

# **Mental Illness History: Early Beliefs and Theories of Mental Health**

## **Early Beliefs**

Historically, mental illness was often viewed through a spiritual lens, attributing conditions to demonic possession, witchcraft, or divine punishment. These beliefs often led to treatments such as exorcisms or ritualistic healing practices. Not until Hippocrates proposed that mental illnesses were linked to natural occurrences in the body, specifically the brain, did perceptions shift (Hankir & Zaman, 2015).

## **Psychoanalytic Traditions**

The psychoanalytic tradition, spearheaded by Sigmund Freud in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, proposed that mental illnesses resulted from unresolved unconscious conflicts. According to Freud, these conflicts often originated in childhood and influenced adult behavior and mental health. His approach revolutionized the field and introduced talking therapies, including psychoanalysis (Breuer & Freud, 2000).

## **Multi-Dimensional Approach:**

The multi-dimensional approach to mental health acknowledges that mental illnesses are complex and are influenced by various factors. This approach maintains that mental health conditions result from biological, psychological, and social factors interacting uniquely, also known as the biopsychosocial model. This framework emphasizes the importance of considering the whole person and their environment when diagnosing and treating mental health conditions (Engel, 1977).

## **Biological Approach**

The biological approach to mental health focuses on the biological underpinnings of mental illness, including genetics, brain chemistry, and physical health. According to this perspective, mental illnesses can be attributed to imbalances in brain chemicals, hereditary factors, or physical diseases. This approach has contributed to the developing of psychotropic medications for treating mental illnesses (Kandel, 1998).

## **Psychological Approach**

The psychological approach emphasizes the influence of thoughts, emotions, and behaviors on mental health. Cognitive-behavioral theories, for example, suggest that

maladaptive thought patterns and behaviors contribute to mental illnesses, while humanistic theories focus on the role of self-perception and personal growth (Beck, 2011).

### **Emotions Approach**

The emotions approach posits that our emotions play a significant role in mental health. Extreme, uncontrolled, or prolonged negative emotions can contribute to mental health issues, whereas positive emotions and effective emotional regulation can promote mental well-being (Gross & Thompson, 2007).

### **Social and Cultural Approach**

The social and cultural approach emphasizes the role of social and cultural factors in mental health. It suggests that our relationships, social roles, cultural backgrounds, and socioeconomic statuses can influence our mental health. For instance, discrimination, poverty, and social isolation can contribute to mental health issues (Hogan & Roberts, 2004).

### **Developmental Approach**

The developmental approach acknowledges that mental health is influenced by experiences and changes across the lifespan. According to this perspective, early life experiences, developmental stages, and age-related changes can all contribute to the emergence and course of mental health conditions (Cicchetti & Toth, 2009).

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, the understanding and treatment of mental illness have evolved significantly over time. Today, mental health professionals recognize that mental illness is multi-faceted, influenced by a complex interplay of biological, psychological, and sociocultural factors. As our understanding continues to grow, so does our ability to provide comprehensive, effective care.

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