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## Intellectual Disability VS Mental Illness: A Psychological Angle

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In the upcoming fifth edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5), the diagnosis of intellectual disability (intellectual developmental disorder) is revised from the DSM-IV diagnosis of mental retardation. The significant changes address what the disorder is called, its impact on a person's functioning, and criteria improvements to encourage more comprehensive patient assessment. The revised disorder also reflects the manual's move away from a multiracial approach to evaluating conditions. Using DSM-IV, mental retardation was on Axis II to ensure that clinicians identified associated impairments alongside other mental disorders. With DSM-5, all mental disorders will be considered on a single axis and given equal weight.

### ***Disorder Characteristics***

Intellectual disability involves impairments of general mental abilities that impact adaptive functioning in three domains, or areas.

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These domains determine how well an individual copes with everyday tasks:

- The conceptual domain includes skills in language, reading, writing, math, reasoning, knowledge, and memory.
- The social domain refers to empathy, social judgment, interpersonal communication skills, the ability to make and retain friendships, and similar capacities.
- The practical domain centers on self-management in areas such as personal care, job responsibilities, money management, recreation, and organizing school and work tasks. While intellectual disability does not have a specific age requirement, an individual's symptoms must begin during the developmental period and are diagnosed based on the severity of deficits in adaptive functioning. The disorder is considered chronic and often co-occurs with other mental conditions like depression, attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder, and autism spectrum disorder.

### *Name Change*

Intellectual disability (intellectual developmental disorder) as a DSM-5 diagnostic term replaces “mental retardation” used in previous editions of the manuals. In addition, the parenthetical name “(intellectual developmental disorder)” is included in the text to reflect deficits in cognitive capacity beginning in the developmental period. Together, these revisions bring DSM into alignment with terminology used by the World Health Organization's International Classification of Diseases, other professional disciplines and organizations, such as the American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities, and the U.S. Department of Education.

A person with an intellectual disability may have problems expressing their thoughts, putting together sentences, learning new skills, doing day to day tasks, making decisions, and remembering things. As a consequence when they experience a mental health issue it may not be recognized. Behaviours that may be associated with the presence of an intellectual disability may mask symptoms. In addition, medical practitioners or careers may assume that difficult behaviours

are due to somebody's intellectual disability, instead of considering the possibility of mental health issues.

Getting the right support can also be difficult but there are many effective treatments. These treatments work best when there is good coordination between the mental health service provider and disability services.

Intellectual disability (ID), once called mental retardation, is characterized by below-average intelligence or mental ability and a lack of skills necessary for day-to-day living. People with intellectual disabilities can and do learn new skills, but they learn them more slowly. There are varying degrees of intellectual disability, from mild to profound.

### ***Definition of Intellectual Disability:***

*Intellectual disability* is a disability characterized by significant limitations in both **intellectual functioning** and in **adaptive behavior**, which covers many everyday social and practical skills. This disability originates **before the age of 18**.

### ***What is intellectual Disability?***

Someone with intellectual disability has limitations in two areas. These areas are:

- **Intellectual functioning.** Also known as IQ, this refers to a person's ability to learn, reason, make decisions, and solve problems.
- **Adaptive behaviors.** These are skills necessary for day-to-day life, such as being able to communicate effectively, interact with others, and take care of oneself.

IQ (intelligence quotient) is measured by an IQ test. The average IQ is 100, with the majority of people scoring between 85 and 115. A person is considered intellectually disabled if he or she has an IQ of less than 70 to 75.

To measure a child's adaptive behaviors, a specialist will observe the child's skills and compare them to other children of the same age. Things that may be observed include how well the child can feed or dress himself or herself; how well the child is able to communicate

with and understand others; and how the child interacts with family, friends, and other children of the same age.

Intellectual disability is thought to affect about 1% of the population. Of those affected, 85% have mild intellectual disability. This means they are just a little slower than average to learn new information or skills. With the right support, most will be able to live independently as adults.

### ***Mental Illness:***

Mental illness is any disease or condition that influences the way a person thinks, feels, behaves, and/or relates to others and to his or her surroundings. Although the symptoms of mental illness can range from mild to severe and are different depending on the type of mental illness, a person with an untreated mental illness often is unable to cope with life's daily routines and demands.

### ***What Causes Mental Illness?***

Although the exact cause of most mental illnesses is not known, it is becoming clear through research that many of these conditions are caused by a combination of genetic, biological, psychological, and environmental factors not personal weakness or a character defect and recovery from a mental illness is not simply a matter of will and self-discipline.

- **Heredity (genetics):** Many mental illnesses run in families, suggesting they may be passed on from parents to children through genes. Genes contain instructions for the function of each cell in the body and are responsible for how we look, act, think, etc. However, just because your mother or father may have or had a mental illness doesn't mean you will have one. Hereditary just means that you are more likely to get the condition than if you didn't have an affected family member. Experts believe that many mental conditions are linked to problems in multiple genes not just one, as with many diseases. which is why a person inherits a susceptibility to a mental disorder but doesn't always develop the condition. The disorder itself occurs from the interaction of these genes and other factors such as psychological trauma and environmental stressors. which

can influence, or trigger, the illness in a person who has inherited a susceptibility to it.

- **Biology:** Some mental illnesses have been linked to an abnormal balance of brain chemicals called neurotransmitters. Neurotransmitters help nerve cells in the brain communicate with each other. If these chemicals are out of balance or are not working properly, messages may not make it through the brain correctly, leading to symptoms of mental illness. In addition, defects in or injury to certain areas of the brain also have been linked to some mental conditions.
- **Psychological trauma:** Some mental illnesses may be triggered by psychological trauma suffered as a child, such as severe emotional, physical, or sexual abuse; a significant early loss, such as the loss of a parent; and neglect.
- **Environmental stressors:** Certain stressors such as a death or divorce, a dysfunctional family life, changing jobs or schools, and substance abuse can trigger a disorder in a person who may be at risk for developing a mental illness.

### *Types of mental illness*

Mental illnesses are of different types and degrees of severity. Some of the major types are depression, anxiety, schizophrenia, bipolar mood disorder, personality disorders, trauma and eating disorders. The most common mental illnesses are anxiety and depressive disorders. While everyone experiences strong feelings of tension, anxiety, or sadness at times, a mental illness is present when these feelings become so disturbing and overwhelming that people have great difficulty coping with day-to-day activities, such as work, enjoying leisure time, and maintaining relationships. At their most extreme, people with a depressive disorder may not be able to get out of bed or care for themselves physically. People with certain types of anxiety disorder may not be able to leave the house, or may have compulsive rituals to help them alleviate their fears.

Less common are mental illnesses that may involve psychosis. These include schizophrenia and bipolar mood disorder. People

experiencing an acute episode of psychosis lose touch with reality and perceive their world differently from what is considered normal. Their ability to make sense of thoughts, feelings, and the world around them is seriously affected.

### *Intellectual disability vs mental illness*

Confusion about the difference between mental illness and intellectual disability is common in the justice system. Some people with intellectual disability may also experience mental illness but the two conditions are very different.

### *What are the Differences between Intellectual Disability and Mental Illness?*

#### **Intellectual disability**

An intellectual disability means that a person has problems with learning, understanding, processing information and problem solving. There may also be difficulties with communication, social skills and general living skills. Intellectual disability is usually present from birth and will be evident before adulthood. It is a permanent condition, not an illness or disease. Intellectual disability cannot be cured or treated with medication. With the right support, people with intellectual disabilities can learn enough life skills to cope and be involved in their community. This where Camphill comes in, providing a secure and active community in which people with intellectual disability can reach their full potential.

- Thoughts are limited by cognitive ability and understanding.
- Is lifelong and will not dissipate.
- Onset occurs before 18 years of age.
- Medication cannot restore cognitive ability.
- Assessed by a psychologist.

## **CONCLUSION**

Mental illness affects emotions, mood, perceptions and behaviour and can be suffered by people of all levels of intellectual ability. Mental illness can onset at any age (although it is unlikely to

affect children before puberty). It can be a temporary condition, be experienced in cycles, or episodes may recur throughout life. Mental illness is treated with medication and psychosocial support. With the right treatment those suffering from it can manage their symptoms and live a normal, independent life. Examples of mental illness include schizophrenia, bipolar disorder and major depression.

- Disturbances in thought processes and perception. May experience hallucinations and delusions.
- May be temporary, cyclical or episodic.
- Onset can occur at any stage of life.
- Medication can be prescribed to control the symptoms.
- Diagnosed by a psychiatrist.

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