

## IS THIS NORMAL?

Activity type Starter idea

At the start of the section it is helpful to try and get students to access their own ideas of normality and what makes it difficult to assess and agree them.

Simply choose a few photos or pictures (see below) from the Internet, e.g. Google Images and get them to discuss:

1. Is this normal?
2. Justifications for their decision.

Suitable images might include – heavily tattooed or pierced people, extreme goth or punk outfits, two-headed sheep (yes this is a real example) or even non-animal examples such as Hiller Lake in Western Australia (it's pink!). It should enable students to think about what constitutes normality. Can they then relate this to mental health examples?

### Practical use

Paired activity followed by class discussion – select pictures according to your students' particular interests or even current issues in the news.

### Additional notes

The Gendered views of mental health activity follows on rather well from this!

## GENDERED VIEWS OF MENTAL HEALTH

handout number

5.1  
a,b,c

Activity type Practical

The study in this activity is based on Broverman *et al.* (1970) and explores definitions of mental health and the ways in which they can be influenced, albeit unconsciously, by the people making the judgments. It is designed to be used when considering the 'Social Norms' definition of mental health and can also be used when later considering the 'Ideal Mental Health' definition.

The basis of the study is that participants are given a sheet which asks them to choose (from a list) the characteristics that represent the characteristics of a psychologically healthy male, a psychologically healthy person or a psychologically healthy female.

Broverman *et al.* (1970) asked therapists to complete a questionnaire in which they were asked to describe the characteristics of people in terms of 122 opposite pairs of traits, such as dependent-independent. The really significant findings indicated that there was a double standard of mental health for males and females. A healthy male was described and rated in the same way

as a healthy person. The healthy female was described differently from both, with such terms as *submissive, emotional, easily influenced, sensitive to hurt, excitable, conceited about appearance, dependent, less competitive, unaggressive, and unobjective*. Obviously this study has powerful implications since traits that are said to characterise a healthy woman are considered socially undesirable for a healthy adult!

This exercise is a very small-scale version of this study using some of the more salient characteristics and requiring participants to tick the ones they think apply to a mentally healthy person/man/woman. Each student can ask three participants to complete a questionnaire, giving a different questionnaire to each of the three. This way they will obtain a reasonable number of responses to each of the questionnaires.

**Ethics – Please print out the handout 'Ethical Approval Form' for all students and ensure that they incorporate all considerations into their design.**

### Practical use

Students gather data outside the classroom, pool it and use data for basis on which to draw graphs and discuss results.

### Additional notes

The study can be found via the following reference:  
Broverman, J. K., Broverman, D. M., Clarkson, F. E., Rosenkrantz, P. S. and Vogel, S. R. (1970). Sex-role stereotypes and clinical judgments of mental health.

*Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 34(1), 1–7.

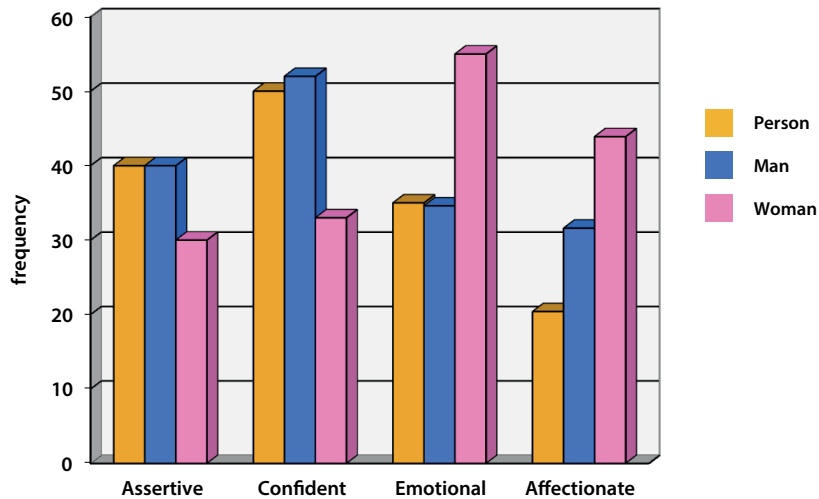
**Answers**

Students could do bar charts of all the characteristics along the horizontal axis and graphs shaded pink and blue for the female/male characteristics respectively (any gender stereotyping entirely deliberate) with a 'neutral colour' for the 'person'.

So the graph would look something like this with three bars for each characteristic (these numbers are

provided just as an example). Students should put a title and label the axes appropriately.

Obviously students can then discuss their results and consider whether views have changed since the original 1970 study (one would expect them to have done, but you never know!).



	Assertive	Confident	Emotional	Affectionate
Person	40	50	35	20.4
Man	40	52	34.6	31.6
Woman	30	33	55	43.9

## WHAT IS IDEAL MENTAL HEALTH?

Activity type Starter idea

One of the definitions of abnormality is 'Deviation from Ideal Mental Health', but what is 'ideal' mental health? Before teaching this definition, ask students to suggest a limited list of characteristics that they believe a mentally healthy person should show (e.g. eight characteristics). Students may struggle with this, so put them in pairs (or small groups) to start with. Give the class 10 minutes to write their list, then combine one group with

another group for a further 10 minutes to discuss what characteristics each group has listed and write a new combined list. Finally have a class discussion.

Hopefully this will raise issues such as whether people need to be happy to be mentally healthy, whether they need to have a goal in life and so on. It should help them remember the list given in the student book once they read that as well.

### Practical use

Paired activity followed by small group and class discussion.

## UNDERSTANDING DSM

*presentation*

5.2

Activity type Background

It is obviously necessary, when teaching psychopathology, for students to have an overview of the classification systems, particularly DSM, to which there are several references in the Student textbook.

This series of slides helps to explain the necessity for a classification system and how it was developed. The presentation starts by looking at older versions of DSM so students can appreciate some of the problems associated with defining abnormal behaviour, especially

Deviation from Social Norms.

It then takes a brief look at DSM-5 with particular reference to the conditions students will be studying in some detail – phobias, depression and OCD. Finally it helps to consolidate what students already know about defining abnormal behaviour and introduces the mental disorders (phobia, depression and OCD) they will be studying in detail.

### Practical use

The PowerPoint presentation provides the teacher with a way of presenting background information and provides a discussion tool for definitions of abnormality.

### Additional notes

The last few slides on definitions of phobias, depression and OCD can be used later as an introduction to these

conditions if this is seen as more appropriate than using the full set of slides all together.

## DEFINITIONS OF ABNORMALITY – REVISION GRID

*handout number*

5.3

Activity type Consolidation

This activity is designed to be done at the end of the teaching section and aims to encourage regular consolidation. Handout 5.3 provides an opportunity to bring all the definitions together and consider the use of each.

There is a column 'In a Word' that encourages students to make associations between each definition and a single word to aid memory. There are some expected

responses, e.g. Statistical infrequency – Rare, Social Norms – Conforming, but students can be encouraged to think about what will help them and be reminded that unusual associations are often best remembered.

They could also be asked to explain the association between the word and the definition to a partner, both to ensure that the link is clear and expose each other to ways that others learn.

### Practical use

Individual activity

### Additional notes

Some students may be able to similarly summarise the evaluations down to one word. As a test of progress the students could be presented with a blank version in a later lesson and asked to complete without the notes – they can then self-assess the effectiveness of this revision.

Students could also be asked to asterisk their ‘favourite’ evaluation point. This should be one that they can explain most fully and as such be the one that they go to if asked for one point in the exam.

## MIX AND MATCH

handout number

5.4

Activity type    Consolidation

This card sort encourages students to learn the key parts of each definition and their associated weaknesses. For each definition there are two cards that provide

some detail of the definition and two more that outline elements of the evaluation of the definitions.

### Practical use

Individual or paired activity

### Additional notes

The cards are randomised so that the teacher can give out the sheet and get the students to do the cutting!

### Answers

Statistical infrequency – If only a small number of people exhibit a behaviour it is considered abnormal – Characteristics that occur in many people are considered normal – Does not consider the desirability of a characteristic – Usually based on comparisons with actual sets of data.

Deviation from social norms – Abnormal Behaviours are ones that we would not usually expect to occur in a population – Considers aspects of the culture in which the behaviour occurs – Makes diagnosis of people from other cultures particularly difficult – Lack of understanding of other cultures would make distinctions difficult under this definition.

Deviation from ideal mental health – People who do not meet the requirements of a set of criteria are considered abnormal – Suggests that a direct comparison with a positive view of mental health is necessary – Is said to set standards that are near impossible for most people to attain – Suffers from

issues of cultural relativism as some of the criteria are thought to be representative of individualist cultures only

Failure to function adequately – Where people are judged as to whether they are able to cope with everyday life – For example, someone is not coping if they are experiencing severe personal distress – Does consider the patient’s distress but this can be hard to assess in a valid way – Those who choose alternative lifestyles such as new age travellers can be wrongly labelled.