

PSY 215 Module Five Milestone Template

Complete this template by replacing the bracketed text with the relevant information.

For this milestone, you will use the Four D's diagnostic indicators to analyze one behavior that might impair a person's adaptive daily functioning. You will determine if that behavior could potentially represent a clinical disorder. Use your template to address the rubric criteria listed below with a minimum of 3 to 5 sentences per bullet. Support your answers with a credible source when necessary.

From the list in the Module Five Milestone Guidelines and Rubric, select one behavior that might impair a person's adaptive daily functioning, then address the following:

- **Distress:** Describe the extent to which the selected behavior causes distress as characterized by mental or emotional imbalance.

A person with a phobia (for example, acrophobia (fear of heights)) causes distress as characterized by mental or emotional imbalance. Considering phobias are a type of anxiety disorder, a person with a phobia has feelings of "... severe anxiety and depression" when they think or see their fear (NHS, n.d., para. 1). A person with acrophobia may experience anxiety and depression being in tall buildings or seeing skyscrapers. Other psychological symptoms of phobias are fear of losing control, fainting, and dying (NHS, n.d., para. 7). A person with acrophobia may feel that they are not in control of their situation because whenever they think or experience their phobia, their body releases its fight-or-flight response. One's fear of heights could be so extreme that they believe that they will die. People with phobia's are likely to experience a great amount of distress.

- **Dysfunction:** Describe the extent to which the selected behavior causes dysfunction by interfering with adaptive daily functioning.

Phobias have the ability to greatly affect a person's daily functioning. While everyone is scared of something, those with phobias can experience a decrease in their ability to do activities, get employment, and to sustain healthy relationships. People with acrophobia may avoid "... being in high places like airplanes, tall buildings, or even upper levels of shopping malls" (Hooley, Nock, & Butcher, 2020, p. 166). Seeing pictures of high places (e.g. mountains) may also cause anxiety. Considering people with acrophobia avoid certain places, it negatively effects their life. They may be denied employment or promotions if the job required traveling via airplane. They may miss out on activities with friends if the activity involves going to high places (bridges, skyscrapers, mountains, etc.). People with acrophobia may even avoid living in big cities that have skyscrapers because of the high level floors and elevators. Overall, people with phobias have numerous effects that negatively impact their daily life.

- **Danger:** Describe the extent to which the selected behavior presents as a danger to self or others.

Unlike disorders such as depression, mania, and schizophrenia, the chance of a person with a phobia presenting a danger to themselves or others is low. People with phobias are usually aware of their triggers and “go to great lengths to avoid encounters with their phobic stimulus” (Hooley, Nock, & Butcher, 2020, p. 165). Avoiding their triggers lessens the chance of feelings anxious. For example, people with acrophobia are aware that high places will cause them to feel anxious, therefore, they will avoid going into tall buildings, flying planes, and going hiking up mountains. They may take the long way by going around to use the stairs instead of the elevator or may drive hundreds of miles to avoid flying on an airplane. Danger has the possibility of occurring if the person is not able to avoid their trigger. If a person experiences their trigger, they harm their health due to the chance of having a panic attack as well as experiencing other symptoms such as “... vertigo (a moving or spinning sensation), increased heart rate, shortness of breath, sweating, anxiety, shaking or trembling, and nausea or an upset stomach” (Boynton & Swinbourne, 2018, para. 8). A person with acrophobia may experience a panic attack if they are unable to avoid taking the elevator because a building closed off its stairway. Although symptoms of having a panic attack may pose a danger to the person with the phobia, phobias do not present a danger to the person or others compared to other disorders.

- **Deviance:** Describe the extent to which the selected behavior deviates from normality.

Although phobias are present to protect us, they are unrealistic and people with phobias behave in ways that deviate from the norm. For example, humans may have developed acrophobia due to our learned history of dying from falling off high places. Researchers believe that many phobias originated from evolution. People who have phobias, such as acrophobia, are “... more likely to survive and later reproduce, allowing them to pass on their genes. Researchers suggest that as a result, this fear has been passed down from generation to generation” (Boynton & Swinbourne, 2018, para. 13). Our ancestors have taught us that avoiding things such as high places will protect us and allow us to continue our species. However, avoiding heights in a way that is unrealistic is a behavior that deviates from normality. People know to be aware of heights and to watch their step going up high places (like a ladder). However, people who are extremely afraid of heights to the point where it influences their employment and social life are exhibiting abnormal behavior.

The goal of this assignment was to determine if a behavior could potentially represent a clinical disorder. I would conclude that a person with a phobia (in this case acrophobia) would represent a clinical disorder due to meeting the requirements for three of the D's diagnostic indicators (distress, dysfunction, and deviance).

References:

- Boynton, R., & Swinbourne, A. (2018, January 11). *Acrophobia, or why are some people afraid of heights*. Psychlopaedia. <https://psychlopaedia.org/health/republished/health-check-why-are-some-people-afraid-of-heights/>.
- Hooley, J. M., Nock, M. K., & Butcher, J. N. (2020). *Abnormal psychology* (18th ed.). Pearson.
- Phobias*. Johns Hopkins Medicine. (n.d.). <https://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/health/conditions-and-diseases/phobias>.