

Abnormal Behavior and Therapy I: Defining Abnormality

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WHAT IS A MENTAL DISORDER?

- **Mental disorder:** a variety of cognitive, emotional, and behavioral symptoms that:
 - Deviate from the norm (uncommon, abnormal)
 - o Cultural determined
- **Or... the APA's definition:**
 - Creates significant stress
 - Impairs functioning (disability)
 - Or leads to significant risk of harm (danger)
 - o Distress, disability, danger

WHAT IS CONSIDERED ABNORMAL?

- It's hard to draw the line between normal and abnormal
 - Based on **cultural** practices (which change with time)
 - Based on what is determined by various health care organizations

IT'S ALL ABOUT CONTEXT

- *"Individuals with mental disorders are different from others in degree, not in kind."*

WHAT CAUSES MENTAL DISORDERS?

- **Demonic model:**

- o evil spirits in the body
- **Medical model:**
 - o mental illness is a physical disorder requiring medical treatment
 - Insane asylums, surgeries, drugs
- **Diathesis-stress model: *******
 - must have both a biological predisposition to a certain disorder (**diathesis**) and significant environmental **stressors**

BIOPSYCHOSOCIAL MODEL

- Abnormal behavior has 3 major aspects:
 - **Biological**
 - o Genes, anatomy, neurotransmitters
 - **Psychological**
 - o Learning history, stress
 - **Social**
 - o Cultural, context, society

DSM-IV

- **DSM-IV:** Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (4th edition)
 - **Axis I:**
 - o clinical disorders
 - Represent a deterioration of functioning

- **Axis II:**
 - o Personality Disorders and Mental Retardation
 - Lifelong
- **Axis III:**
 - o Medical Conditions
 - Diabetes, head trauma
- **Axis IV:**
 - o Psychosocial/environmental stressors
- **Axis V:**
 - o Level of functioning within the past year
 - **GAF (Global Assessment of Functioning):** (1-100)
 - GAF is not very accurate

DSM-IV CONTINUED...

- Designates lists of observable symptoms needed to warrant a particular disorder
 - Prevalence, course, onset
- Adopts a categorical (present/absent) model
- Does not explain causes of disorders--- besides PTSD
- Criticized for classifying so many human behaviors as disorders

COMORBIDITY

- Presence of **more than one** psychological disorder
- Why does this occur?
 - Criteria for various disorders overlap?
 - Having one disorder increases vulnerability for another?
 - Common diathesis for different disorders?
 - Common stressors for different disorders?
 - o *If you have one disorder, there is a very good chance that you have another