

Beginners' exercise: Introduction to mental health (and psychiatric diagnoses)

This is a simple exercise intended to be done by the whole group (up to around 16 people) in discussion. The idea is to help them to overcome the perception that mental health is difficult to understand by asking them to arrange these 21 cards as they think they should go.

Give them the blanked out key to work from as though it's a jigsaw with the key taking the place of the picture in the box.

Most groups are able to do this correctly without any help at all – just by process of elimination, the application of the things they already know and the clues they can glean from the key (length of blanked out words, number of items in each column etc). I've done this little exercise with countless groups and only rarely do they need any assistance. Those few groups that have needed help didn't need much.

The advantage of this exercise is that it works as a warm up, it gets participants talking early on and it boosts their confidence. It also provides the participants with a rough and ready mental schema to hang the rest of the day's training on to.

Follow it up with a discussion about the fact that, whilst mental health work might seem very complicated, at its most basic level it's really just about these categories and symptom groups.

Mental disorders

5 Groups

Depressive	neurotic	psychotic	personality disorder	dementia
Disturbed sleep	disturbed sleep	hallucinations	lifelong	deteriorating
Disturbed appetite	disturbed appetite	delusions	not an illness	terminal
Psychomotor Retardation	psychomotor excitation	thought disorders		organic

Mental disorders

5 groups

Depressive

Neurotic

Psychotic

Personality
disorder

Dementia

Disturbed sleep

Disturbed sleep

Disturbed
appetite

Disturbed
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Psychomotor
retardation

Psychomotor
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Hallucinations

Delusions

Thought disorders

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Not an illness

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Key:

