

Essay plan: due 7th November 2022 23.59 p.m. via Turnitin on moodle.

Essay title: Discuss the biological, social and psychological factors which may contribute to the development of a mental health condition.

(2,000 words)

Introduction (150 words approx.)

Set the scene – how do we explain mental illness? Many different causes.

Summarise which psychological approaches are you going to refer to? I would select a maximum of three. I wouldn't necessarily choose the Humanistic approach.

Main body (approx. 1,700 words – about 600 words per approach, if choosing 3 approaches)

Biological explanations

- 1. Genetics – what do twin studies tell us about the heritability of mental health conditions? What do family studies and adoption studies suggest about the role of genetics in mental illness?*
- 2. The role of hormones and neurotransmitters in mental illness. E.g. low serotonin levels in depression, high levels of dopamine in schizophrenia etc. Too much melatonin in Seasonal Affective Disorder.*
- 3. The role of brain structure/injury in mental illness – I would not include this, very difficult to write about.*

Psychodynamic explanations (a difficult one to find evidence for)

- 1. The role of the unconscious mind – the content of dreams and the use of psychoanalysis to uncover the hidden meaning of dreams. Until we know and understand our dreams (unconscious content) we cannot work through them and get well.*
- 2. Psychosexual stages and fixations at each stage as a result of unresolved issues that we have repressed/displaced via our defence mechanisms.*
- 3. The tripartite personality; ID, EGO and SUPEREGO: an imbalance of these elements; the ID is too dominant or the SUPEREGO is over developed. Either way the personality is not well-formed.*

Behaviourist explanations

- 1. Classical conditioning – the development of anxieties, fears and phobias. Think of the “little Albert” experiment, where he was ‘taught’ how to develop a phobia.*
- 2. Operant conditioning – the learning of undesirable behaviours usually through reinforcement. For example Eating disorders such as Anorexia can be learned via the praise and complemental that you get when losing weight. This rewards your weight loss and you continue to lose more.*
- 3. Social Learning Theory – learning by modelling your behaviours on other individual, because you see the success/popularity they they have and therefore you want to achieve the same too. Another example here is learned helplessness (Seligman and Maier).*

Cognitive explanations

- 1. Faulty thought processes and cognitions, pessimistic thinking. The ABC model – i.e. the **a**ctivating event, the **b**eliefs that you adopt and the **c**onsequences of your behaviour.*

2. The Cognitive triad - I am useless, I am no good at anything, the future is useless as it will never get better.

3. The success of CBT in changing people's thoughts and cognitions by challenging their faulty thoughts and getting them to seek evidence to dispute their inaccurate thoughts.

Conclusions (approx. 150 words)

Remind me of the key points; usually about three sentences or short paragraphs to recap over the explanations you have chosen to include.

Structuring your essay:

Introduction – roughly 5% of the overall word count (100 words in a 2,000-word essay)

Main body – 90% of your word count, 1,800 words in a 2,000-word essay. Split this into sections to make it more manageable. For example, if you are going to talk about the Biological approach, the Behavioural approach and the Cognitive approach, allow 600 words for each section. Use your 600 words to outline the theory and provide examples of this – i.e. use evidence to illustrate your main points. For example; 'according to Seligman (1973) learned helplessness is a behaviour that is learned through experience. In his study he showed that dogs demonstrated lacked the motivation to escape electric shocks even when they were able to do so, which, when applied to human behaviour can explain why some individuals remain in unpleasant situations despite having an alternative option'.

Conclusion – roughly 5% of the overall word count, you simply summarise the main points from your essay!

General tips:

For this essay, your best bet is to use a basic Abnormal Psychology/Clinical Psychology text book, or Richard Gross- Psychology: the Science of Mind and Behaviour (if you can get your hands on a copy). Also, **the Works** often have psychology introductory texts for sale at reasonable prices.

You may well have to use secondary sources as your references for this essay, because all of this research is relatively old (not a problem for this essay).

Always remember to reference each key point that you make. Also remember to paraphrase, avoid copying and pasting, use your own words and don't be tempted to include quotes.

NEVER use sub-headings, bullet points, lists or images in an essay.

Always place the essay title at the top of the page.

Use the DRAFT submission portal to check your similarity score (up to three times). Only use the FINAL portal when you are sure your essay is ready for submission.

Always write in the THIRD person - 'This essay will discuss..., according to Gross (2015)... never write 'I think that' ... or 'we have found that...'

Whilst you have not covered APA 7th edition referencing yet, you will be looking at it with Zoe on the 22nd October session, so that will help you reference your essay. In the meantime, go onto the Library website and under student essentials, click 'referencing handbooks' and then APA referencing.

