

**Abnormal Psychology: Current Perspectives (9<sup>th</sup> Ed.)**

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The preparation of an abnormal psychology text presents the formidable challenge of reviewing a breadth of research and theory across a number of subfields, while also respecting the complexity inherent within each of these domains. Alloy, Riskind, and Manos (2004), the authors of *Abnormal Psychology: Current Perspectives*, have met this challenge through their organized and thoughtful integration of cutting-edge research and theory in an eighteen-chapter text. An additional challenge presented to authors is the rapid advancement of technology in today's learning environment, and students' increasing demand for these applications. The authors of this text have included supplements that are in keeping with current trends in technology, providing students with several mediums to explore the material. These include access to a casebook in abnormal psychology, access to MindMap Plus CD-ROM, links to an online learning centre, and the creation of a student study guide. Similar multi-media resources are also provided for instructors, allowing for the enhancement of lecture material without corresponding increases in preparation time.

This comprehensive text is formatted in a manner that optimizes learning. Organizational tools have been included such as an outline at the beginning of each chapter and a summary of key terms and learning points at the end. Also, throughout the chapters, case examples are widely used which have the effect of bringing theoretical principles and critical research findings to life. The wise placement of vivid case examples maintains the interest level of the reader throughout the text, and facilitates memory for fundamental concepts. The case examples also provide ready-made opportunities for instructors to pique the interest of students in the classroom setting.

The text is logically divided into six sections. The first section contains three chapters that review fundamental concepts from an historical perspective, such as definitions of abnormality, the purpose of diagnosis and assessment, and research methods in abnormal psychology. This section provides a context that is essential for optimal integration of the material presented in later chapters. In the second section the authors review the fundamental principles underlying the main theoretical approaches to understanding and treating mental illness. They place each theory in an historical context, and make explicit links between the different orientations, highlighting the benefits and limitations of each perspective as well as the common principles across the different theories. This integrative approach is in keeping with recent trends in psychological research, that emphasize collaboration across sub-disciplines, as opposed to the "information silo" approach of the past. Of particular note is the entire chapter devoted to the neuroscience perspective, which is timely in light of the explosion of research in this area, and the many recent links being made between neuroscientific research and learning theory.

The third, fourth, and fifth sections review the symptoms and treatment related to emotional and behavioural disorders, psychotic and neuropsychological disorders, and developmental disorders respectively. Although the authors present some descriptive information in line with the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (IV-TR), they also engage readers in a sophisticated discussion, one that is far above and beyond the largely descriptive

accounts of disorders offered in many other abnormal psychology textbooks. Each chapter is peppered with illustrative case examples and current clinical research, highlighting the nuanced relationships between symptoms, and the many contextual factors that underlie their expression such as gender and culture. In addition, links are provided to visual media which help to close the gap between “textbook” descriptions of illness, and their expression in the real world. In keeping with the integrative approach of earlier chapters, these sections review treatments that are consistent with different theoretical perspectives, and the reader is provided with enough information to critically evaluate the benefits and limitations of each individual approach, as well as multi-modal approaches. Of particular note is the inclusion of prevention models from the field of community psychology throughout this section. This represents a fresh, forward-thinking approach, and is a strength compared to many other abnormal psychology texts which have typically only offered cursory glances at this field of study.

The closing section deals with the complex issues that arise at the intersection between mental illness and the law, as well as ethical principles related to the delivery of psychological and psychiatric treatments. What might otherwise be a tedious discussion is made fascinating by the use of high-profile case examples, and reviews of seminal human and animal research. This section brings the text full circle, back to the core concepts defined in section one, such as the thorny issue of defining abnormality. Overall, Alloy, Riskind, and Manos, the authors of *Abnormal Psychology: Current Perspectives*, have crafted a comprehensive, well-organized text that exemplifies progressive teaching, through its emphasis on integration, cutting-edge psychological research, and its use of technologically advanced learning tools.

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