



# Intro to Abnormal Psych

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# What is this class about?

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What is considered “normal” behavior?

When does behavior cross into becoming “abnormal behavior”?

What exactly is abnormal behavior?

What is “mental” illness and how is it different from other types of illness?

How many people are affected by mental illness?

What are the different types of mental illness?

# We don't know all the answers.

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These are the questions that we will be looking at and trying to answer this semester.

However, there are not always clear cut answers and while *we know a lot more* about mental illness today than we did fifty years ago, *there is still much that we do not know* .

The study of psychology, and particularly, abnormal psychology, is a relatively new field.

Mental illness has been around for hundreds of years, but an accurate understanding of it has only just begun to take shape in the last several decades and continues to evolve to this day.



# Definition of mental illness

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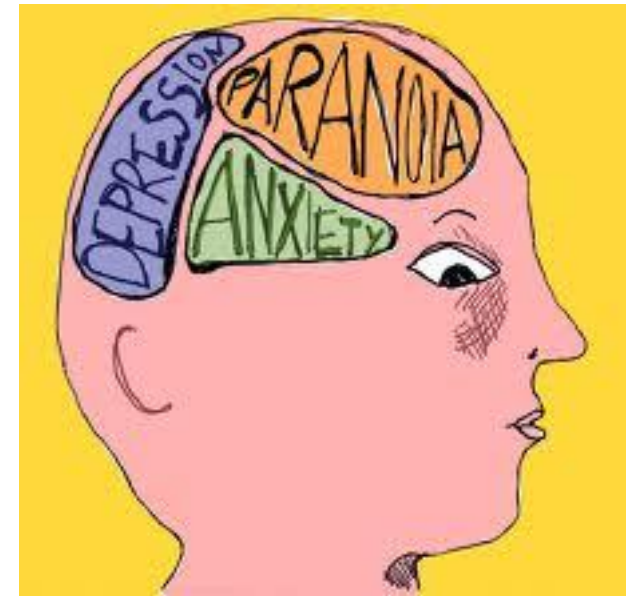
Mental illness refers to a wide range of mental health conditions — ***disorders that affect your mood, thinking and behavior.*** Examples of mental illness that we will be talking about in this class include depression, anxiety disorders, schizophrenia, eating disorders and addictive behaviors.



# Don't we all have issues that affect our mood, thinking & behavior?

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Many people have mental health *concerns from time to time*. But a mental health concern **becomes a mental illness when ongoing signs and symptoms cause frequent stress and affect your ability to function.**



# How can mental illness affect your life?

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A mental illness can make you miserable and **can cause problems in your daily life**, such as at work or in relationships.

However, in most cases, symptoms can be managed with a combination of medications and counseling (psychotherapy).



# Warning Signs

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**Signs and symptoms of mental illness can *vary***, depending on the particular disorder, circumstances and other factors. Mental illness symptoms can affect emotions, thoughts and behaviors.

*Examples of signs and symptoms include:*

Feeling sad or down

Confused thinking or reduced ability to concentrate

Excessive fears or worries, or extreme feelings of guilt

Extreme mood changes of highs and lows





# Symptoms of Mental Illness

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Withdrawal from friends and activities

Significant tiredness, low energy or problems sleeping

Detachment from reality (delusions), paranoia or hallucinations

Inability to cope with daily problems or stress

Trouble understanding and relating to situations and to people

Alcohol or drug abuse

Major changes in eating habits

Excessive anger, hostility or violence

Suicidal thinking



# Physical Symptoms

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Sometimes symptoms of a mental health disorder appear as physical problems, such as **stomach pain, back pain, headache, or other unexplained aches and pains.**



# When to see a doctor

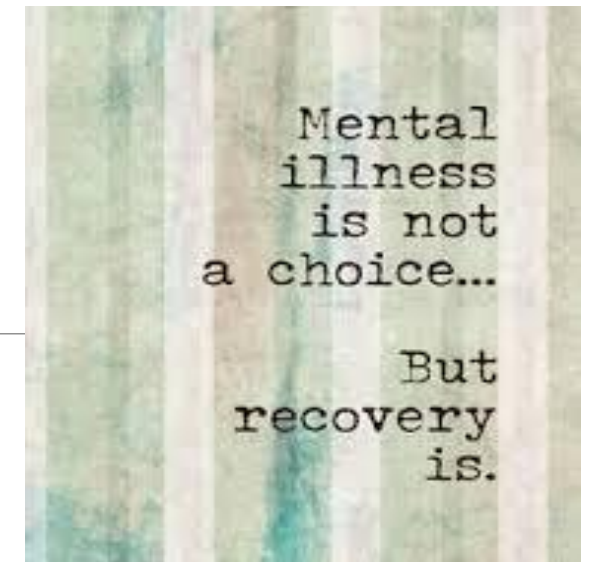
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If you have any signs or symptoms of a mental illness, see your primary care provider or mental health specialist. Most mental illnesses ***don't improve on their own***, and ***if untreated***, a mental illness ***may get worse over time*** and cause serious problems.



# If you have suicidal thoughts

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Suicidal thoughts and behavior are common with some mental illnesses. If you think you may hurt yourself or attempt suicide, *get help right away*:

Call 911 or your local emergency number immediately.

Call a suicide hotline number —the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at **800-273-TALK (800-273-8255)** to reach a trained counselor.

# Get Help

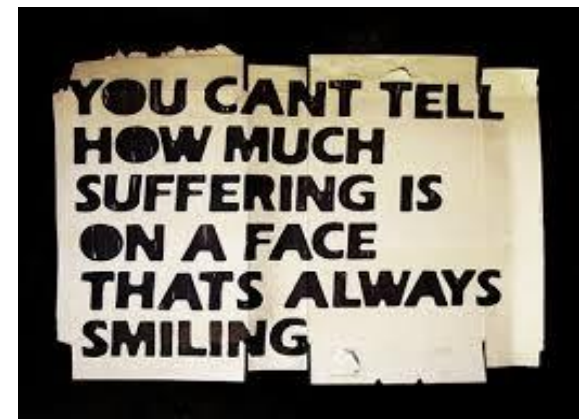
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Reach out to a close friend or loved one.

Contact a minister or someone in your faith community.

Contact your doctor, other health care provider or mental health specialist like the school's adjustment counselor.

**Suicidal thinking doesn't get better on its own — so get help!**



# Helping a friend or loved one

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If your friend or loved one shows signs of mental illness, have an open and honest discussion with him or her about your concerns. You may not be able to force someone to get professional care, but you can ***offer encouragement and support***. You can also help your loved one find a qualified mental health provider and make an appointment. You may even be able to go along to the appointment.

If your loved one has done self-harm or is seriously considering doing so, take the person to the hospital or call for emergency help.



# Warning

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Just remember that no matter how much you may learn in this class about mental illness, ***you are not an expert and should not try to take the place of a trained professional.***

You may have the best of intentions, but only a licensed psychologist, doctor, or psychiatrist can make a diagnosis and only a trained professional should give medical or therapeutic advice.

Also, don't fall prey to the “**psychology student's disease**” of diagnosing yourself or your friends and family with all of the disorders that we learn about!

# So what causes mental illness?

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If mental illness is a disease like any other illness then surely it must have some biological component.

However, it also is affected by other factors, including our life circumstances, our levels of stress, and other *external* factors.





# Nature vs Nurture?

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You've probably heard of the **Nature vs Nurture** debate

This examines whether our thoughts and behaviors are caused more by *biological* or *environmental* factors

Mental illnesses, in general, are thought to be caused by a variety of genetic *and* environmental factors.

In other words, it is not nature or nurture, but rather a ***combination of the two.***



# Biological explanation

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Says mental illness is caused by **genetics, the brain, brain chemicals, hormones or *something in the body***

*Internal* causes



# Biological Causes

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**Inherited traits.** Mental illness is more common in people whose biological (blood) relatives also have a mental illness. Certain genes may increase your risk of developing a mental illness.

**Brain chemistry.** Biochemical changes in the brain are thought to affect mood and other aspects of mental health. Naturally occurring brain chemicals called neurotransmitters play a role in some mental illnesses. In some cases, hormonal imbalances affect mental health.



# Neurons

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**Nerve cells in the brain** that communicate with one another

In the brains of those with mental illness **neurons may misfire or send mixed up signals**



# Neurotransmitters

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**Chemicals in the brain** that carry messages between neurons

Examples – dopamine, serotonin

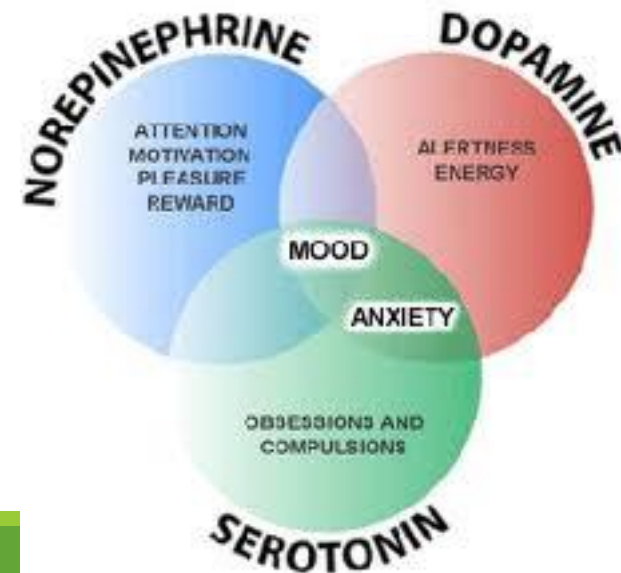


# Neurotransmitters

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These **chemicals are often out of balance** in those with mental illness

Psychiatric drugs, like Prozac, **attempt to bring these chemicals back into balance**



# Environmental Causes

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Environmental causes include anything outside of yourself (non-biological) that might affect your thoughts and behaviors.

**Environmental exposures *before* birth.** Exposure to viruses, toxins, alcohol or drugs while in the womb can sometimes be linked to mental illness.

**Environmental exposure *after* birth.** This includes your upbringing, social experiences (in school, etc.), and any traumatic events you may have experienced.

These are all *external* causes that may contribute to mental illness.

# Nature *and* Nurture

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In most cases, mental illness is believed to be caused by a ***predisposition to mental illness which is triggered by your life situation*** (stress, traumatic events, etc.)

A predisposition ***does not mean that you will automatically develop a mental illness***, but rather that you are *more susceptible* because it runs in your family.

For example, depression

- you have a *20% chance* of developing it if it runs in your family instead of only a *5% chance* if it does not





# Who is at risk?

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It is important to note that *no one is immune* from mental illness.

It doesn't discriminate – anyone, regardless of wealth, gender, or race is vulnerable



# But who is more likely to develop a mental illness?

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There are certain groups, however, that possess *risk factors* making them more prone to develop mental illness:

Having a *biological (blood) relative*, such as a parent or sibling, with a mental illness

*Experiences in the womb* — for example, having a mother who was exposed to viruses, toxins, drugs or alcohol during pregnancy

*Stressful life situations*, such as financial problems, a loved one's death or a divorce

*A chronic medical condition*, such as cancer



# Who else?

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*Brain damage* as a result of a serious injury (traumatic brain injury), such as a violent blow to the head

*Traumatic experiences*, such as military combat or being assaulted

*Use of illegal drugs*

Being *abused or neglected* as a child

Having few friends or *few healthy relationships*

A previous mental illness



# What about gender?

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Women are more likely to be diagnosed with mood and anxiety disorders than men

Men are more likely to have substance abuse related disorders and antisocial personality disorder



# Can mental illness be treated?

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Yes, it can be *treated*

There is no cure



**However, people can live very normal, productive lives with treatment**

# Historical Treatment

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Historically the mentally ill have been **treated very poorly**

They were **beaten, locked up in institutions,** and viewed as incapable of being productive and participating members of society



# Today's Treatment

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We have ***come a long way*** in our treatment of the mentally ill in this country, though we **still have a long way to go**.

Your treatment today *depends on the type of mental illness you have, its severity and what works best for you*. In many cases, a combination of treatments works best.



# Your Treatment Team

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*Your treatment team may include your:*

Family or *primary care doctor*

*Psychiatrist*, a medical doctor who diagnoses and treats mental illnesses

*Psychotherapist*, such as a psychologist or a licensed counselor

Pharmacist

Social worker

Family members







# Psychotherapy

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Treatment for many disorders often involves either therapy, medication, or a combination of the two.

**Psychotherapy**, sometimes just called *therapy* or *counseling*, involves talking about your condition and related issues with a mental health provider.

During psychotherapy, you learn about your condition and your moods, feelings, thoughts and behavior. With the insights and knowledge you gain, you **can learn coping and stress management skills.**

# Different Kinds of Therapy

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There are many types of psychotherapy, each with its own approach to improving your mental well-being. Psychotherapy often can be successfully completed in a few months, but in some cases, **long-term treatment may be needed**. It can take place one-on-one, in a group or with family members.



# Psychiatric Medication

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The use of medication to treat mental illness is known as **psychopharmacology**

Although psychiatric medications ***don't cure mental illness***, they can often ***significantly improve symptoms***.

Psychiatric medications can also help make other treatments, such as psychotherapy, more effective.

The best medications for you will depend on your particular situation and how your body responds to the medication.

# Classes of Psychiatric Medication

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The **4 main types** of psychiatric meds are ***antidepressants, anti-anxiety, mood-stabilizing, and antipsychotic medications***. Each is designed to treat specific types of disorders and will be talked about later in the semester.



# Combination of the Two

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The reality is that therapy **can be a time consuming process** and many people don't want to put in the effort.

In today's quick-fix society, **many people want to simply pop a pill** to make all their problems go away.

While medication can be extremely beneficial and in some cases, even a life-saver, **medication alone can not usually "fix" your problems.**

Medication will treat the symptoms, but **only with therapy can you address the bigger issues.**



# What happens when therapy and medication aren't enough?

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The vast majority of people dealing with mental health issues respond well to medication and/or therapy.

However, some people, do not respond positively to medication, even after trying several different medications.

For a small number of people, their symptoms persist, get worse, or may even lead to suicidal thoughts.

These people may require *inpatient treatment*.



# Inpatient vs. Outpatient

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The vast majority of people receiving services for mental health issues are receiving them on an **outpatient basis**.

The term outpatient is just what it sounds like. ***You receive treatment out of the hospital.*** Outpatient services involve going somewhere for therapy or medication.

**More serious cases** need to be treated on an **inpatient basis**. This means that you will be *hospitalized*.



# Hospital and Residential Treatment Programs

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Sometimes mental illness becomes so severe that you need care in a psychiatric hospital. This is generally recommended ***when you can't care for yourself properly or when you're in immediate danger of harming yourself or someone else.***







Inpatient treatment makes up a very small % of people and most are **usually just held for 72 hours to be evaluated.**

Options include 24-hour inpatient care, partial or day hospitalization, or residential treatment, which offers a temporary supportive place to live. Another option may be intensive outpatient treatment.

# Next Time

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Tomorrow we will talk about how *common* mental illness is (you might be surprised!) and how despite this, there is still a lot of *prejudice* and *discrimination* against those who struggle with it daily

# The End

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