



Moorpark College ACCESS

Mental Health Disabilities



Overview

Students with psychiatric disabilities experience significant emotional difficulty that may or may not have required treatment in a hospital. Psychiatric disabilities affect people of any age, gender, income group, and intellectual level.

Anxiety Disorders:

- **Panic disorder** – the sudden onset of paralyzing terror or impending doom with symptoms that closely resemble a heart attack
- **Obsessive-compulsive disorder** – persistent distressing thoughts (obsessions) that a person attempts to alleviate by performing repetitive, intentional acts (compulsions) such as hand washing
- **Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)** characterized by specific symptoms that result from exposure to terrifying, life-threatening trauma, such as an act of violence, war, or a natural disaster

Mood Disorders:

- **Major depression** – an extreme or prolonged episode of sadness in which a person loses interest or pleasure in previously enjoyed activities
- **Bipolar disorder** (also referred to as manic-depressive illness) – alternating episodes of mania (“highs”) and depression (“lows”)
- **Seasonal affective disorder (SAD)** – a form of major depression that occurs in the fall or winter and may be related to shortened periods of daylight

Schizophrenia Disorders:

Symptoms are categorized as either “negative” or “positive.” Negative symptoms include social isolation or withdrawal, loss of motivation, and a flat or inappropriate affect (mood or disposition). Positive symptoms include hallucinations, delusions, and thought disorders.

Suggestions for instructors:

- Spend extra time with the student, when necessary, and assist the student in planning assignment sub-phases and in time management by scheduling follow-up meetings or lessons at specified intervals.
- Be flexible with deadlines.
- Clearly define course requirements, the exam dates, and assignment due dates.
- Provide advance notice of changes.
- When in doubt about how to assist the student, ask him or her as privately as possible without drawing attention to the student or the disability. Keep instructions as brief and uncomplicated as possible.
- Clearly define course requirements, grading criteria, exam dates and assignment due dates. Provide reminders and advance notice of any changes.
- When teaching, state objectives, review previous lessons, and summarize periodically.
- Allow time for clarification of directions and deadlines.
- Provide alternative ways for the students to do tasks (e.g., substituting oral for written work).

Common accommodations are alternate methods to complete assignments, time extensions for assignments and exams, recording of lectures, provision of advance copies of syllabi, and consultations for study skills and strategies.

For more information:

BU Center for Psychiatric Rehabilitation
<https://bit.ly/2vIDeUj>