



Anxiety disorders 2: the biological approach

Module PSYB2

Section C – Individual Differences

3.2.5 anxiety disorders

What we will be learning about

Psychologists want to understand the causes of abnormal behaviour because knowing this might help us understand how best to treat people who have psychological disorders. The problem is that psychologists don't all agree on the best way of approaching this issue. There are several different approaches to understanding people's behaviour and each of them leads to very different ideas about what causes mental illness and what should be done about it. The first such approach we will learn about is the biological approach. These psychologists believe that experience and behaviour are caused by activity within the nervous system, especially the brain. So if a person starts to have abnormal experiences or behaviours, the biological psychologists start by asking 'what's wrong with this person's brain?' and continue by considering how the functioning of the brain can be altered to put things right. Usually, this means a drug treatment of some sort so we will also learn about how these work and consider some of their advantages and drawbacks.

What you could be tested on

	A01 – knowledge & understanding	A02 – application, analysis & evaluation	A03 – methods, statistics & ethics (how science works)
You must be able to...	State the main assumptions of the biological approach to abnormal behaviour (importance of nervous system; genetic influences; chemical influences). Outline one or more biological explanations of phobia/OCD. Describe two drugs used to treat anxiety disorders.	Distinguish between the actions/effects of two anxiolytic drugs.	Outline some ways of gathering biological evidence to investigate abnormal behaviour.
You should be able to...	Describe one or more research studies of biological causes of phobia/OCD and one or more research studies of biological treatments of phobia/OCD.	Interpret evidence from studies in terms of what it tells us about biological contributions to anxiety disorder. Assess the biological view of anxiety disorders in terms of support from evidence, strengths and weaknesses.	Predict what evidence should indicate if the biological model is correct. Assess strengths and weaknesses of research methods used by the biomedical model. Identify ethical issues raised by drug treatments.
You could be able to...	Explain the links between the biological model of abnormality and biomedical treatments for it.	Evaluate biological explanations and treatments for phobias and OCD.	Consider ethical issues of drug treatments in terms of a cost-benefit analysis.

