

We Are All Psychologists

# Psychology in the World : We Are All Psychologists

## Lesson 1 Overview

With this lesson, you're beginning the exciting journey of exploring your own feelings, personality and abilities. In today's rapidly changing world, you need information about yourself more than ever.

Adult Psychology aims to provide you with an exciting introduction to the science of the mind.

As you complete each lesson of the programme, your knowledge of psychology will increase. As you go on, it will become clear to you that psychology is a wide field of study with many applications and sub-areas.

### **1.1 Define psychology its varying fields and applications**

#### **Beginning Psychology**



## READING ASSIGNMENT

Psychology begins as soon as you're born. Many studies have shown that newborn infants are pre-programmed to make sense of their surroundings from the very beginning. At more subtle levels, this process continues throughout our whole lives.

Everyone is a psychologist. Everyone has models of other people stored in the brain. We all have our theories as to why people do what they do. The difference between so-called professional psychology and common-sense approaches to people's motives, etc. is that, if they are good, practising psychologists bring a degree of objectivity, expertise and sensitivity to each situation. In addition, most trained psychologists undergo many years of study and research before starting to apply their skills in the real world.

But what is this word psychology about? Your reading will provide you with certain definitions. Look at them now. We can list the really important aspects which airy good definition of psychology should make clear, i.e.:

- Private
- Meaningful
- Subjective
- Emotions
- Prediction

Traditionally, students were offered the following definitions:

‘Psychology is the Science of Behaviour’ or ‘Psychology is the scientific study of mental life.’ Such definitions, while useful in their way, say little about what actually concerns us.

So what is psychology concerned with?

- Psychology is concerned with the private experiences of people;
- With how they construct their meanings in life;
- With their understanding of other people and their knowledge of themselves;
- People are primary—all psychological explanations are human constructions.

*Psychology* is the scientific discussion of human experience.

To benefit from this programme of study, you must have an open mind. Try not to have preconceptions about the subject. Public perceptions of what psychologists do are usually very wide off the mark. You may be surprised to find that your idea of psychology and what psychologists do will be very different at the end of this programme of study!

## **Fields and Applications**

Modern psychology is a vast enterprise, with many sub-disciplines and many different applications. No one psychologist can hope to be expert in all the many fields, so many choose to become specialists in particular areas.

One current estimate is that nearly 500 journals exist on psychological topics, each producing four issues a year. This is not to include the torrent of books, periodicals and seminars which proliferate in the area. A daunting prospect for any would-be psychologist!

One reason for the information explosion in this field of study is that psychology (unlike physics or biology) is a new discipline and young disciplines always take some time to get on their feet. The technical term for this process is paradigm development. What this means is that, like any area of human activity, fashions come and go.

Originally, the dominant paradigm in psychology was evolution of the brain. Later on it became Freudianism. Later still the dominant one was behaviourism. Today the takeover bid has been launched by the application of computer models to the human mind, so-called Artificial Intelligence (A.I.).

The main sub-areas of psychology are the following:

- Personality
- Developmental Psychology
  - Infancy to old age
- Biological Psychology
  - The brain and nervous system
- Motivation and Emotion
- Learning and Conditioning
- Cognitive Psychology
  - Memory, language and thought

- Social Psychology
  - Psychology of groups
- Animal Studies
- Perception and the Senses
- Sexual Behaviour
- Psychological Testing
  - Intelligence and creativity
- Abnormal Psychology
  - Behaviour change/psychotherapy
- Scientific Method and Statistics

The above areas make up most of what students of psychology study in college. After this initial training is completed, they then begin to specialise in one or another of the professional fields of psychology.

These are:

- Psychology applied to Medicine
  - Clinical Psychologists
- Psychology applied to Education
  - Educational Psychologists
- Psychology applied to Work
  - Occupational Psychology

This classification does not do justice to the wide range of jobs that psychologists do today. These range from mentally-challenged handicapped people to designing advertisements; from selecting fighter pilots to testing drugs. In addition, many psychologists are

based in teaching colleges and conduct research of various kinds. Many lecture on their various specialties. In fact, the number of jobs they do is as varied as the people who do them!

A point is worth making. While psychologists have to deal with the mental/emotional facets of people and often work in the mental health area, psychiatrists are usually doctors, who have specialized in abnormal psychology—mental illness. One major difference between them is that psychiatrists may prescribe medication to patients while psychologists may not.

## **Key Points and Links**

### READING ASSIGNMENT

## **Key Points**

- Psychology is concerned with the private experiences of people, with how they construct their meanings in life, with their understanding of other people and their knowledge of themselves, and people are primary—all psychological explanations are human constructions.
- Originally, the dominant paradigm in psychology was evolution of the brain. Later on it became Freudianism, then behaviourism. Today the takeover bid has been launched by the application of computer models to the human mind, so-called Artificial Intelligence (A.I.).
- While psychologists have to deal with the mental/emotional facets of people and often work in the mental health area, psychiatrists

are usually doctors, who have specialized in abnormal psychology—mental illness.

## **Exercise: Your View of the World**

### **Respond to the following based on your reading.**

This test is designed to measure the degree to which you have a sense of purpose and meaning in your life. Perhaps the only time you, like most people, may think of this, is when you are alone in the bathroom first thing in the morning, groggily surveying your reflection in the mirror.

Don't do the test then! However, when you do, for each of the following statements choose the number that would be most nearly true to you. Note that the numbers always extend from one extreme feeling to its opposite kind. Neutral implies no judgment either way. Try to use it as little as possible.

1. I am usually:	1 Completely bored
	2
	3
	4 Neutral
	5
	6

	7 Exuberant, enthusiastic
	7 Always exciting
	6
	5
2. Life to me seems:	4 Neutral
	3
	2
	1 Completely routine
	1 No goals or aims at all
	2
	3
3. In life I have:	4 Neutral
	5
	6
	7 Very clear goals and aims
	1 Utterly meaningless, without purpose
	2
	3
4. My personal existence is:	4 Neutral
	5
	6

	7 Very purposeful and meaningful
	7 Constantly new and different
	6
	5
5. Every day is:	4 Neutral
	3
	2
	1 Exactly the same
	1 Often wonder why I exist
	2
	3
6. In thinking of my life, I:	4 Neutral
	5
	6
	7 Always see a reason for my being here
	1 Completely confuses me
	2
	3
7. As I view the world in relation to my life, the world:	4 Neutral
	5

	6
	7 Fits meaningfully with my life
	1 Very irresponsible person
	2
	3
8. I am a:	4 Neutral
	5
	6
	7 Very responsible person
	7 Absolutely free to make all life choices
	6
	5
9. Concerning man's freedom to make his own choices, I believe man is:	4 Neutral
	3
	2
	1 Completely bound by limitations of heredity and environment
	7 Prepared and unafraid
	6
	5
10. With regard to death, I am:	4 Neutral

	3
	2
	1 Unprepared and frightened

### **Exercise Answer Key:**

#### **Exercise: Your View of the World**

Add up your total score, i.e. all the numbers you chose in items 1 to 10, and compare your score to the table below.

Above 50	You have a very strong sense of purpose and fill your life with activities and pursuits that hold a deep meaning for you. You are usually well-directed in your career and tend towards a job involving service to the community.
30–50	A balanced approach to living life for oneself and others comes with this score, since you do feel that life has meaning.
20–30	You have an average score and may alternate between finding life to have direction at times and then at others wondering what it is all about.
0–20	You have little sense of purpose in your life. It often seems a puzzling mystery to you. This may lead to feelings of frustration in your day-to-day life.

## **1.2 Describe the introduction to historical aspects of psychology and its use**

### **Historical Aspects**

#### **READING ASSIGNMENT**

Psychology began with man's eternal quest to know his place in the universe. This is evident, for example, in the words of the Psalmist in the Bible:

Who is man, Lord, that you have recognised him?

For the early Greeks such as Socrates, Plato and Aristotle, the question philosophy tried to answer was:

How can we live the ‘good life’?

During the Medieval days, psychology remained firmly wedded to theology, St Thomas Aquinas being a major figure.

Psychology only really became a science when it began to move away from both theology and philosophy. A major figure here was René Descartes, a French philosopher, who solved the psychological nature of man by his famous statement of:

‘I think, therefore I am.’

Descartes started the Mind-Body split in psychology seeing physical and mental processes as different and distant—so-called Dualism.

With the advent of true scientific thought in the 19th Century, workers like W. James, F. Galton, A. Binet, I. Pavlov and Sigmund Freud began to study the nature of our internal worlds. The practical effect of all this endeavour was to place man squarely alongside all other animals. By viewing man as adapted to survive in nature, the Biological Model of man was created.

## **Different Schools of Psychology**

In this early phase of the development of psychology, various groups of scientists organized themselves into special interest groups to

promote their particular view of the subject. Some of the most famous of these were:

People Involved	View of the Mind	Name of Group
William James	Practical actions result from thought.	Pragmatism
I. Pavlov C. Darwin	Brain is nature's creation.	Physiologists
S. Freud C.G. Jung	Unconscious mind influences us.	Psychoanalysts
J.B. Watson B. Skinner	Behaviour <i>is</i> the mind.	Behaviourists

Many of these early influences continue to affect psychology today.

## Why Psychology?

In many ways, we are still mysteries to ourselves. As a result we often do not have explanations for the behaviour of other people.

Psychology's project is to disclose people to themselves. This aim can be broken down into those shown below, each with its particular need or motivation:

- Satisfy our needs
  - Satisfaction
- Understand the world
  - Understanding
- Know what we are
  - Identity Formation

- Overcome our sense of isolation
  - Anti-Alienation
- Control Others
  - Control
- Create what we are
  - Self-Expression

Basic to all psychological approaches is the acceptance that the world, or our experience of it, does not have a pre-set meaning. It only has the meaning which we bring to it. Psychological problems in life such as severe anxiety states, personality problems or mental ill-health are essentially reflections of loss of meaning.

## **Psychology in Everyday Use**

As we have seen, we are all psychologists! Someone once said that ‘the world is an intelligence test!’ Everything we do involves our psychology. Whether we are:

- Choosing something to buy
  - Consumer Psychology
- Deciding which route to take home
  - Problem Solving
- Picking a Partner
  - Attraction
- Watching a sporting event
  - Arousal
- Talking to our friends

- Social Psychology
- Dealing with a headache
  - Pain Control

the psychological processes comes into play.

Even when we are asleep, the unconscious mind is ordering the day's events. Like the heart, we, as persons, never stop looking for the meaning in our experience. This is what makes it such an interesting field of study. The subject matter is ourselves.

## A Practical Example of Applied Psychology

### **Giving Up Smoking—A Cruise to Lose a Stubborn Habit**

A unique experiment of changing behaviour began on 20 November 1970 when 88 determined people set sail on a cruise ship bound for the Caribbean. They had decided to eradicate an ingrained pattern—smoking—and had 13 days in which to break the habit. The special cruise was organized by Dr. William Nemon, a psychiatrist who contends that it is easier to get rid of unwanted modes of behaviour in pleasing new surroundings.

But just in case the relaxed shipboard surroundings failed to do the trick, a rigorous anti-smoking programme was started on the cruise. Each day after breakfast there were films and lectures on smoking as a health hazard.

This was followed by group meetings with psychologists at which the

reasons for the tobacco addiction were discussed. After that came exercises in substituting deep breathing for smoking, and then a seminar on self-hypnosis as a tool to combat smoking. By putting themselves in a slight trance the smokers could divert themselves from the urge to smoke.

This indoctrination reduced smoking in the controlled environment on board ship, but the test came when the ship stopped at island ports and the passengers went ashore. As one of them described it, “Suddenly everyone we see seems to be smoking, and we plunge into the shops to escape. The weakest-willed flee back to the ship.”

At the end of the cruise, 80% of the participants claimed to have broken the smoking habit. A follow-up study conducted six months later found that 37% had succeeded in making this alteration in behaviour at least relatively permanent.

## **Personal Objectives of the Course**

Because psychology is such a wide subject, the motivations of students studying it are equally wide-ranging. These range from:

- Personal
  - I think psychology can help me have a happier life,
- Practical
  - I want to understand my children better,
- Professional
  - I want to open up my own play school,

- Adult Learning
  - Psychology interests me.

To the extent that you are aware of your motivation for learning, the course will benefit you.

## **Key Points and Links**

### READING ASSIGNMENT

## **Key Points**

- René Descartes, a French philosopher, who solved the psychological nature of man by his famous statement of: 'I think, therefore I am.' Descartes started the Mind-Body split in psychology—Dualism.
- Pragmatism involved William James and researched practical actions that result from thought.
- I. Pavlov and C. Darwin researched the brain as nature's creation, called physiologists.
- Psychoanalysts, including S. Freud and C.G. Jung researched how the unconscious mind influences us.
- J.B. Watson and B. Skinner were behaviourists, who researched how behaviour is the mind.
- Psychological problems in life such as severe anxiety states, personality problems or mental ill-health are essentially reflections of loss of meaning.

## **Exercise: Setting Your Objectives**

**Which of the following objectives best describes your interest in pursuing this programme? Rank your objectives from:**

- a. the most important
  - b. the next important etc.
1. I hope to use this course professionally.
  2. I am doing this course mainly because I am interested in the subject.
  3. I am studying psychology at the moment
  4. I hope the course will help me deal with some personal things in my life.
  5. I feel I need to have my brain stimulate
  6. I hope studying psychology will make me a better person.
  7. I feel that studying psychology will make me more useful to society.
  8. Studying psychology will make me happier.
  9. I know someone who is mentally disturbed. I would like to help them.
  10. Knowing about psychology will help me with my family.
  11. Any others?

**Respond to the following based on your reading.**

13. For me psychology is:
14. What I hope to gain from this programme is:

15. The areas of psychology that especially interested me are:

**Exercise Answer Key:**

**Exercise: Setting Your Objectives**

Student responses will vary.

**Lesson 1 Review**

**Flash Cards**

**1. Term:** Psychology

**Definition:** The scientific discussion of human experience

**2. Term:** Psychiatrists

**Definition:** Usually doctors, who have specialized in abnormal psychology—mental illness

**3. Term:** Psychologist

**Definition:** Deal with the mental/emotional facets of people and often work in the mental health area

**4. Term:** Artificial Intelligence (A.I.)

**Definition:** The application of computer models to the human mind

**5. Term:** Dualism

**Definition:** The Mind-Body split in psychology seeing physical and mental processes as different and distant

**6. Term:** René Descartes

**Definition:** A French philosopher, who solved the psychological nature of man by his famous statement of: 'I think, therefore I am.'

**7. Term:** Pragmatism

**Definition:** Practical actions result from thought

**8. Term:** Physiologists

**Definition:** Brain is nature's creation

**9. Term:** Psychoanalysts

**Definition:** Unconscious mind influences us

**10. Term:** Behaviourists

**Definition:** Behaviour is the mind