

Intro to Abnormal Psychology

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Abnormal Psychology

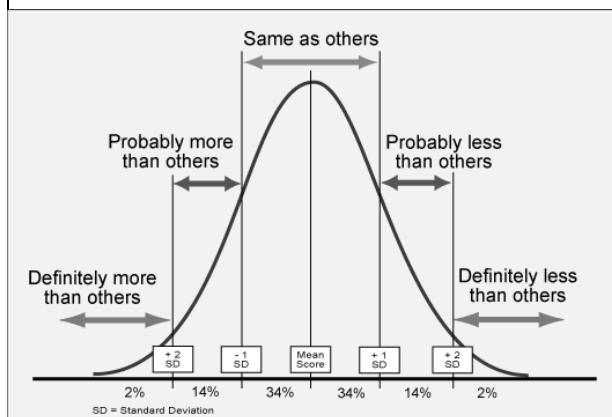
- The scientific study of abnormal behavior in order to describe, predict, explain, and change abnormal patterns of functioning.
- Studies the nature of psychopathology, its causes, and its treatments.
- An area of psychology that studies people who are consistently unable to adapt and function effectively in a variety of conditions.

Abnormal Psychology

- What do we mean when we talk about abnormal behavior?
 - Demons, gods, and magic
 - Bodily fluids and wandering uterus
 - Astral influences
 - Physical illness

Various definitions that are used by psychologists and people in general for defining abnormal behavior.

- **Statistical deviation:** The defining characteristic is uncommon behavior
 - a significant deviation from the average/majority.
 - Characteristics falling beyond a particular distance from the average values are sometimes seen as abnormal.
 - This distance is defined in terms of "standard deviation units"
- This is perhaps the most straight forward definition: collect data, calculate averages and sd's.



Various Definitions

- **Social norm violation:**
 - Breaking social "rules".
 - Someone who frequently violates these unwritten rules is seen as abnormal.
- This is a very powerful and persuasive definition.

Various Definitions

- Maladaptive behavior:
 - To one's self - inability to reach goals, to adapt to the demands of life
 - To society - interferes, disrupts social group functioning.
- This is a "practical" definition:
 - it identifies those unable to cope.
 - It is also a "flexible" definition: it takes into account an individual's context, recognizing that maladaptive is a relative term - it depends on the person's life circumstances

Various Definitions

- Personal distress
 - If the person is content with his/her life, then he/she is of no concern to the mental health field.

Exceptions

- As natural and absolute the norms of our society seem to us, Sociology and Anthropology have taught us that there is in fact nothing absolute about them.
 - What's abnormal in one society may be perfectly normal in another.
 - Personal distress: To say that abnormal behavior is behavior that causes a person distress/discomfort is to say that it is normal if there is no discomfort.
 - Charles Manson is normal because he feels no guilt.

End.
