

PSY 215 Module One Milestone Template

Using this template, respond to the below prompts, which focus on deconstructing the stigma associated with abnormal behavior. Support your position with a minimum of 3 to 5 sentences per bullet, using credible sources. Complete this template by replacing the bracketed text with the relevant information.

- Often a person describes an abnormal behavior as weird—a term that can elicit a range of emotional responses (e.g., fear, anger, guilt, curiosity, withdrawal, compassion). Describe a common **psychological reaction** that a person might have after hearing this description.

A common psychological reaction that a person might have after hearing a person describe an abnormal behavior as weird would be social anxiety and shame. An article, "A Stress-coping Model of Mental Illness Stigma: II. Emotional Stress Responses, Coping Behavior, and Outcome", talks about how people with mental health disorders feel social anxiety and shame due to the stigma associated with abnormal behavior. The article explains that social anxiety is a reaction to someone feeling threatened in social interactions and shame is a reaction to feeling socially exposed, devalued, and humiliated (Rüsch, 2009). People with mental health disorders are not treated with respect by society, although all they want is to "fit-in", and this leads to having emotional responses. In the textbook, there is a story about James McNulty, on page 9, who has bipolar disorder and was hospitalized. He called mental health authorities for assistance and they responded by saying he needs to give up his only possession, which was a car, and have no money. He was worried about getting to work and they told James that people with mental disorders do not go back to work (Hooley, 2019). After experiencing that situation, it would make someone feel shame and social anxiety because they are not receiving help from the place that should be providing them with resources and support.

- Describe why witnessing an abnormal behavior may cause a person to experience **psychological discomfort**.

A person experiences psychological discomfort when witnessing an abnormal behavior because society wants everyone to "fit-in" and be "normal", so when someone behaved abnormally, they stand out. Many people worry about how others see them and think about how they would be viewed if they were the ones acting abnormally. Another reason why witnessing an abnormal behavior may cause a person to be uncomfortable is because the person does not understand mental illnesses. Some people only know about mental illness from what they see on TV, which leads them to continue the stereotypes surrounding mental illness. However, according to page 10 in the textbook, a study that was duplicated ten years later, when people gained more knowledge of mental health issues, showed that education does not lead to less stereotyping (Hooley, 2019). While education is important to understanding mental illness, more global advocacy needs to occur to decrease the stigma around mental illnesses.

- Describe the feelings a person may experience when witnessing a behavior that **deviates** from the norm.

Some feelings a person may experience when witnessing a behavior that deviates from the norm could be anxiety, sympathy, or hostility. Society does not want people to deviate from the normal, so when people witness someone who is acting abnormal, they can feel uncomfortable and/or anxious. A person may place themselves in the shoes of the person who is acting abnormal. By doing this the person would feel empathy for the person causing shared feelings of embarrassment and judgment, which causes the anxiety. Others may feel sympathy towards the person acting abnormally because they feel sorry for the person and what they must go through. Another feeling someone may feel when witnessing abnormal behavior is hostility. According to the article, "From Sin to Science: Fighting the Stigmatization of Mental Illnesses", nurses can have hostility towards mentally ill patients: "nurses held hostile attitudes toward people who had self-harmed, often viewing them as squandering precious health care resources intended to save lives. Emergency department nurses and those in intensive care units... were often openly unsympathetic and demeaning" (Arboleda-Flórez, 2012). People may have different reactions to witnessing abnormal behavior, all of which are caused by the stigma around mental health disorders.

- Ironically, it is normal to perceive abnormal behavior as atypical, uncomfortable, or strange. However, the labels that we use to describe abnormal behavior could contribute to its stigma. In your own words, describe how abnormalities in the mind are not really **different** from other physical or biological abnormalities.

If a person has a disease or feels physically sick, they go to the doctor. If a person feels unhealthy mentally, they go to a therapist. However, people have a difficult time viewing mental illness in the same way as they view other illnesses, like cancer. Physical and mental illnesses are similar because they are intertwined. Physical and emotional health effect each other, positively and negatively. An article, "The Distinction Between Mental and Physical Illness", says only people get illnesses, not minds or bodies. The article goes on to say our emotions influence our physical health, for example, fear can cause "myocardial infarction, hypertension, asthma, and other bodily illnesses, and bodily changes such as fatigue, anorexia, and weight loss are commonplace in psychiatric disorders" (Kendell, 2018). Abnormalities of the mind are like abnormalities of the body, the only difference between the two is the treatment process. Treating mental health can treat physical health and vice versa.

References:

Arboleda-Flórez, J., & Stuart, H. (2012). From Sin to Science: Fighting the Stigmatization of Mental Illnesses. *The Canadian Journal of Psychiatry*, 57(8), 457-463. <https://doi.org/10.1177/070674371205700803>

Hooley J. M., Nock M. K., & Butcher J. N. (2019). *Abnormal Psychology (Subscription)*. [MBS Direct]. Retrieved from <https://mbsdirect.vitalsource.com/#/books/9780135190968/>

Kendell, R. (2001). The distinction between mental and physical illness. *British Journal of Psychiatry*, 178(6), 490-493. doi:10.1192/bjp.178.6.490

Rüsch, N., Corrigan, P., Powell, K., Rajah, A., Olszewski, M., Wilkniss, S., & Batia, K. (2009). A Stress-coping Model of Mental Illness Stigma: II. Emotional Stress Responses, Coping Behavior and Outcome, *Schizophrenia Research*, Volume 110, Issue 1-3, 2009, Pages 65-71, <http://doi.org/10.1016/j.schres.2009.01.005>.