SYMPTOMS

**Description**

A symptom is a subjective experience or sensation reported by an individual that may indicate a deviation from typical well-being or functioning. Symptoms are internal experiences, such as pain, sadness, or fatigue, and cannot be directly observed or measured by others; they rely solely on the individual’s self-report.

In the context of diagnostics, a symptom does not automatically indicate the presence of a pathology. Symptoms can vary in intensity and may be influenced by temporary factors, lifestyle, or environmental contexts. Therefore, while certain symptoms may correlate with specific disorders, the presence of a symptom alone is not sufficient for a diagnosis.

**Difference Between a Symptom and a Sign**

**Symptoms** are subjective and reported by the person experiencing them while **signs** can be observed by others.

Both are crucial for understanding health because they give clues about what might be going on, but symptoms rely on the person’s description while signs can be independently verified.

**Examples**

Here are some examples of symptoms commonly noted in psychopathology:

1. **Sadness or Persistent Low Mood** - Feelings of sadness or a consistently low mood, often associated with depressive disorders.
2. **Anxiety** - Persistent feelings of worry, fear, or unease, which may interfere with daily activities and be linked to anxiety disorders.
3. **Irritability** - Increased sensitivity to frustration or anger, which may be seen in mood disorders or certain personality disorders.
4. **Insomnia or Hypersomnia** - Difficulty falling asleep, staying asleep, or excessive sleeping, which may appear in mood or anxiety disorders.
5. **Hallucinations** - Sensory experiences, such as hearing or seeing things that aren’t present, commonly associated with psychotic disorders like schizophrenia.
6. **Delusions** - Strongly held false beliefs that persist despite evidence to the contrary, such as paranoid delusions, seen in schizophrenia and other psychotic disorders.
7. **Loss of Interest or Pleasure (Anhedonia)** - Diminished interest or pleasure in activities once enjoyed, commonly observed in depressive disorders.
8. **Fatigue or Low Energy** - Persistent tiredness or lack of energy that is not alleviated by rest, often seen in depressive disorders.
9. **Excessive Guilt or Feelings of Worthlessness** - Intense guilt or feelings of worthlessness that may not be grounded in reality, often observed in depression.
10. **Racing Thoughts** - Rapid or overwhelming flow of thoughts, typically associated with manic episodes in bipolar disorder.
11. **Difficulty Concentrating** - Challenges in focusing or sustaining attention, which can occur in various disorders, including ADHD, depression, and anxiety.
12. **Appetite Changes** - Significant increase or decrease in appetite, which may accompany mood disorders.
13. **Self-harm Thoughts or Behaviors** - Thoughts about self-harm or engaging in self-injury, often related to mood disorders, borderline personality disorder, or other distress-related conditions.
14. **Memory Problems** - Difficulty recalling recent events or information, sometimes seen in mood disorders or cognitive disorders.
15. **Feelings of Detachment (Derealization or Depersonalization)** - A sense of being disconnected from oneself or reality, often occurring in dissociative disorders or severe stress.

These symptoms are indicators of possible mental health conditions, but, their presence alone does not confirm a diagnosis. They are part of a broader picture that helps in understanding the individual’s experiences and potential diagnoses.