

MODULE 65 DEFINING PSYCHOLOGICAL DISORDERS

DEFINING PSYCHOLOGICAL DISORDERS

- A **PSYCHOLOGICAL DISORDER** is a syndrome marked by a “clinically significant disturbance in an individual’s cognition, emotion regulation, or behavior.”
- Over time, definitions of what makes for a “significant disturbance” have varied. From 1952 through December 9, 1973, homosexuality was classified as a mental illness. On December 10th, it was not. The APA had dropped homosexuality as a disorder because more and more of its members no longer viewed it as a psychological problem.

UNDERSTANDING PSYCHOLOGICAL DISORDERS

- Controversy over **ATTENTION-DEFICIT/HYPERACTIVITY DISORDER** (ADHD), that some 11% of American 4- to 17-year-olds who display its key symptoms (extreme inattention, hyperactivity, and impulsivity). ADHD is diagnosed three times more often in boys than in girls.
- Variables persisting in this has been seen with extensive TV watching and video gaming are associated with reduced cognitive self-regulation and ADHD. ADHD often coexists with a learning disorder or with defiant and temper-prone behavior. ADHD is heritable, and research teams are sleuthing the culprit genes and abnormal neural pathways.
- Phillipe Pinel, in France, insisted that madness is not demon possession but a sickness of the mind caused by severe stresses and inhumane conditions.
- Hospitals replaced asylums, and the medical world began searching for physical causes and treatments of mental disorders. Today, this **MEDICAL MODEL** is recognizable in terminology of the mental health movement: a mental illness needs to be diagnosed on the basis of its symptoms and treated through therapy, which may include time in a psychiatric hospital.
- Difficulty in the person’s environment, the person’s current interpretations of events, or the person’s bad habits and poor social skills may be factors.
- The biopsychosocial model helps to assess the whole set of influences.

CLASSIFYING PSYCHOLOGICAL DISORDERS

- In psychiatry and psychology, diagnostic classification aims not only to describe a disorder but also to predict its future course, imply appropriate treatment, and stimulate research into its causes.
- The American Psychiatric Association’s 2013 Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, now in its fifth edition (DSM-5). Physicians and mental health workers used the detailed “diagnostic criteria and codes” in the DSM-5 to guide medical diagnoses and define who is eligible for treatments.
- Critics have long faulted the DSM for casting too wide a net and bringing “almost any kind of behavior within the compass of psychiatry”.

LABELING PSYCHOLOGICAL DISORDERS

- Once we label a person, we view that person differently. Labels create preconceptions that, guide our perceptions and our interpretations.
- Mental health professionals use labels to communicate about their cases, to comprehend the underlying cause, and to discern effective treatment programs.

RATES OF PSYCHOLOGICAL DISORDERS

- With the increase in the amount of disorders, the need for research and treatment to help the growing number of people, especially teenagers and young adults, who suffer the bewilderment and pain of psychological disorder.

BE ABLE TO ANSWER: What is the biopsychosocial approach, and why is it important in our understanding of psychological disorders?

PRACTICE FRQ: Name and describe the two major approaches to understanding psychological disorders.

The Biopsychosocial Approach

Assumes that biological, socio-cultural, and psychological factors combine and interact to produce psychological disorders.

