

Classroom Assistance: Mental Health Disorders

What is a Mental Health Disorder?

A mental health disorder or mental illness refers to the collection of diagnosable mental health disorders that can cause severe disturbances in functional behaviors, thinking, feeling, and relating. Depression, Anxiety, Schizophrenia can all result in a substantially diminished capacity or impairment of functioning. Mental Health Disorders are significantly different from many other disabilities in that they can fluctuate and are a result of an intermittent and episodic process. As well, a mental health disorder is usually not visually apparent to others and is often considered an invisible or hidden disability.

Source: The National Institute of Mental Health

Suggested Best Practices for Students with Learning Disabilities

- ✓ Allow students to tape record lectures and directions for assignments.
- ✓ Have students connect with a classmate to back up their own lecture notes.
- ✓ Supply the students with outlines of your lecture and/or copies of overheads.
- ✓ Allow additional time for overheads or board work to be copied.
- ✓ Encourage students to use extended time or less distracted area for testing if it is one of their approved accommodations.
- ✓ Allow student prearranged or frequent breaks from class, if necessary.
- ✓ Preferential seating, especially near the door to allow class breaks.

Not all of the above strategies are applicable to each student with the particular listed disability. Instructors should work with students on an individual basis.