

Course Overview

The Study of Psychology is a fascinating look at human development and behavior. Psychology is a social science like criminology and sociology. It is a study of what makes us unique as human beings. There are mental processes or procedures that humans use to interact and function successfully. As children grow physically, emotionally and psychologically, they are influenced by many factors. Psychologists and psychiatrists are people who can directly affect the lives of children in need. A study of the types of psychologists and psychiatrists is included in unit one. Also studied are key vocabulary words used in psychology. There is a study of a family and its interactions with each other that allows students to see a character as he or she develops into adulthood.



THE STUDY OF PSYCHOLOGY

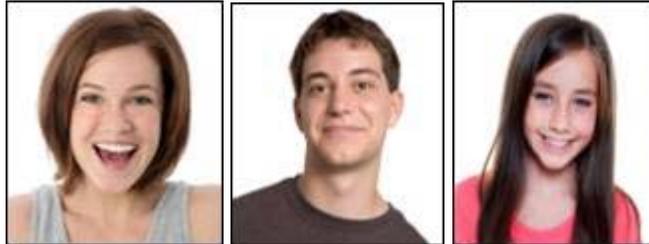
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What is Psychology?

Psychology is the study of humans and their behaviors. Although this is a simple definition of the word, it is not a simple but rather complex science. Psychology is considered a social science just like sociology, anthropology or criminology. Sociology is the study of how people interact with each other. Anthropology is the study of how humans and animals have evolved into what they are today. Criminology is the study of the minds, patterns and behaviors of criminals. Psychology is not an exact science. People are not born exactly alike. Our environment and life experiences make us different. That is what makes the world such a diverse place. We will discuss the problems that occur as one begins to experience changes in their lives.



The brain is a complex organ and our behaviors are, in part, dictated by our brain development. Take a look at this 3D model of the brain to become aware of the major parts of it, and what they are responsible for.



Brain Basics: Study the brain in 3D!

Case Study One

John is a seventeen year-old junior in high school. He has a sister, Ann, who is nineteen years old and a college freshman. His younger sister, Mary, is twelve years old. His grandparents live four blocks away and he visits them often. His life up until last year has been very normal. He has the same friends, family members and routines. His parents are always supportive of him as well as his studies, sports activities and interests. John noticed that he has been increasingly aware of changes in himself, his environment, his family and friends and his way of thinking. John realizes that a few of the changes have to do with the changes in the dynamics of his everyday life. John is concerned about his lack of focus, security and happiness. His overall feeling of uneasiness alarms him. John does not realize that his life, with all of its changes and emotions, is perfectly normal. What John needs to do is find someone in whom he can confide and share his concerns. Sometimes that person is a friend, counselor or psychologist. We will study John and his family throughout this course and understand why they are experiencing emotions that are very common for their ages. Awareness of the mental processes that accompany change and development are what psychology is all about.

Psychology is based on the **mental processes** that occur in humans. Mental processes are the procedures that one's brain uses to understand, remember and connect information. The smell of cake and blown out candles, gifts wrapped in special paper or seeing family gathering may remind you of a birthday party celebrated long ago. This mental process would involve memory. There are other mental processes that help you stay alert because your reactions are triggered. Sirens, flashing lights and the smell of burnt wood cause you to panic.

You may want to run for your life. Those mental processes determine how people act or react in situations. Age, maturity level, intelligence and life circumstances influence how humans process information, situations and surroundings. A three year-old child does not have the maturity of a ten year-old child. If both children were playing with matches, which one do you think would be able to reason that something terrible may happen? A child raised by parents who praise and compliment repeatedly will be more likely to praise and compliment others. Likewise, a child raised by parents who belittle and criticize all the time, may tend to be negative and sarcastic. Can behaviors such as negative parenting be changed? Of course! It requires changing the mental processes that created the negativity. However, sometimes bad behaviors are caused by factors beyond one's control...but that is another lesson.



Types of Psychologists and Psychiatrists

There is a difference between a psychologist and a psychiatrist. A **psychologist** uses therapy techniques and knowledge of psychology to treat patients. The psychologist, if he/she is a doctor, has a **PhD**. Not all psychologists have a PhD. Many do not. That type of doctor is different from a doctor with an **MD**. A doctor with a PhD is a doctor of Philosophy. Those doctors cannot administer medical treatment. In other words, they cannot prescribe medication. A **psychiatrist** is an MD. He or she is a doctor of medicine.

Psychiatrists can prescribe medicine. When a psychologist determines that a patient needs medication for various reasons, the patient is referred to a psychiatrist who will prescribe and monitor medication. The patient usually continues with both for as long as is necessary. It is not unusual for a patient to see both a psychologist and a psychiatrist at the same time. This allows a study of the effects of the medication over a period of time. The medication can be increased, decreased or changed completely.

There are many types of psychologists. It seems that new psychology fields open up every year. Applying the research, methods and concepts to various areas, can create many interesting occupations. Clinical psychologists, consumer psychologists, educational psychologists, forensic psychologists, health psychologists, etc. are just a few of the jobs psychologists are doing today.

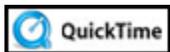
Clinical psychologists - research methods, conduct studies and diagnose treatments of patients with mental illnesses.

Consumer psychologists - research the habits, preferences and trends of consumer buying, selling and trading.

Educational psychologists - work in school settings to help students and schools plan courses, deal with issues and counsel students.

Forensic psychologists - applying psychology to legal issues.

Health psychologists - applying psychology to health issues, illnesses, etc.



Psychologists [05:28]



Now stop and answer questions 1 through 21



Common Psychology Terms

Since the study of psychology is the study of one's behavior and mental processes, there are many words that are used. A few key terms are used repeatedly in psychology. If you cannot tell the meaning of the word from its **context clue**, refer to a dictionary for help. A context clue is a hint given in the writing, speech or discussion that leads one to understand the meaning of a new word.

The **behavior** of a person is unique to that person. His or her actions in various situations are determined by many factors. Often a person with behavior that seems to be out of the **norm** or acceptable in situations, is **observed** or watched. One's **mental processes** or patterns of thinking out problems, events or situations are also the study of psychologists. A psychologist may form an educated guess or **hypothesis**. Two psychologists studying the same individual may have differing guesses. We will study the steps taken to confirm or disregard a hypothesis. **Accuracy** is important in the study of psychology. Being sure of the findings of a study is important. Psychologists like other scientists, want to be sure that their work can be **replicated** or repeated with the same results. A case-study that results in a negative finding may not be replicated. The statement do no harm is held in utmost esteem. **Experiments** may be conducted in order to study a hypothesis. These controlled studies are important parts of the scientific study process. Throughout this course, you will read a **case-study**, or story per lesson that will help explain the many ideas, concepts and theories that make psychology a fascinating and ever-changing field of study.



Now stop and answer questions 22 -32



In our case study of John and his family, John is experiencing changes in every aspect of his life. John feels

that his whole world is changing. He is a middle child who is athletic, studious, friendly, family oriented and happy. When John begins to face the challenges of growing up, maturing and facing his senior year in high school, he allows the outside forces that have always been there, to overwhelm him. He has choices that will help him alleviate or ease his concerns. He can confide in a friend who may be going through similar worries. He may want to talk to his parents who will assure him that what he is concerned about is normal. His older sister is a valuable source of information. Ann recently went through the same anxieties that accompany teens as they begin the transformation into adulthood. Her transition to college can serve as a model for John to follow. If Ann has been successful in her freshman year in college, John may see the positive path to follow. Since John has been well adjusted his whole life, his outlook is positive. John's parents and grandparents may lend an ear. Their years of life experiences may help John understand what is happening to him. However, their lives as teens differ greatly from John's. The eras in which they grew up are definitely different from John's. Therefore, their experiences may not help John's current situation. As a final ace in the hole, John's parents can take him to see a psychologist. After a few sessions, John may discover that he is in the norm. He may realize that the changes and emotions he is experiencing are perfectly normal. Such sessions will allow John to speak freely, voice his concerns and work out his anxieties.



Now stop and answer questions 33-40



Case Study Two

Now let us apply what we have studied. There are many existing and developing fields of psychology. We talked about changing bad behaviors that will change negativity. Do you believe that is possible to change a negative behavior or attitude into positive ones? Yes. Under the right circumstances it is possible. See if you know the basic differences between **positive** and **negative reinforcement** by taking a quiz.



Be aware though that some bad behaviors go far beyond changing mental processes to change behaviors. Some bad behaviors are deep seated emotional or psychological problems that require detailed treatment or removal from the population for safety. Let us look at a scenario. Use the knowledge you have of the types of psychology available, and your creativity to determine what needs to be done to help the Michael.

Our case study deals with a friend of John's. His name is Michael. He is an only child and here is his story. Michael grew up two doors from John. They attended school together until the end of their sophomore year. Michael played football and basketball with John from the third grade through football practice shortly before the beginning of this year. They looked forward to the start of school and football season. One day late in August, Michael came to see John. John knew something was wrong. Michael asked to talk to John alone. He had been crying and was obviously upset. Michael announced that his mother and father were divorcing. Michael had no idea that anything was wrong. They never fought in front of him. Things appeared to be like they always had been. His parents had talked it over and decided to separate before school was to start. The house was to be sold. Michael would alternate weekends between his parents. Dad was moving twenty miles away, closer to his job. Mom was moving to her hometown, so that she could be near her aging parents. That town was 50 miles away. They wanted to get Michael situated and enrolled in his new school before the start of year. He would be moving in two days. No discussion! No alternative! Time to move and adjust!

Both teens took this news badly. This would be the end of their friendship as they knew it. Since both boys were old enough to drive, but neither had his own car, this would be difficult. John and Michael spent evenings at each other's houses. Michael and John's girlfriends had become good friends. The four of them did everything together. They often vacationed together and looked forward to a great junior year with all of their friends. John felt sad for his friend but glad that his own life was stable. He knew in his heart that his adjustment to life without Michael would be difficult but he would have others to fall back on at school. Suddenly John felt ashamed that he did not focus on Michael's problem. He had many new factors that he needed to adjust to very quickly.

Michael's move to a distant town meant he would not play sports for the same team. He would more than likely not be able to play sports for a whole year. John thought of the team. Momentarily he was angry that all of the football practices had been for nothing. How could the Tigers teach someone else to catch the ball like Michael? How would the coach feel when he learned that the star receiver would be gone? How would they replace him with only ten days until the opening game? Michael's parents were being selfish he thought. Couldn't they stay together for two more years? This was the year that critics said would be the year for a championship playoff. Michael was letting his team down. Michael was letting John down! Once again John realized that his thoughts were wandering. He needed to focus quietly on John's news and concentrate on the problem at hand. Michael's world was changing drastically and there was nothing he could do to stop it from happening. A feeling of sadness swept over John. He felt like crying. He needed someone to make things right. He needed for Michael tell him he was joking. He did not want his own world to change as a result of Michael's misfortune. If only his own parents would let Michael move in with them. After all, Ann was away at school. Maybe he could ask his parents to let Michael live in their home for the next two years. He would have to approach them soon.... John saw Michael to the door and promised him that everything would be fine. He had a few ideas of his own to work on and he wanted to be the first to alert the coach and team that Michael would not be returning. Surely the coach would appreciate knowing the game altering news.

Case Study Three



To understand psychology, one must understand the various roles we play in the lives of others. Let us look at the influences that both John and Michael have in their lives. Each young man has a family. Each family has its own dynamics. By that it is meant that each family has a way of dealing with each other, outsiders, education, athletics, social problems and more. John has siblings. An older sister is leading the way by going to college. John will listen and observe her over the next few years. How she fairs in college will impact John's future. Why? Older siblings test the waters. The fact that she is out of the house, living in a dormitory and on her own for the first time is as new to her as it is to her parents. John will learn that Ann's success will make his move to college easier. If Ann should fail, moving to college may be more of a problem for him. Parents do not want to repeat errors in judgment or parenting. John may find himself struggling to move away breaking the ties that hold him close to home. Until he proves himself as an individual different from his sister in many ways, he may find it hard to convince his parents to let him go away. Michael has no brothers or sisters. No one will go before him to test the waters. Michael's future is not based upon whether an older brother or sister succeeded before him. His family dynamics are based on how he himself gets along with his parents.

John, like Michael, is an athlete. We are not aware if there is a great support system for either boy. John has the security of knowing that his high school sports career is in place until he graduates, unlike Michael. Their common bond is sports. They have successfully played it for years. John sees Michael as a more important player. The thought that Michael is leaving first strikes John when he thinks of the loss of a Playoff Bid. To John, the loss of a friendship is overshadowed by the loss of a team mate. Soon John would realize that Michael's move would impact his athletic, social and educational life. John would be unsettled by the fact that Michael's parents were filing for divorce. He may reassure himself that his parents have a more stable relationship but the fact is that Michael thought his parents were stable too. John may realize that all relationships are fragile and changeable at any time.



Now stop and answer questions 41-51.