Learning Objectives

Upon completion of this unit, students should be able to:

1. Identify the sources used to classify behavior patterns and explain the features and systems these sources use to define abnormal behavior.
2. Describe the importance of reliability and validity in terms of abnormal behavior classification and assessment.
3. Compare and contrast the methods used to assess abnormal behavior.
4. Differentiate between the counseling methods used to bring about changes in behavior, thoughts, and feelings.
5. Evaluate the biomedical therapies used in the past and the current therapies used to treat patients with psychological disorders.
6. Discuss the roles of hospitals and Community Mental Health Centers (CMHCs) and how these facilities have helped or hindered deinstitutionalization.
7. Discuss mental health issues surrounding ethnic groups and racial stereotyping.

Written Lecture

Tanya was recently fired from her job and is having financial difficulties. Over the last month, she has experienced excessive worry and fear that she will not be able to meet her financial obligations. She is having difficulty sleeping and is suffering from fatigue and irritability. Her constant worry is making her feel edgy most of the time. Tanya is having difficulty completing tasks as she cannot concentrate. Her family is concerned about her impaired functioning.

John ends his relationship with his girlfriend. He feels sad, cries, and is irritable over the next week. As time passes, John is still sad, but makes an effort to connect with friends. He does not stop going to work and is sleeping the same as usual.

These two examples help illustrate the difference between a mental disorder and non-pathological behavior. Can you tell which is which? We will discuss it shortly.

Unit II focuses on the classification and assessment of abnormal behavior and the treatment methods for abnormal behavior. The most notable and widely used method of classification for abnormal behavior is the model used in the Diagnostic & Statistical Manual (DSM-IV-TR). The DSM-IV-TR classifies abnormal behavior as mental disorders. The key to defining a mental disorder is the presence of impaired functioning and emotional distress or dysfunction. For instance, experiencing sadness for over two weeks, not sleeping, and lacking appetite likely indicates a depressive disorder. Functioning becomes impaired as the individual may isolate socially, not groom themselves, and not go to work.
However, sadness alone is not considered a disorder and is a normal emotional reaction to certain life events.

**DSM-IV TR**

The DSM-IV TR uses a V-Axis model for classifying and describing abnormal behavior. When evaluating and developing a treatment plan for a client, a mental health clinician will use all five axes. They are as follows:

- **Axis I** : Clinical Disorders—includes clinical syndromes and disorders like Schizophrenia, Major Depressive Disorder, and Panic Disorder to name a few.
- **Axis II** : Personality Disorders and Mental Retardation—includes any developmental disorder(s) as well as personality disorder(s), like Paranoic Personality Disorder and Obsessive-Compulsive Personality Disorder.
- **Axis III** : General medical conditions—any medical condition that is relevant to the treatment of the individual or the understanding of a mental disorder is identified in this area. For instance, a head trauma can lead to changes in behavior, such as aggressiveness and impulsivity.
- **Axis IV** : Psychosocial and environmental problem—this area identifies such problems as marital problems, unemployment, death of a spouse, homelessness, or any other problem that may be affecting the individual at the moment.
- **Axis V** : Global Assessment of Functioning (GAF)—a scale found in the DSM-IV TR is used to rate the client’s level of current functioning.

Let us use the same case example above of Tanya and identify each of the axes in the DSM-IV-TR model described above.

- **Axis I** : Generalized Anxiety Disorder (NOTE: Tanya is experiencing several of the symptom criteria for this disorder; criteria for all the different mental disorders are found in the DSM-IV TR)
- **Axis II** : None
- **Axis III** : None
- **Axis IV** : Loss of job, financial problems
- **Axis V** : 65 (this is a numerical number that describes Tanya’s current functioning according to the scale provided in the DSM-IV-TR; a clinician would review this scale and identify a numerical score that accurately describes the client’s current functioning).

Assessment of abnormal behavior includes the following methods: clinical interview, psychological tests, and observation. A clinical interview is the most commonly used method of assessment. It covers topics like identifying information (age, gender, race, etc.), presenting problem(s), psychosocial history, medical and psychiatric history, and medical problems. Clinical interviews can take either structured or unstructured formats. Psychological tests include objective, projective, and intelligence tests. Examples of objective tests are the MMPI-2 and the MCMI. Examples of projective tests are the Rorschach Ink Blot test and the Thematic Apperception Test.

**Methods of treatment in psychology**

Methods of treatment can encompass psychotherapy, biomedical therapy, hospitalization, and community-based treatment. There are seven psychotherapy modalities. We will review them in a moment. Biomedical therapy
consists primarily of treatment with medication. For instance, the most effective treatment for Schizophrenia is the use of anti-psychotic medication. Other biomedical therapies include electroconvulsive therapy and psychosurgery.

Now let us review the major models for psychotherapy.

Psychodynamic therapy—this modality is based on Sigmund Freud’s theories, and focuses on helping individuals resolve unconscious conflicts. A clinician using this type of therapy will use transference relationships in therapy to help individuals resolve emotional conflicts. For instance, a client in psychotherapy will react to the clinician in ways he/she reacts or interacts with other important individuals in their life, like a mother or father. The clinician will use this in order to help the client process emotions that have been repressed. The aforementioned example is just one method used in psychodynamic therapy as there are other methods that can also be used.

Behavior therapy—this type of treatment uses the principles of learning to address abnormal behavior. For example, systematic desensitization can be used to treat phobias. The person is gradually exposed to fear-inducing stimuli while remaining deeply relaxed. This helps the individual associate the fear-inducing stimuli with more positive feelings.

Humanistic therapy—as opposed to psychodynamic therapy, humanistic therapy focuses on the individual’s conscious, personal, subjective experiences. The main form of humanistic therapy is Carl Roger’s person-centered therapy. A clinician using this type of therapy expresses unconditional positive regard to create an environment of acceptance where the person can work towards fulfilling a natural drive towards growth. Empathy is a primary tool used in humanistic therapy. By expressing empathy, the clinician can demonstrate to the client that he/she understands his/her feelings and experiences.

Cognitive therapy—this type of therapy focuses on changing maladaptive thinking. The clinician challenges irrational thoughts and helps the client develop more positive ways of thinking. For instance, to help a client with depression, the clinician would help the client identify self-defeating thoughts that are perpetuating the depression and then will have the client change those thoughts to positive ones.

Cognitive-Behavioral therapy—this one is similar to cognitive therapy, in that it focuses on changing underlying thoughts that are contributing to maladaptive behavior. However, this type of therapy does not stop here. It also helps the client change the problematic behavior.

Take a look at pages 115-116 in your textbook. Group, family, and couples therapies are addressed as additional methods counseling and are important in addressing mental health issues as well.

Learning Activities (Non-Graded)

You may want to take some time during this unit and read the following articles. They are found in the CSU Online Library under the Academic OneFile database. Although there is no grade for this activity, each article is an example of the various types of therapies that are being used within the field of psychology.
