

# Unit 2: Personality and Individuality

## Part 5: Purposes of Personality Theories

# Objectives:

- 1. Define personality.*
- 2. Describe the major purposes of personality theories.*
- 3. List the major schools of personality theory.*

# I. Introduction to Personality

A. People have something inside each of them that makes them think, feel, and act differently from one another.

**Personality** is the consistent, enduring, and unique characteristics that make a person different from anyone else.



## II. Purposes of Personality Theories

- A. Personality theories provide ways to organize the characteristics of people. Researchers develop theories about what characteristics go together, why a person has some characteristics and not others, and why someone might show different characteristics in different situations. Theories vary, but all try to discover patterns in the ways people behave.

## II. Purposes of Personality Theories (con't)

- B. A second purpose of personality theories is to explain differences between individuals.
  
- C. A third purpose of personality theories is to look at how people conduct their lives. Researchers try to explain why problems arise in people's lives and why some people can deal with the problems better than others.

## II. Purposes of Personality Theories (con't)

- D. A fourth purpose of personality theories is to determine how people can improve their lives. People need to grow and change. Yet what are the goals of growth and change? How can we cope with conflicts when we encounter them?
- E. Finally, personality theories are used to guide research. They are precise statements of possible explanations for human behavior that can be tested to see if they are right or wrong.

# III. Major Schools of Personality Theory

A. There are many competing and conflicting theories, or schools of thought, regarding personality.



# III. Major Schools of Personality Theory

School of Thought	Emphasis
1. Psychoanalytic Theories	Stresses the importance of motives hidden in the unconscious mind.
2. Behaviorist Theories	Study how punishments and rewards shape our actions.
3. Social Learning Theories	Study how parts of personality are learned due to observing others.
4. Cognitive Theories	Focus on how our thoughts, perceptions, and feelings shape our personalities.
5. Humanistic Theories	Stress one's human potential for growth.
6. Trait Theories	Try to understand basic personality characteristics such as friendliness or aggression.