

## Freud's Theory of Aggression

The id embodies all of a person's basic, biological drives - self-presentation (food, water, safety) and sex. The id responds with aggression whenever it is frustrated (i.e. wants something but can't have it immediately). The superego usually blocks the direct expression of aggression. The aggressive drive therefore builds up in the unconscious. The ego finds ways of getting rid of the build-up aggression. This could include:

- Channelling it into something acceptable e.g. sport (sublimation).
- Directing it against a substitute target e.g. breaking something (displacement).
- Watching someone else being aggressive e.g. a violent film. (vicarious aggression)

The process of getting rid of build-up emotions is called catharsis. If the ego cannot find a safe way of letting out the aggression, it may build up to such an extent that the ego can no longer hold it in and it all comes out in a give, violent outburst. People who act in overtly aggressive ways are therefore people who:

- Do not inhibit the expression of aggression (weak superego).
- Cannot channel their aggression adequately (weak ego).

### How would Freudian theory explain the following examples?

John didn't get the pay rise he was hoping for at work. When he got home he kicked the cat.

Sandra's boyfriend dumped her, so she played Call of Duty for four hours straight.

After remaining calm all lesson while his class played up, Mr Sloane suddenly started screaming and shouting at a pupil who talked.