**Concepts of abnormality information sheets**

1. ***DEVIATION FROM SOCIAL NORMS***

Social norms are \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and expected ways of behaving in society e.g. appearance, interactions with others, relationships and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_. Many of these rules are implicit and agreed as a matter of convention within a particular society. Often we are not even aware of them until one is broken. For instance if someone jumps to the front of the queue in a shop, they have broken the social norm of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ waiting your turn. This would make you aware that the norm had been broken, it might even make you angry. This is because these norms are often linked to \_\_\_\_\_\_ standards and if a person breaks them they are seen as deviant or abnormal. Social norms are often in place for good reasons e.g. politeness is a social norm – it oils the wheels of interpersonal relations and people who are rude or \_\_\_\_\_\_ are seen as behaving in a socially deviant way.

Words to use in the gaps:- *Surly, politeness, approved, beliefs, politely*

## *LIMITATIONS OF THE DEVIATION FROM SOCIAL NORMS DEFINITION*

**Changes over time**

*Social norms change over time because \_\_\_\_\_\_ attitudes change. This means that behaviour classified as deviant 50 years ago would be perfectly \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ nowadays e.g. until the 1960’s unmarried mothers were often sent to mental hospitals. Also, homosexuality was listed as mental disorder in the DSM until the 1970’s (and it was also illegal). This obviously resulted in \_\_\_\_\_\_ and unfair treatment.*

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**Context-specific**

*Much of our behaviour is \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_. Making judgements regarding what is socially deviant depend to a large extent on context e.g. a person on a beach wearing only a bikini is regarded as normal but if the same \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ was worn in the classroom it would be regarded as very \_\_\_\_. Also, there is not a clear line between what serious \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ is and what is just annoying or upsetting e.g. being rude is deviant, but not evidence of mental illness.*

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**Deviance can be good**

*Some people are socially deviant because they have chosen a non-conformist life-style. Other people become deviants due to moral principles, such as anti-Nazis in Germany in the 1930’s. Such people were clearly not mentally ill.*

**Culture**

*Also, social deviance depends on \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ e.g. some ethnic groups will have auditory hallucinations i.e. “hear voices” during religious rituals or have \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ hallucinations i.e. see mythical animals and this would be regarded as mental illness in the West. This could explain why a disproportionate number of black males are diagnosed with schizophrenia in the UK.*

MCj04123760000[1]

**Susceptible to abuse**

*Labelling somebody as mentally ill, it is suggested, is a form of social control. If we define abnormality in terms of deviation from social norms we open the door to definitions that rely on the dominant attitudes. This then permits the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ of people who \_\_\_\_\_ . Szasz claims that mental illness is just a way of excluding non-conformists from \_\_\_\_\_\_.*

MCj03403840000[1]

## Strengths of the deviation from social norms definition

*The model distinguishes between \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and undesirable behaviour which the statistical infrequency definition does not. Also, it takes into account the effect behaviour has on others and therefore acknowledges the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ that social rules can have on society.*

Words to use in the gaps:-

Desirable, benefit, context-specific, deivation, outfit, odd, cruel, society, moral, acceptable, auditory, break, visual, stigmatising, culture.

**MCj03047550000[1]Task – Read the following case study, what are the dangers of creating a psychological disorder based on the social norms and attitudes of the day?**

*‘Curing Homsexuality’*

*The effects of aversion therapy could be devastating. In 1964 an 18 year old was admitted to a psychiatric ward in Chester. He recalls his interview with a psychiatrist. ‘He asked me if I realised how revolting homosexuality was’. He wanted to make me feel disgusted. The ‘patient’ was locked in a room containing a bed, with no windows or furniture, and given a pile of erotic photographs of men. He was then pumped full of a drug that made him violently sick. This continued for 72 hours. The bed and room were eventually covered in his vomit, urine and faeces. Those three days of ‘therapy’ he says, have destroyed 30 years of his life*

***Adapted from D’Silva, 1996***

MCj04240940000[1]

1. ***FAILURE TO FUNCTION ADEQUATELY***

This definition refers to the inability to cope with day-to-day living so that the person is causing distress either to themselves or to others. Rosenman and Seligman have suggested seven abnormal characteristics: one on its own is not usually evidence of failing to function but the greater the number present, the greater the likelihood that the person is abnormal.

The Seven Features of Abnormality – Rosenman and Seligman (1989) suggest that by using these criteria, the fewer of the features displayed by an individual, the more likely they can be regarded as ‘normal’ and vice versa.

**In each case, give an example of when it might NOT be abnormal or might be NORMAL to behave in this way. (One or two of them have been done for you as examples). What does this tell us about the definition?**

**\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**SUFFERING** – Most abnormal individuals report that they are suffering, so this is a key feature of abnormality.

*This might not be abnormal because some people are clearly mentally ill, but do not suffer, in fact they can be very happy or not feel anything in particular; an example might be psychopaths or people with mania.*

**MALADAPTIVENESS** – Maladaptive behaviour is something that prevents an individual from achieving major life goals such as working effectively and having good relationships with others.

*This is not a sign of abnormality when ……*

**UNPREDICTABILITY AND LOSS OF CONTROL –** Most people behave in fairly predictable and controlled ways. The behaviour of abnormal individuals is often very varied, uncontrolled and inappropriate.

*This is not a sign of abnormality when ……*

**IRRATIONALITY AND INCOMPREHENSIBILITY –** This is when it is not clear why someone has chosen to behave in a certain way. We cannot understand their behaviour and it appears irrational.

*This is not a sign of abnormality when ……*

**OBSERVER DISCOMFORT –** Our social behaviour is governed by a number of unspoken rules, eg, maintaining a certain amount of eye contact with others, not shouting out in a public place or maintaining a certain amount of physical space between ourselves. Where these rules are broken, discomfort can arise.

*This might be normal in different cultures, for instance, in Arabic culture, it is normal to stand closer together than Europeans. This might cause discomfort but would not suggest abnormality. Similarly, an individual with Tourettes might not cause observer discomfort in some people, but Tourettes is clearly a psychological disorder.*

**VIOLATION OF MORAL AND IDEAL STANDARDS –** Behaviour might be judged to be abnormal when it violates moral standards, even when many or most people fail to maintain those standards. For example, religious leaders have sometimes claimed that sex outside marriage is abnormal. The same is true of masturbation.

*This is not a sign of abnormality when ……*

**Also, consider the definition of Deviation from Social Norms, do any of the evaluations also apply to this characteristic?**

## LIMITATIONS OF THE FAILING TO FUNCTION ADEQUATELY DEFINITION

**As the previous exercise suggests, FFA depends on context/ reasons for behaviour**

*This definition relies to some extent on the reasons underlying a person’s actions, as this can alter our interpretation of their behaviour. For example, a person may refuse to eat and starve themselves as a protest against social injustice by going on hunger strike e.g. Gandhi and his campaign for Indian independence, but they would not be regarded as abnormal*

**Also, some “abnormal” characteristics are actually normal**

*Sometimes it is normal to display some of these characteristics and a person would not be considered as abnormal. Conversely, people who are clearly abnormal and suffering from a mental disorder, such as psychopaths, do not feel some of these characteristics e.g. personal suffering or guilt.*

**Culture**

*Observer discomfort (making other people feel embarrassed) can simply be a result of cultural differences, rather than abnormality e.g. Arabs tend to stand closer to people when talking to them compared to Europeans, plus eye contact varies with culture. This means that the behaviour of people from these cultures may be interpreted inaccurately.*

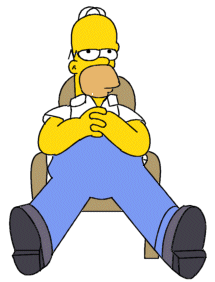
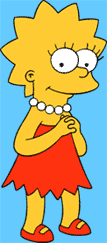
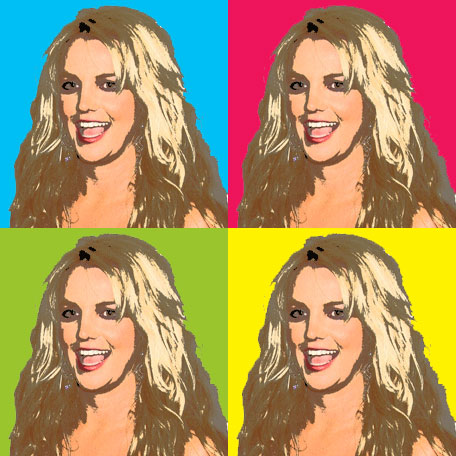
## Strengths of the failing to function adequately definition

*It takes into account the subjective experiences of the patient i.e. how they feel. Also, this definition can be used objectively because it is relatively easy to list behaviours (can dress, prepare meals) and so judge when treatment is required.*

***MCPE02514_0000[1]***

***DEVIATION FROM IDEAL MENTAL HEALTH***

**What is Mentally Healthy?**



Are these people mentally healthy?

Why?/Why Not?

Do you know anyone who is particularly mentally well balanced?

Using this information, try to come up with a list of characteristics that would show mental health.

Based on the work of Abraham Maslow, the famous Humanist psychologist, Marie Jahoda took a different approach to the definition of psychological abnormality. Instead of looking at negative characteristics such as causing distress to others etc, she identified six **positive** characteristics which she believed indicated psychological health. Anyone unable to show these qualities, she thought, would be vulnerable to mental disorder.



|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Complete the following table for Jahoda’s six characteristics of ideal mental health. | |
| Characteristic | What it means |
| Resistant to stress (Integration) |  |
| Positive self attitude |  |
| Self-actualisation (Personal growth) |  |
| **Able to adapt to the environment** |  |
| Autonomy |  |
| **Accurate perception of reality** |  |

## *LIMITATIONS OF THE DEVIATION FROM IDEAL MENTAL HEALTH DEFINITION*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **The difficulty of self-actualising** |  |
| **Adaptation not always beneficial** |  |
| **Culture** |  |

## *STRENGTHS OF THE DEVIATION FROM IDEAL MENTAL HEALTH DEFINITION*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Positive Approach** |  |
| Cultural Relativism |  |
| Subcultural Relativism |  |

j0135749**Terms**

**Culture**: The learned, shared behaviour of members of a society. Culture includes social norms, attitudes, values and beliefs which are generally shared by people in a particular society.

**Cultural relativism:** The view that behaviour cannot be judged properly unless it is viewed in the context of the culture in which it originates.

**Subculture**: Learned, shared behaviour which is distinctive to certain groups within a society. While sharing many aspects of the mainstream culture, these groups have certain social norms, values and beliefs which differ from the culture of the society as a whole.

**Ethnocentrism**: Judging, evaluating and interpreting other cultures in terms of the standards and beliefs of one’s own culture.

**Culture-bound syndrome**: abnormal behaviour and troubling experiences that may be limited to particular cultures or may be similar to Western psychological disorders, just expressed in a different way.

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