

Definitions and Concepts for AQA Psychology A-level

Topic 4: Clinical Psychology and Mental Health

Beck's negative triad: A component of **Beck's (1967)** cognitive explanation for depression suggesting that depressed people have negative thoughts about themselves, the world and the future.

Cognitive behavioural therapy: A form of therapy that aims to treat psychological disorders by changing negative or irrational thoughts and behaviours.

Cognitive distortions: Errors or biases in thinking that lead to irrational or negative interpretations of events.

Compulsions: Repetitive behaviours or mental acts that a person feels compelled to carry out, often to reduce anxiety caused by an obsession.

Counter-conditioning: A process in which a person learns a new, more positive response to a stimulus that previously caused fear.

Depression: A mood disorder characterised by persistent low mood and other symptoms that affect a person's thoughts, feelings and behaviour.

Deviation from ideal mental health: A definition of abnormality based on the failure to meet criteria for ideal mental health as proposed by **Jahoda (1958)** such as coping with stress, self-actualisation, self-esteem, autonomy, adaptation to new situations and an accurate perception of reality.

Deviation from social/cultural norms: A definition of abnormality in which behaviour is considered abnormal if it deviates from the accepted rules or standards of a particular society.

Ellis's ABC model: A cognitive explanation of depression suggesting that an activating event (A) is interpreted through a person's beliefs (B), which produce emotional and behavioural consequences (C).





Empirical disputing: A method of challenging irrational beliefs by examining the evidence for and against them.

Failure to function adequately: A definition of abnormality in which behaviour is considered abnormal when it prevents an individual from coping with everyday life or causes significant distress

Fear hierarchy: A list of feared situations or stimuli arranged in order from least to most anxiety-provoking.

Flooding: A behavioural therapy for phobias in which a person is exposed to the feared stimulus at a high level of intensity without avoidance, allowing the fear response to eventually decrease.

Gradual: Taking place in small steps or stages, rather than all at once.

Habituation: A reduction in a response to a stimulus following repeated exposure to it.

Logical disputing: A method of challenging irrational beliefs by examining whether they are logical and consistent with reality.

Obsessions: Persistent and unwanted thoughts, images or impulses that cause anxiety or distress.

OCD: A disorder characterised by obsessions and/or compulsions that cause significant distress or interfere with everyday functioning.

Phobia: An excessive and irrational fear of a particular object, situation or activity, which leads to avoidance.

Reciprocal inhibition: The principle that two incompatible responses cannot occur at the same time, meaning that relaxation can inhibit a fear response.

REBT (rational emotive behaviour therapy): A form of CBT developed by **Ellis (1962)** that aims to identify and challenge irrational beliefs and replace them with more rational beliefs.

Relaxation techniques: Techniques used to reduce physical and psychological tension, such as controlled breathing and muscle relaxation.

Schema: A cognitive framework of information gained from experiences that helps a person interpret the world and build and organise their knowledge and understanding.





Selective serotonin reuptake inhibitor (SSRI): An antidepressant that increases the availability of serotonin in the brain by preventing its reuptake.

Serotonin-noradrenaline reuptake inhibitor (SNRI): An antidepressant that increases the availability of serotonin and noradrenaline in the brain by preventing their reuptake.

Statistical infrequency: A definition of abnormality in which behaviour or characteristics are considered abnormal if they are rare compared with the majority of the population.

Systematic desensitisation: A behavioural therapy for phobias that involves gradually exposing a person to the feared stimulus while they remain relaxed, usually using a fear hierarchy.

Tricyclic antidepressant: A type of antidepressant that increases the levels of serotonin and noradrenaline in the brain. They are generally used when other antidepressants have not worked because they have more severe side effects.

Two-process model: An explanation of phobias proposing that they develop through classical conditioning and are maintained through operant conditioning, particularly avoidance behaviour.

