

PSYCHOLOGICAL DISORDERS

Students with psychological disorders have experienced significant emotional difficulty that generally has required treatment in a hospital setting. With appropriate treatment, often combining medications, psychotherapy and support, the majority of psychiatric disorders are controlled. The National Institute of Mental Health estimates that one in five people in the United States has some form of psychiatric disability, but only one in five persons with a diagnosable psychiatric disorder ever seeks treatment due to the strong stigmatization involved. Below are brief descriptions of some common psychological disorders.

DEPRESSION is a major disorder that can begin at any age. Major depression may be characterized by a depressed mood most of each day, a lack of pleasure in most activities, thoughts of suicide, insomnia and feelings of worthlessness or guilt.

BIPOLAR DISORDER (manic depressive disorder) causes a person to experience periods of mania and depression. In the manic phase, a person might experience inflated self-esteem, a decreased need to sleep, irrational thinking, irrational behaviors and impulsivity.

ANXIETY DISORDERS can disrupt a person's ability to concentrate and cause hyper-ventilation, a racing heart, chest pains, dizziness, panic and extreme fear.

SCHIZOPHRENIA can cause a person to experience, at some point in the illness, delusions and hallucinations.

Some considerations:

- Trauma is not the sole cause of psychological disorders; genetics may play a role.
- Psychological disorders affect people of any age, gender, income group and intellectual level.
- Disruptive behavior is not an attribute of most people with psychological disorders.
- Eighty to ninety percent of people with depression experience relief from symptoms through medication, therapy or a combination of the two. Depression is a variable condition that may fluctuate during a person's lifetime.
- Common accommodations for students with psychological disorders are exam modifications, alternative ways of completing assignments, time extensions, taped lectures, early syllabus and study skills and strategies training.

Instructional Strategies

The following strategies are suggested to enhance the accessibility of course instruction, materials and activities. They are general strategies designed to support individualized reasonable accommodations.

- Include a Disability Access Statement on the syllabus
- Spend extra time with the student, when necessary and assist the student with planning and time management.
- Be flexible with deadlines.
- Allow the student to tape-record lectures.
- Assist the student with finding an effective note-taker or lab assistant from the class
- Clearly define course requirements, the dates of exams and when assignments are due; provide advance notice of any changes.
- When in doubt about how to assist the student, ask him or her.
- Allow the student the same anonymity as other students (i.e., avoid pointing out the student or the alternative arrangements to the rest of the class).

Student's Goals

Time management, stress management, challenging distorted thinking, accountability, managing symptoms, taking control of the disorder, performing within academic expectations, assertiveness training, relaxation techniques, learning to adapt, goal oriented behaviors, psycho-social interactions, education about their disorder.

Documentation for this disability, as with all disabilities, is required before services can be provided.