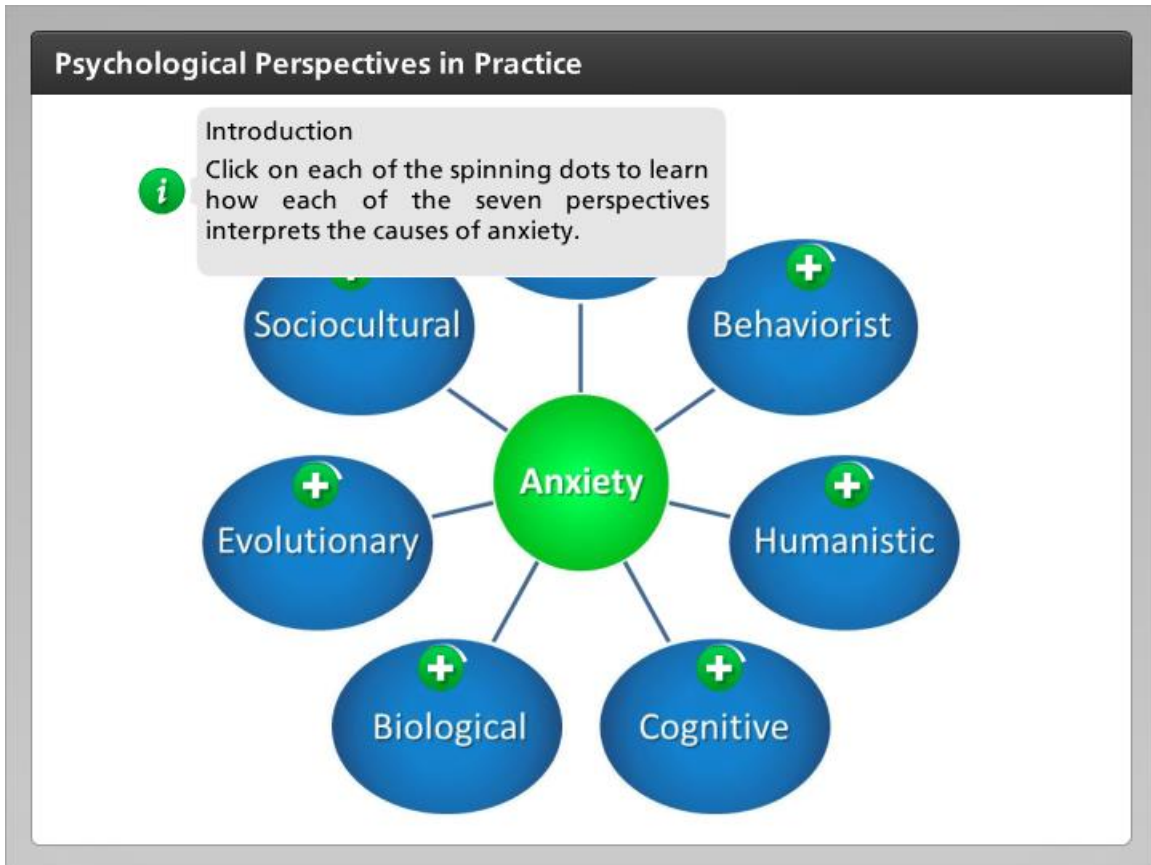


Module 1: Introduction to Psychology

Topic 2 Content: Psychological Perspectives in Practice

Introduction



Click on each of the spinning dots to learn how each of the seven perspectives interprets the causes of anxiety.

Module 1: Introduction to Psychology

Topic 2 Content: Psychological Perspectives in Practice

Psychoanalytic Perspective

Psychological Perspectives in Practice

Psychoanalytic Perspective

Someone working from a psychoanalytic perspective might seek to use free association techniques to try to uncover repressed memories from the anxious person's childhood. The anxiety might be viewed as the side effect of the person's ego being unable to resolve the competing demands of his id and superego. For example, the person's id might tell him to skip work and play outside, but his superego is telling him to work harder even though he does not like his current job.

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Topic 2 Content: Psychological Perspectives in Practice

Behaviorist Perspective

Psychological Perspectives in Practice

Behaviorist Perspective

A behaviorist would first want to see the exact, observable behaviors that demonstrate an underlying anxiety. Simply saying "I feel anxious" means little to a behaviorist. For example, if the anxiety manifests itself as a person biting his nails very deeply, then the behaviorist would seek to describe the nail-biting behavior as a learned, or conditioned, response.

Perhaps the person could be counter-conditioned to stop biting his nails by having a bad-tasting nail polish put on his fingernails. Then, whenever he begins to anxiously bite his nails, the polish will make him associate the behavior with the unpleasant taste. After enough time, the nail-biting behavior could be extinguished completely.

Behaviorist

Humanistic

Biological

Cognitive

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Humanistic Perspective

Psychological Perspectives in Practice

Humanistic Perspective
A humanist would likely view anxiety as a symptom of a person being unnecessarily judged or lacking positive self-regard. A humanist might suggest that the person with the anxiety engage in "client-centered" therapy that would allow him to discuss his or her feelings openly, without the therapist being overly directive or seeking to explain what he or she sees as the cause of the anxiety. People suffering from anxiety would be encouraged to come to their own conclusions about what might be at the root of their anxiety and develop a more positive self-image.

Other perspectives shown: Psycho-, Behaviorist, Evolutionary, Humanistic.

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Cognitive Perspective

Psychological Perspectives in Practice

Cognitive Perspective

A cognitive perspective emphasizes the need to discover the patterns of thought that are causing the anxiety. Perhaps the person's interpretation of certain situations is not accurate and can be corrected.

For example, a cognitive therapist might discover a person believes that her colleagues think she is incompetent or expect her to fail when in fact this is not true. In such a case, her anxiety stems from an incorrect perception, or pattern of thinking.

A cognitive psychologist might also be interested in the ways that anxiety affects a person's memory or decision-making processes.

Behaviorist

Humanistic

Cognitive

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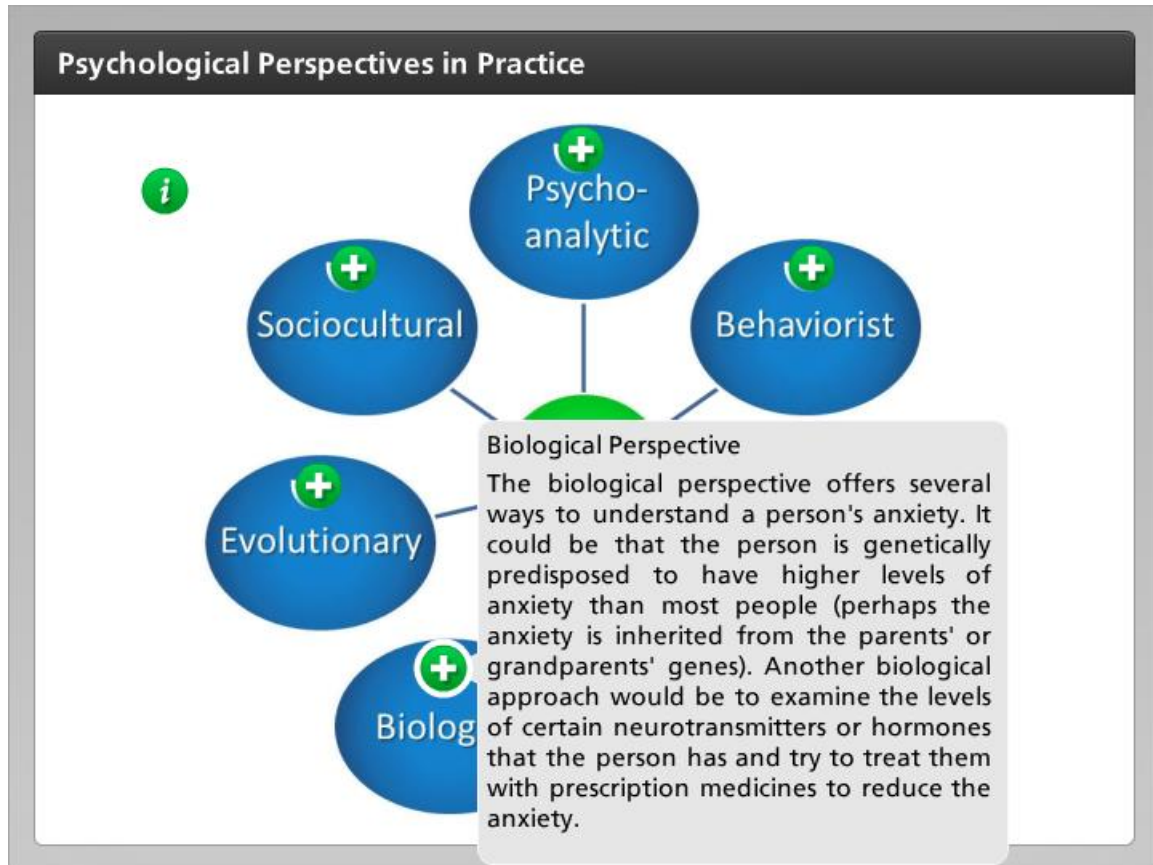
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Biological Perspective



The biological perspective offers several ways to understand a person's anxiety. It could be that the person is genetically predisposed to have higher levels of anxiety than most people (perhaps the anxiety is inherited from the parents' or grandparents' genes). Another biological approach would be to examine the levels of certain neurotransmitters or hormones that the person has, and try to treat them with prescription medicines that reduce the anxiety.

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Evolutionary Perspective

Psychological Perspectives in Practice

Evolutionary Perspective

An evolutionary approach might view anxiety as a natural product of evolution. Evolution is a slow process that develops over thousands of years, but common day-to-day experiences like project deadlines or jobs that deal with angry customers are not things to which people have had time to adapt evolutionarily.

Being a bit more prone to anxiety might have been an asset in 20,000 B.C. In other words, a tribe that had a slightly anxious member would always get plenty of warning when a sabre-toothed tiger was on the prowl or when a neighboring band was trying to take over the food source. From the evolutionary perspective, feelings like anxiety emerged only to help humans survive, not to make them happy.

Now with all the stressors of modern life, it is easy for these stressors to trigger an anxiety response too frequently.

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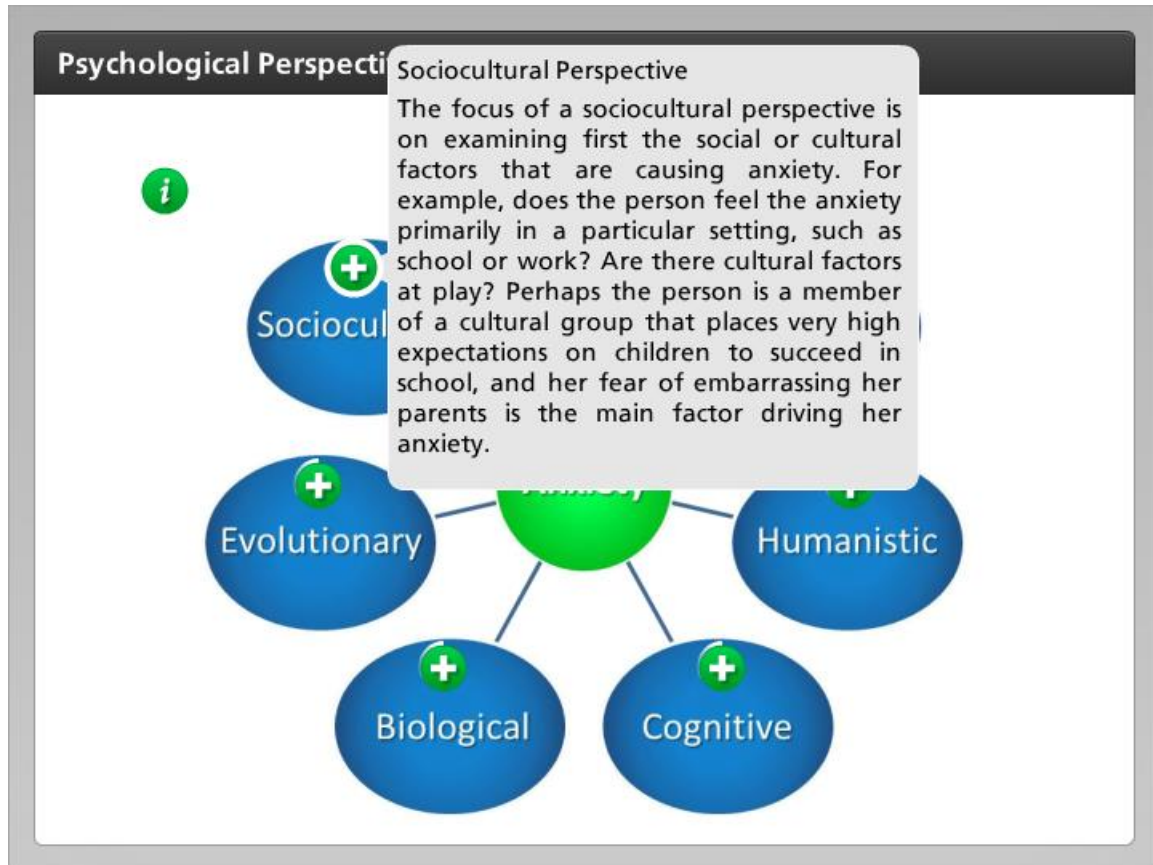
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Sociocultural Perspective



The focus of a sociocultural perspective is on first examining the social or cultural factors that are causing anxiety. For example, does the person feel the anxiety primarily in a particular setting, such as school or work? Are there cultural factors at play? Perhaps the person is a member of a cultural group that places very high expectations on children to succeed in school, and her fear of embarrassing her parents is the main factor driving her anxiety.