Mental Health in Social Work
A Casebook on Diagnosis and Strengths-Based Assessment

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Preface

*Mental Health in Social Work: A Casebook on Diagnosis and Strengths-Based Assessment* is a graduate level textbook that will help students and professionals learn to understand clients holistically as they proceed with the assessment and intervention process. A major purpose of *Mental Health in Social Work* is to familiarize readers with the *American Psychiatric Association’s Diagnostic and Statistical Manual* (DSM) classification of mental disorders. The primary reasons that social workers need to become conversant with the DSM are the following: (1) to offer clients appropriate referrals and treatment; (2) to communicate effectively with other mental health professions; and (3) to be eligible for third-party reimbursement.

While gaining competence in DSM diagnosis, the reader is also taught to maintain a critical perspective on the various DSM diagnoses and the medical model as promulgated through the DSM. The field of social work has a focus not just on the individual, but on the person within an environmental context, and concerns itself with strengths as well as problems. Additionally, social work has a traditional commitment to socially diverse populations. Because the DSM is limited in these areas, *Mental Health in Social Work* includes the biopsychosocial risk and resilience perspective, which takes into account both risks and strengths at the individual and environmental levels. Each chapter then explores the relevant risk and protective influences for each disorder, highlighting some of the particular risks for special populations, including children, women, the elderly, people of color, people with disabilities, LGBTQ people, and those from low socioeconomic strata.

Another emphasis in *Mental Health in Social Work* is evidence-based treatment, a movement in social work and various other health and mental health disciplines. The meaning of evidence based practice can be debated, but has been generally defined as the prioritization of research evidence when social workers consider how to best help clients. However, client preferences and available resources must also be part of the process of clinical judgment in addition to research studies. In considering the hierarchy of evidence, whenever possible we rely on systematic reviews and meta-analyses, which are considered “first-line evidence.” These systematic reviews aim to comprehensively locate and synthesize the treatment outcome literature in a particular area. If the review lends itself to combining the results of primary studies in a quantitative way, then it is referred to as meta-analysis. From these reviews of the literature, *Mental Health in Social Work* presents treatment guidelines for each disorder covered in the book.

The learning in *Mental Health in Social Work* primarily occurs through a case study method. Case-based learning developed in the field of business, and problem-based learning found its origin at the McMaster University Medical School in Canada, but these pedagogical methods dovetail in their use of cases as teaching tools for analysis, application, and decision-making. In *Mental Health in Social Work* students are asked to respond to cases in each chapter, which have been selected to represent the diversity of people with whom social workers intervene. Each chapter in *Part Two: DSM-5 Categories* contains a chapter case study as well as end-of-chapter “Reflect and Reply” cases. A template for formulating diagnoses for the chapter case studies is pro-
vided in Appendix A. In addition, each chapter case study provides “Questions to Consider” to help you formulate the DSM-5 diagnoses, and answers to those questions are provided in Appendix B. Appendix C provides a template for the multipart diagnosis, assessment, goal setting and treatment planning plan, and critical critique for the “Reflect and Reply” end-of-chapter cases, and the Instructor’s Manual provides the answers to these. Instructors can choose their own way of using the cases, but typically they are formulated in class by small groups, for individual homework, or used as a way to evaluate student performance. Note that in order to complete the diagnosis in each case, readers must access a copy of the DSM–5.

**New to This Edition**

This third edition has the following updates and additions:

- New chapters on obsessive-compulsive disorder (Chapter 9) and post-traumatic stress disorder (Chapter 10) have been added to align with the DSM–5.
- A new chapter on gender dysphoria has been added (Chapter 14).
- Many chapters now include boxes that discuss how socially diverse populations are affected by the disorders discussed in the respective chapters.
- “Questions to Consider” for making a DSM diagnosis have been added for each chapter case study. Suggested answers for those questions are provided in Appendix B.
- The templates for end-of-chapter “Reflect and Reply” cases have been updated for better ease of use.
- Research and studies have been updated.
- References have been updated.

In summary, this book takes a case study approach, with students applying evidence-based information on mental disorders to build their social work competency in terms of assessment and treatment of mental illness.

**Acknowledgments**

The case studies that make up this book are based on our clinical practice and the contributions of our students and other professionals. As the application of assessment competencies is a core element of this book, we are truly grateful to the following students who offered case contributions: Susan Bienvenu, Treva Bower, Lindsay Doles, Martha Dunn, Gidget Fields, Lisa Genser, Carolynn Ghiloni, Christine Gigena, Dana Gilmore, Kristine Kluck, Elizabeth Lincoln, Pamela McDonald, Jodee Mellerio, Cynthia Ormes, Kristi Payne, Constance Ritter, Zoe Rizzuto, Heather Roberts, Anne Ross, Amelia Schor, Tina Shafer, Rebecca Sorensen, Megan Vogel, Raquelle Ward, and Dallas Williams. We are also indebted to the following social work professionals: Kim Giancaspro, Kris McAleavey, and Adina Shapiro. Finally, we want to thank Shane Fagan for tirelessly reading over case studies and offering her valued clinical opinions.

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Brief Contents

PART ONE: ASSESSMENT
1. Diagnosis and the Social Work Profession 1
2. Biopsychosocial Risk and Resilience and Strengths Assessment 8

PART TWO: DSM–5 CATEGORIES
3. Autism Spectrum Disorder 19
4. Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder 36
5. Schizophrenia 50
6. Bipolar Disorder 66
7. Major Depressive Disorder 81
8. The Anxiety Disorders 97
9. Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder 108
10. Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder 116
11. Eating Disorders: Anorexia Nervosa, Bulimia Nervosa, and Binge Eating Disorder 128
12. Oppositional Defiant Disorder and Conduct Disorder 145
13. Substance-Related and Addictive Disorders 155
14. Gender Dysphoria 173
15. Alzheimer’s Disease 186
16. Borderline Personality Disorder 200

Appendix A: Template for Preparing Diagnosis for Chapter Case Study 216

Appendix B: Suggested Answers to “Questions to Consider” 217

Appendix C: Directions and Template for “Reflect and Reply” Cases 231
Contents

PART ONE: ASSESSMENT

1. Diagnosis and the Social Work Profession  1
   The DSM Classification System  3
   Mental Status Examination  4
      Rationale for the Diagnosis  5
   Limitations of the DSM  5

2. Biopsychosocial Risk and Resilience and Strengths Assessment  8
   Definitions and Description  8
   Individual Factors  9
      Biological Mechanisms  9
      Psychological Mechanisms  11
   Social Mechanisms  12
      Family  13
      Neighborhood  14
      Social Support Networks  15
   Societal Conditions  15
      Poverty  16
      Ethnicity  16
      Sexual Minorities  17
      The Mental Health Care System  17
   Conclusion  18

PART TWO: DSM–5 CATEGORIES

3. Autism Spectrum Disorder  19
   Prevalence and Comorbidity  20
   Assessment  20
   Biopsychosocial Risk and Resilience Influences  23
      Onset  23
      Course and Recovery  25
   Intervention  27
      Behavior Management  27
      Special Education  28
      Family Education, Support, and Involvement  29
Contents

Social Skills Training  29
Medication  29
Complementary and Alternative Treatments  30
Critical Perspective  31
Reflect and Apply  31

4. Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder  36
Prevalence and Comorbidity  37
Assessment  37
Biopsychosocial Risk and Resilience Influences  40
Onset  40
Course and Recovery  42
Intervention  43
Psychosocial Intervention  43
Medication  44
Critical Perspective  46
Reflect and Apply  47

5. Schizophrenia  50
Prevalence and Comorbidity  50
Assessment  51
Biopsychosocial Risk and Resilience Influences  54
Onset  54
Course and Recovery  55
Intervention  57
Medication  57
Psychosocial Interventions  58
Critical Perspective  62
Reflect and Apply  63

6. Bipolar Disorder  66
Prevalence and Comorbidity  67
Assessment  68
Biopsychosocial Risk and Resilience Influences  70
Onset  70
Course and Recovery  71
Intervention  73
Medication  74
Psychosocial Interventions  75
Critical Perspective  76
Reflect and Apply  77
Contents

7. Major Depressive Disorder  81
   Prevalence and Comorbidity  82
   Assessment  82
   Biopsychosocial Risk and Resilience Influences  84
      Onset  84
      Course and Recovery  87
   Intervention  88
      Psychosocial Intervention  89
      Medication  90
   Critical Perspective  92
   Reflect and Apply  93

8. The Anxiety Disorders  97
   Prevalence and Comorbidity  97
   Assessment  99
   Biopsychosocial Risk and Resilience Influences  100
      Onset  100
      Course and Recovery  103
   Intervention  103
      Psychosocial Intervention  103
      Medication  104
   Critical Perspective  105
   Reflect and Apply  105

9. Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder  108
   Prevalence and Comorbidity  110
   Assessment  110
   Biopsychosocial Risk and Resilience Influences  111
      Onset  111
      Course and Recovery  112
   Intervention  113
      Psychosocial Intervention  113
      Medication  114
   Critical Perspective  114
   Reflect and Apply  115

10. Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder  116
    Prevalence and Comorbidity  118
    Assessment  118
    Biopsychosocial Risk and Resilience Influences  120
       Onset  120
       Course and Recovery  121
## Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intervention</td>
<td>122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td> Psychosocial Intervention</td>
<td>122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td> Medication</td>
<td>124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical Perspective</td>
<td>124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflect and Apply</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>11. Eating Disorders: Anorexia Nervosa, Bulimia Nervosa, and Binge</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eating Disorder</td>
<td>128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td> Prevalence and Comorbidity</td>
<td>129</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td> Assessment</td>
<td>130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td> Biopsychosocial Risk and Resilience Influences</td>
<td>132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td> Onset</td>
<td>132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td> Course and Recovery</td>
<td>136</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td> Intervention</td>
<td>138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td> Treatment Settings</td>
<td>138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td> Psychosocial Interventions</td>
<td>139</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td> Medication</td>
<td>141</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical Perspective</td>
<td>142</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflect and Apply</td>
<td>143</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>12. Oppositional Defiant Disorder and Conduct Disorder</strong></td>
<td>145</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prevalence and Comorbidity</td>
<td>145</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment</td>
<td>145</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biopsychosocial Risk and Resilience Influences</td>
<td>148</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Onset</td>
<td>148</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Course and Recovery</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intervention</td>
<td>151</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td> Psychosocial Intervention</td>
<td>151</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td> Medication</td>
<td>151</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical Perspective</td>
<td>152</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflect and Apply</td>
<td>152</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>13. Substance-Related and Addictive Disorders</strong></td>
<td>155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prevalence and Comorbidity</td>
<td>155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment</td>
<td>157</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biopsychosocial Risk and Resilience Influences</td>
<td>160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Onset</td>
<td>160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Course and Recovery</td>
<td>162</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intervention</td>
<td>164</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td> Psychosocial Intervention</td>
<td>163</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td> Medication</td>
<td>167</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical Perspective</td>
<td>167</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflect and Apply</td>
<td>169</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
14. Gender Dysphoria  173
   Prevalence and Comorbidity  174
   Assessment  175
   Biopsychosocial Risk and Resilience Influences  178
     Onset  178
     Course and Recovery  180
   Intervention  181
     Psychosocial Intervention  181
   Critical Perspective  183
   Reflect and Apply  184

15. Alzheimer’s Disease  186
   Prevalence and Comorbidity  187
   Assessment  188
   Biopsychosocial Risk and Resilience Influences  190
     Onset  190
     Course and Recovery  192
   Intervention  192
     Psychosocial Intervention  193
     Medication  194
   Critical Perspective  195
   Reflect and Apply  195

16. Borderline Personality Disorder  200
   Prevalence and Comorbidity  202
   Assessment  202
   Biopsychosocial Risk and Resilience Influences  205
     Onset  205
     Course and Recovery  207
   Intervention  208
     Psychosocial Interventions  208
     Medication  210
   Critical Perspective  211
   Reflect and Apply  211

Appendix A: Template for Preparing Diagnosis for Chapter Case Study  216
Appendix B: Suggested Answers to “Questions to Consider”  217
Appendix C: Directions and Template for “Reflect and Reply” Cases  231
References  233
Index  271