



DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY

Winter Regional 2011

What is Psychology?

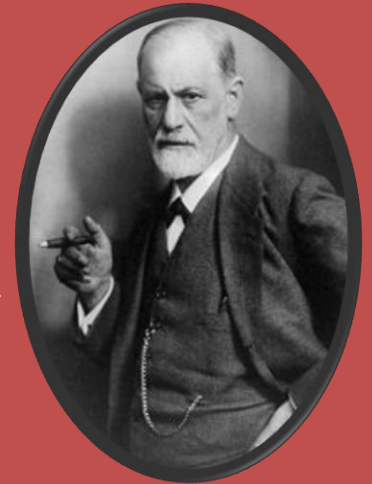
psy·chol·o·gy (sīkŏl'əjē): *The science of behavior and mental processes*

(From *Psychology*, Seventh Edition, by David G. Myers)

ENGLISH SUBTITLES:
Psychologists study how you act and how you think

Religion is something that involves **ACTION** and **THOUGHT**- a perfect thing for budding psychologists – like yourselves – to study!

Tonight we're going to think about what one famous psychologist said about religion.

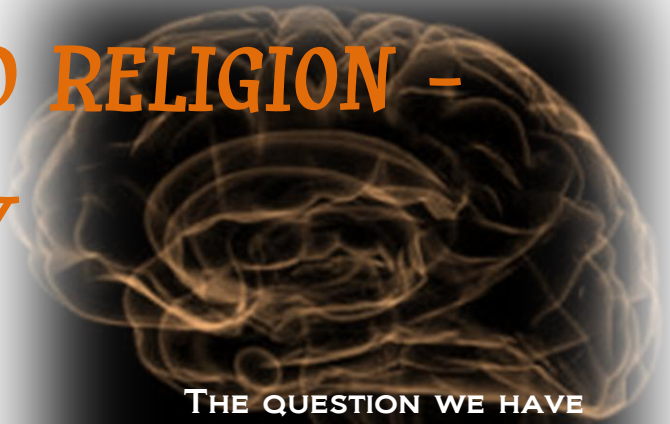


“Religion is an illusion and it derives its strength from the fact that it falls in with our instinctual desires.”

- *Sigmund Freud*

ENGLISH SUBTITLES: Religion is not legit. The only reason people get into religion is because it fits in with their most basic needs and wants!

PSYCHOLOGY AND RELIGION – TODAY



Sigmund Freud - a Jew, born as “Shlomo” Freud btw- died over 70 years ago; since then, psychologists have had a lot of time to study up on the psychology of religion.

They’ve found some pretty cool things - as we’ll see in a minute.



Dr. Phil has been kind enough to lend us some of his time and expertise to take us through some things that modern psychologists have discovered about religion.

THE QUESTION WE HAVE TO ASK IS- WAS FREUD RIGHT? IS RELIGION JUST AN “ILLUSION”?



ARE PEOPLE ONLY RELIGIOUS BECAUSE IT FITS IN WITH THEIR MOST BASIC NEEDS AND WANTS?



OR IS THERE SOMETHING MORE TO IT?



Specifically, Dr. Phil wants to talk about the relationship between religion and three basic needs or wants:

Happiness

Health

Long Life

HAPPINESS

“...numerous studies find religion to be closely related to life satisfaction and happiness (e.g., Ferriss 2002; Greeley and Hout 2006; Hadaway 1978; Inglehart 2010).”

(Salmoirago-Blotcher et al., 2011)



“...religion is positively associated with subjective well-being... studies find that the association between religion and subjective well-being is *substantial* (Inglehart 2010; Myers 2000; Witter et al. 1985).”



“Several studies find that *the sense of closeness to God...* is significantly related to well-being... all traditions show a higher level of life satisfaction than does ‘no religion.’” (Lim and Putnam, 2010)

ENGLISH SUBTITLES: Studies show that religion is totally related to happiness. It's like *mad* related. It's *ridiculously* related. People who feel that G-d likes chillin' out with them are *much* cooler with their life than people who don't.

“For life satisfaction, what matters is how involved one is with a religious community.”

(Lim and Putnam, 2010)



YOU BE THE PSYCHOLOGIST

WHY WOULD STUDIES SHOW THAT RELIGION AND FEELING CLOSE TO G-D ARE RELATED TO HAPPINESS AND LIFE SATISFACTION?

HEALTH

“...adherents of selected faith traditions with strict dietary and behavioral guidelines appear to be *protected from some cancers...*”

(Salmoirago-Blotcher et al., 2011)

“There is reasonably consistent evidence of the beneficial effects of religious involvement for some aspects of a healthy lifestyle such as *not smoking or the limited consumption of alcohol...*”

(Salmoirago-Blotcher et al., 2011)

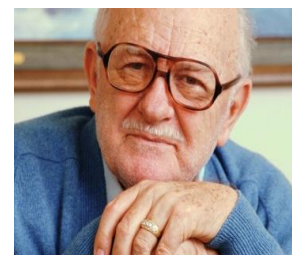
ENGLISH SUBTITLES: People whose religion has a lot of rules – especially like “you can't pig out on whatever you want”- are less likely to get some types of cancer, or to drink alcohol or smoke.

“In sum, there is strong and consistent evidence that greater levels of religious involvement... are associated with *better physical health...*”
(Salmoirago-Blotcher et al., 2011)



**YOU BE THE
PSYCHOLOGIST**

**WHY WOULD
STUDIES SHOW
THAT RELIGION
IS RELATED TO
BETTER
PHYSICAL
HEALTH?**



LONG LIFE

“...one of the most well-established findings is the existence of an *inverse relationship* between different measures of *religious involvement* and *all-cause mortality*.”

(Salmoirago-Blotcher et al., 2011)

“[Studies have found] a positive association of religious involvement with. These associations remained significant even after adjusting for demographic, behavioral, psychological and social support variables.”

(Salmoirago-Blotcher et al., 2011)

“...there is considerable evidence in favor of a positive association of frequent worship attendance and survival.”

(Salmoirago-Blotcher et al., 2011)



ENGLISH SUBTITLES: People who are religious and pray generally LIVE LONGER!!!! THAT'S NUTS!!!!!!!

YOU BE THE PSYCHOLOGIST

WHY WOULD STUDIES SHOW THAT RELIGION IS RELATED TO LIVING A LONGER LIFE?



What about the exceptions?



WE ALL KNOW PEOPLE WHO DON'T FIT INTO THESE FINDINGS:

WE ALL KNOW PEOPLE WHO ARE RELIGIOUS AND AREN'T HEALTHY.

WE ALL KNOW PEOPLE WHO ARE RELIGIOUS AND AREN'T NECESSARILY HAPPY.

WE HAVE ALL KNOWN PEOPLE WHO WERE RELIGIOUS BUT, UNFORTUNATELY DIDN'T LIVE LONG.

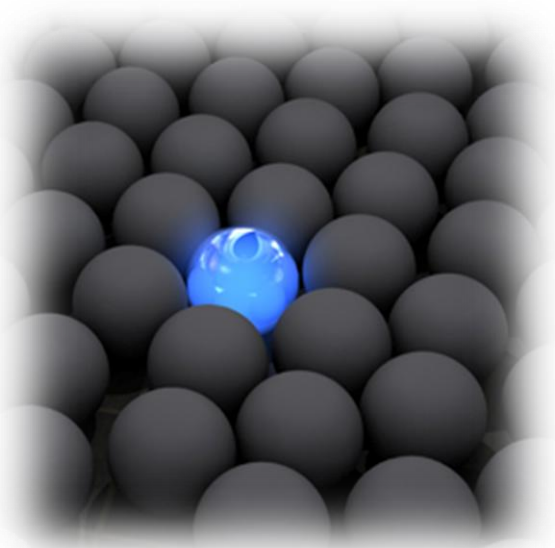
HOW DO PSYCHOLOGISTS EXPLAIN THAT IN LIGHT OF THESE STUDIES?



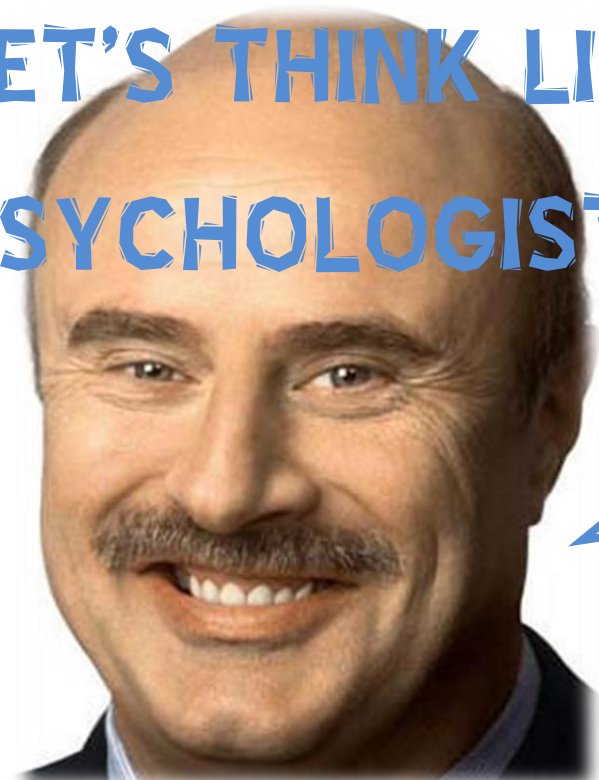
None of these studies say that a religious person will *never* be unhappy.

None of them say that a religious person will *never* - G-d forbid- die young.

All these studies show is that IN GENERAL and OVER THE COURSE OF AN ENTIRE LIFETIME - people will tend to be happier, healthier and live longer if they are religious and attend religious services.



LET'S THINK LIKE PSYCHOLOGISTS

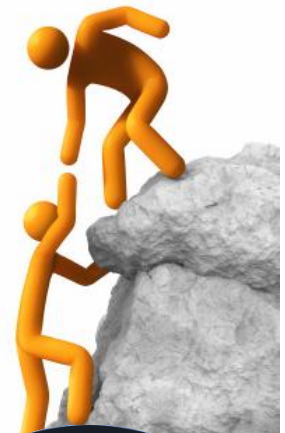


Psychologists have to look at the facts and come up with an explanation- how would you explain the findings we studied?

Happiness: One explanation that psychologists have given for the finding that religious people tend to be happier and have more life satisfaction is that religion gives us a group of people to hang out with and get support from.

Health: One explanation given to explain why religious people tend to be healthier is that religion makes them more disciplined when it comes to eating food that is bad for them and making potentially harmful decisions like whether or not to smoke or drink alcohol.

Long Life: Psychologists are not really sure why attending religious services would lead to long life. One study ruled out a lot of explanations including showing that it is NOT because people who go to services have a better support group.



FREUD WAS RIGHT - SORT OF!



Freud said that religion wasn't legit and that people were only interested in it because it fits in with their basic and wants.

**Freud was definitely right about one thing:
RELIGION FITS INTO OUR NEEDS AND WANTS!
It gives us the social structure and discipline
to be:**

Happier, Healthier and to Live Longer

Freud also said that "Religion is an illusion" – was he right about that as well??

WE HAVE SEEN THAT MOST OF THE AMAZING FINDINGS ABOUT RELIGION CAN BE EXPLAINED IN VERY NATURAL WAYS: RELIGION GIVES US A GOOD SOCIAL SUPPORT STRUCTURE, AND CAN KEEP US AWAY FROM UNHEALTHY BEHAVIORS.

DOES THAT MEAN THAT IT IS AN ILLUSION?

NOT AT ALL!

ISN'T IT POSSIBLE THAT THE REASON PSYCHOLOGISTS HAVE FOUND THAT HUMAN BEINGS WERE DESIGNED TO GENERALLY BE HAPPIER, HEALTHIER AND LIVE LONGER WHEN RELIGIOUS IS BECAUSE RELIGION IS ROOTED IN SOMETHING REAL?

IT'S NOT THE ONLY EXPLANATION, BUT IT'S DEFINITELY A POSSIBILITY.

One final important question – if psychologists have found all these amazing things about religion doesn't that make it worth a deeper look?