

What Do We Mean By Abnormal?

Here are some examples of behaviour that could be considered abnormal. Read each example and highlight the behaviours or characteristics that make it abnormal. Think about **why** it could be considered abnormal. Make some brief notes on the right and be ready to discuss your answers.

A young woman reports that she has an acute fear of snakes. She cannot bear to watch any films or television programmes which include snakes. If she sees a picture of a snake, she becomes very anxious or distressed. If she sees a toy snake in a toy shop, she wants to walk away. She certainly will not go anywhere near a zoo.

A young man, who lives with his mother, believes that the world beyond his house is filled with radio waves which will insert evil thoughts into his head. For this reason, he never leaves the house. He covers his bedroom window with aluminium foil because he believes that this will protect him. He claims to hear voices which tell him that he should give up the fight against the evil waves.

A 37 year-old woman has an extreme fear of germs and bacteria. She will only allow visitors into her house if she is convinced that they are clean. She goes through elaborate rituals when performing ordinary tasks. For example, when making a cup of tea, she will fill and empty the kettle fourteen times in order to make sure that the water is clean.