :

- (1) **introversion - extroversion and**
- (2) **neurotic - stability.**



Both dimensions according to him resulted from biological and physiological changes in the individual. You would remember the terms introversion and extroversion from the psychoanalytic theory of Jung. Eysenck used these terms to describe people who were either withdrawn and self-sufficient (introverts) or outgoing and sociable (extroverts). In the neurotic - stability dimension, neurotic individuals will be more likely to become anxious, and to suffer from 'nervous' ailments such as headache or panic attacks in comparison to the stable individuals. They will also over-react to threat. You must remember that these four types of personalities: introverts, extroverts, neurotics and stables, are extreme personality 'types' and there would be individuals with personalities which are in between these extremes. In 1976, Eysenck introduced another personality dimension to the two described above. It was called '*psychoticism*' and it related to whether an individual would conform to society's rules and conventions.

## Cattell

Raymond B. Cattell, an American psychologist, collected data from a wider range of people than Eysenck. The data was categorised into three types called L-data, Q-data and T-data. L-data were related to the life record. These included information like school grades, absence rate at work etc. Q-data was gathered by asking individuals to rate their own personalities by completing pre-set questionnaires. The T-data were gathered through objective tests where questions were asked without letting the individual know what aspect of personality it was seeking to understand.

Cattell divided traits into two categories called *surface traits* and *source traits*. Surface traits were those that could be identified easily by others. Source traits were less visible but were more important in shaping one's personality. He identified sixteen major traits which in his opinion were essential to give an adequate description of a personality which he called a '*personal profile*'. These traits are given in figure 1.4. You would notice that each trait is formed from a pair of opposite characteristics. Cattell's Personality profile provides for a detailed psychometric assessment of personality.

Reserved	Outgoing
Less intelligent	More intelligent
Affected by feelings	Emotionally stable
Submissive	Dominant
Serious	Happy-go-lucky
Expedient	Conscientious
Timid	Venturesome
Tough-minded	Sensitive
Trusting	Suspicious
Practical	Imaginative
Forthright	Shrewd
Self-assured	Apprehensive
Conservative	Experimenting
Group-dependent	Self-sufficient
Uncontrolled	Controlled
Relaxed	Tense

Figure 1.4 Cattell's Sixteen Personality Traits



### Activity

You may attempt this activity on your own. List down Cattell's personality traits on a blank sheet. Remember that each trait gives two extreme positions. A person could position oneself in-between these extreme positions. E.g. Reserved \_\_\_\_\_ outgoing

Assess where you stand with reference to each trait. You could use ticking to indicate where you fit in as shown. Reserved \_\_\_\_\_ outgoing

After completion, study your assessment. It will indicate where improvements are desirable to become a better person.

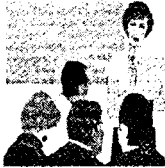
## Behaviourist view

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These theories are based on the assumption that personality is a product of learning. Behaviourists assume that all human behaviour can be explained in terms of learned stimulus-response (S-R) associations or *conditioning*. This concept can be clarified using an example. A rat cage can be designed so that its floor contains metal contacts through which an electric shock can be given to the rats. One place of the cage such as a small ladder is kept free of shock. A rat can be trained by giving small electric shocks repeatedly to run to the ladder where the shock is not generated. Simultaneous with the shock, it can be exposed to a source of light. After sometime, when the source of light is given without the electric shock, the rat still runs to the ladder. It is an example of conditioning or a learned S-R association. Here the association is between the shock and the source of light. The foundation for the behaviour view was laid by J.B. Watson in 1913 and was further developed by B.F. Skinner.

### Skinner

Skinner deviated from the classical concept of conditioning. Instead, he believed that an individual could be manipulated by *reward experiences*. It meant that actions with pleasant experiences were more likely to be repeated. He argued that personality was simply the sum of such learned behaviour.



### Activity

Group activity of 5-10 persons recommended. Select a facilitator. Each member could list ten instances where a reward experience has given encouragement. Each member can then share this list with the group. Based on this sharing, discuss whether reward experiences encourage development of good habits.

## Social learning theory

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In the 1960s and 1970s, American psychologists Walter Mischel and Albert Bandura forwarded views that behaviour was controlled not by hypothetical traits but according to the degree of *regularity of external stimuli*. This suggests that personality traits could vary once the external environment changes. It also suggests that a child begins to learn by imitation. The importance of '*role models*' in the learning process of a child is becomes highlighted here. The child identifies individuals to be his or her role models. In response to an environmental change, the child will behave in a manner it imagines that his or her role model might act. Thus *social interactions* become an important factor for personality development.



### Activity

Group activity in a small group of 5-10 people recommended. Select a facilitator. Each member can list 5 role models that he/she has chosen to guide behaviour in 5 selected situations. Put them up for display for others to see. Discuss amongst the group the frequency of members to rely on role models.

## Phenomenological perspectives

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In the 1950s, there was a new approach to study personality. It emphasised that individuals themselves should interpret how they behaved. The use of one's own perception of one's own behaviour in the study of personality is called the phenomenological approach.

### Rogers

According to Carl Rogers, all human beings have two basic needs: a need for *self-actualization* and a need for *positive regard*. Self-actualization involves the exploring of one's talents to improve personal development and to realize one's aspirations. This may need educating oneself or improving one's skills and abilities. Positive regard is a need for affection and respect from other people. During childhood, provision of *unconditional positive regard* would lead to a healthy personal development. This means providing love irrespective of good or bad behaviour on the part of the child. Approval of behaviour is not a pre-condition to be loved. The child is therefore encouraged to explore his or her potential without any fear of disapproval. With *conditional positive regard*, the child develops a set of values which brings approval. It will lead to an image of what they ought to grow up to be, called the *ideal self-concept*. This may be difficult to achieve practically and the individual may become neurotic as a result.



### Activity

Recall and list the characteristics of an individual referred to in this session as helpful in the study of personality. Categorise them into external and internal.

You have learnt only a few of the theories put forward by investigators of personality. They are sufficient to convince us that the concept of personality has no universal definition. The theories also directed us to factors that are associated with and influence personality development.



## Self-help questions

Use the following format to develop a table for a comparative view of all the theories you have studied in this Session.

Theory category	Major names	Key words	Critical period in life of individual

## Unit Summary

In this unit an attempt was made to define personality. Different theories of personality authored by specialists in their respective fields of study were discussed. These theories are based on physiological, morphological, psychoanalytical, behavioural, social learning and phenomenological aspects. Obviously these theories are based on different types of attributes of human beings. The propounding of different theories of personality essentially indicates that there is no single universal definition for personality and several factors may be involved in building the personality the individual.

## Suggested Readings

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