

Psychology A2 (AQA – A Specification)

Module 5

3 topics:

- Individual differences (treating mental disorders)
- Issues and debates in Psychology (synoptic)
- Perspectives in Psychology (synoptic)

Assessment

Written paper (2 hours)

Topic	Assessment
Treating mental disorders	Essay Question (40 mins)
Issues and debates in Psychology	Essay Question (40 mins)
Perspectives in Psychology	Stimulus material and short answer questions (40 mins)

Module 5.1 Treating Mental Disorders

You will be assessed on your ability to:

1. *Describe (A01)* the use and mode of action of:
 - Biological therapies (Drugs, ECT, surgery)
 - Behavioural therapies (systematic desensitisation, token economy)
 - Psychodynamic therapies (classical psychoanalysis, brief psychodynamic therapy)
2. *Assess and evaluate (A02)* these therapies in terms of:
 - Appropriateness (which problems they work for)
 - Effectiveness (how well they work)
 - Ethical Issues (any moral or ethical problems they raise)

Links to:

Unit 2 individual differences (anorexia and bulimia)

Mental Disorders and their Treatments

Outcomes:

By the end of this session you should be able to:

- State some common misconceptions about mental illness.
- Distinguish between four types of mental illness.
- Outline the main assumptions of the biological, behaviourist and psychodynamic perspectives.
- Describe how each perspective approaches treatment.
- Name two therapies from within each perspective.

Before looking at how mental illnesses are treated, it is useful to understand a little bit about the different sorts of mental disorder.

Some common ideas about mental illness:

Idea	True or false?
<i>Mental illnesses are a form of intellectual disability or brain damage.</i>	False. They are illnesses just like heart disease, diabetes and asthma.
<i>Mental illness is incurable and lifelong.</i>	False. When treated appropriately and early, many people recover fully.
<i>People are born with mental illness.</i>	Partly true. Some mental illnesses seem to run in families, but other factors, like stress, bereavement, relationship breakdown, child abuse and unemployment can all contribute.
<i>People with a mental illness are usually dangerous.</i>	False. People with a mental illness are seldom dangerous when receiving appropriate treatment.
<i>People with mental illness need to be isolated from the community.</i>	False. Most people with a mental illness recover quickly and do not need hospital care, or have only brief admissions.
<i>I am not at risk of mental illness.</i>	False. In fact, as many as one in five people may develop a mental illness at some stage in their lives. Everyone is vulnerable to mental health concerns.

Common Mental Health Problems

Anxiety Disorders

Disorders whose main symptoms are feelings of tension, fearfulness and anxiety. Includes *phobia*, *obsessive-compulsive disorder* and *post-traumatic stress disorder*.

Mood Disorders

Disorders whose main features are abnormal mood states. Includes *unipolar disorder* (depression) and *bipolar disorder* (manic depression).

Eating Disorders.

Disorders whose main features centre on abnormal eating, including *anorexia nervosa* and *bulimia nervosa*.

Shizophrenia

A loosely connected set of disorders involving a breakdown of the personality and a loss of contact with reality. NB schizophrenia is **not** the same as multiple personality.

Treating Mental Illness

- The focus of this topic is how different mental illnesses can be treated.
- This is part of **Clinical Psychology**, which also deals with the causes of and the diagnosis of mental illnesses.

Treatments for mental illness are derived from different psychological perspectives including:

- Biological
- Behaviourist
- Psychodynamic

Each perspective makes different assumptions about the causes of mental illness. As a result, each perspective suggests a different way of treating mental illness.

Assumptions of the Different Psychological Perspectives

Perspective	Assumptions	Possible causes of Mental Illness
Biological	Abnormal behaviour is the result of a problem with the functioning of the brain.	Chemical or hormonal imbalance Structural brain abnormality Genetic (inherited) abnormalities
Behaviourist	Abnormal behaviour is learned in the same way as any other behaviour.	Classical conditioning (learning by association) Operant conditioning (learning by consequences)
Psychodynamic	Abnormal behaviour results from conflict and repressed material in the unconscious mind, possibly dating back to childhood.	Fixation (not developing properly) Repression of trauma (e.g. being abused as a child) Reaction to abnormal parenting in the early years

Approaches to Therapy and Specific Treatments

Perspective	Approach to Treatment	Specific types of therapy
Biological	Correct the abnormality in the patients brain functioning.	Drugs Surgery Electro-convulsive therapy (ECT)
Behaviourist	The patient <i>unlearns</i> the abnormal behaviour and <i>learns</i> more useful ways of behaving.	Systematic desensitisation Token economy
Psycho-dynamic	The patient brings the repressed problem into consciousness, where they can begin to deal with it.	Classical psychoanalysis Brief Psychodynamic Therapy.

Summary

- Many people hold mistaken ideas about mental illness
- Common types of mental illness include anxiety, mood and eating disorders and schizophrenia.
- Different psychological perspectives make different assumptions about the causes and treatments of mental illness.