

2017-01-30

What is a “Psychological Disorder”?

- There are *four* characteristics
 - **Atypical** = the behavior isn’t exhibited by most people
 - **Disturbing** = the behavior evokes a disturbed response from those who observe it
 - **Maladaptive** = the behavior is counter-productive to one’s welfare
 - **Unjustifiable** = the behavior cannot be reasonably pinned on a simple cause

The Medical Model

- **Medical Model** = a theory of mental illness that emphasizes finding the causes for certain illnesses
 - Treatment is often rather hit-and-miss
 - * Lots of different types of treatment
 - Psychoanalysis
 - Therapy
 - Medication
 - Electro-shock therapy
- **Philippe Pinel** = a french person that wrote about how madness was a response to severe stress rather than a demonic ailment
- **Thomas Szasz** = a person who wrote that mental illness is a *social* construct rather than a medical phenomenon
 - Is used to ignore problematic patterns of thought or behavior
- **Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders(DSM-V)**
= widely considered the central authority on what qualifies as a mental illness and how it should be diagnosed

Prevalence

- About half of adults experience symptoms of a mental illness at one point in their life
- About 80% of those who experienced symptoms in the last year did not seek treatment
 - Generally, men are less likely to seek treatment because of the social stigma
- Though it is quite common, mental illness is not commonly severe enough to completely debilitate someone

- Women are more likely to experience depression and anxiety
- Men are more likely to abuse substances and experience antisocial personality disorder

Neurotic vs Psychotic

- **Neurotic** = a term that describes mental illness that causes suffering to people but doesn't impair their ability to think rationally
- **Psychotic** = a term that describes mental illness that distorts people's perceptions of reality or capacity for rational thinking

Classifying Mental Illness

- Labels make us feel like those afflicted aren't *human*
 - *e.g.* Suicide hotline will dispatch police if they believe you may harm yourself
 - * The autonomy of the depressed person is pretty much ignored
- **David Rosenhan** = ran an experiment where people admitted themselves to a psychiatric hospital and pretended to hear voices
 - All of them were falsely diagnosed with Schizophrenia

Anxiety Disorders

- **Anxiety Disorders** = a mental illness that is associated with distress, persistent feelings of anxiety or harmful behaviors that the person performs to reduce feelings of anxiety
 - People with OCD repeat certain behavioral patterns in order to cope with the feelings on anxiety

Generalized Anxiety Disorder

- **Generalized Anxiety Disorder(GAD)** = a catch-all illness that is associated with the following
 - Tense
 - Apprehensive
 - Abnormally active nervous system
 - More or less anxious about *everything*
 - Headaches
 - Stomach pains
 - Irritable

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Panic Disorder

- **Panic disorder** = a condition characterized by relatively short periods of extreme dread and terror
 - Is often accompanied by
 - * Chest pain
 - * Sense of choking
 - * Shortness of breath

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder

- **Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder(PTSD)** = an anxiety disorder that is caused by a traumatic experience
 - Often associated with
 - * Flashbacks
 - * Feelings of fear
 - * Feelings of horror
 - * Feelings of helplessness
 - * Social withdrawal
 - * Insomnia

Why Do Anxiety Disorders Exist?

- **Learning perspective** = anxiety disorders are “learned” from the surroundings as one grows up
 - Explains how phobias can be passed on from parent to child without any genetic component
 - **Fear conditioning** = anxiety disorders arise from associations between harmful stimuli and harmless stimuli
 - **Stimulus generalization** = a phobia developed from conditioning can become broader than the stimuli that first caused it
 - * *e.g.* a fear of a white rat can generalize into fear of white, fluffy things
 - **Reinforcement** = an effect of strengthening the association between a harmful stimulus and a harmless one by exerting effort to avoid the causing stimulus
- **Biological perspective** = anxiety disorders can be caused by genetic or physiological factors

- **Genetic** factors can predispose people to certain phobias
 - * Perhaps natural selection is behind some of the most common phobias
- **Physiology** = anxious symptoms actually manifest in physiological ways
 - * Increased heart rate
 - * Brain activity
 - * Stress hormones