

Unconscious Motivation

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Unconscious Motivation refers to hidden and unknown desires that are the real reasons for things that people do.

An example is when someone is unable to stay in a long-term relationship and always finds a reason to break off his relationships. He may insist that there is a rational explanation for leaving a relationship, but his actions may actually be driven by an unconscious desire for love and belongingness, and an overwhelming fear of rejection. Deep down, he wants and needs to be in a loving relationship, but he finds ways and reasons to put an end to the relationship so as to avoid being rejected.

The idea that our behavior is driven by unconscious motives was put forth by Sigmund Freud, who said that the mind is like an iceberg, and that only a small part is revealed to conscious awareness, while the bigger, deeper reasons for our actions lie beneath the surface. Abraham Maslow, who is best known for his work on the Hierarchy of Needs, also said that unconscious motives take a central role in determining how people behave. He said that any action must be understood by looking at what basic need it satisfies and more often than not, it is our unconscious rather than conscious motives that direct our behavior.