

Characteristics of Abnormal Psychology

There is no succinct description of abnormality, but rather a set of characteristics to describe "abnormal psychology." These characteristics include behavior that is a statistical rarity, and that is a violation of social norms. These characteristics also include maladaptive behaviors, along with those that can cause personal distress.



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Statistical Rarity

Statistical Rare-steam rarity Chart

Statistical rarity describes behavior that does not occur frequently in a population--It is rare. Some rare activities are considered desirable, while others are not. Therefore, a statistical rarity by itself gives little guidance as to whether a behavior should be considered abnormal, and further information is needed to clarify whether a behavior is abnormal.

Violation of Norms

Violation of Normal-Norm

Norms are written and unwritten rules of social conduct, and provide guidelines for how to behave in a given situation. Thus, when people violate norms, it attracts our attention and makes us anxious, or even angry.

Maladaptive Behavior

Fear of Mallets interfering with everyday life

Maladaptive behavior is behavior that interferes with or decreases a person's ability to provide the basic necessities of life. Examples of these behaviors include mild social phobias, or severe phobias of leaving the house. The degree of these severities influences how much the person's life is effected.

Personal Distress

Personalized Anxiety-bag

Behaviors that are personally distressing, or feelings that cause unpleasant emotions, are often considered the hallmark of a psychological disorder. Examples of these include anxiety disorders, depression, and schizophrenia.