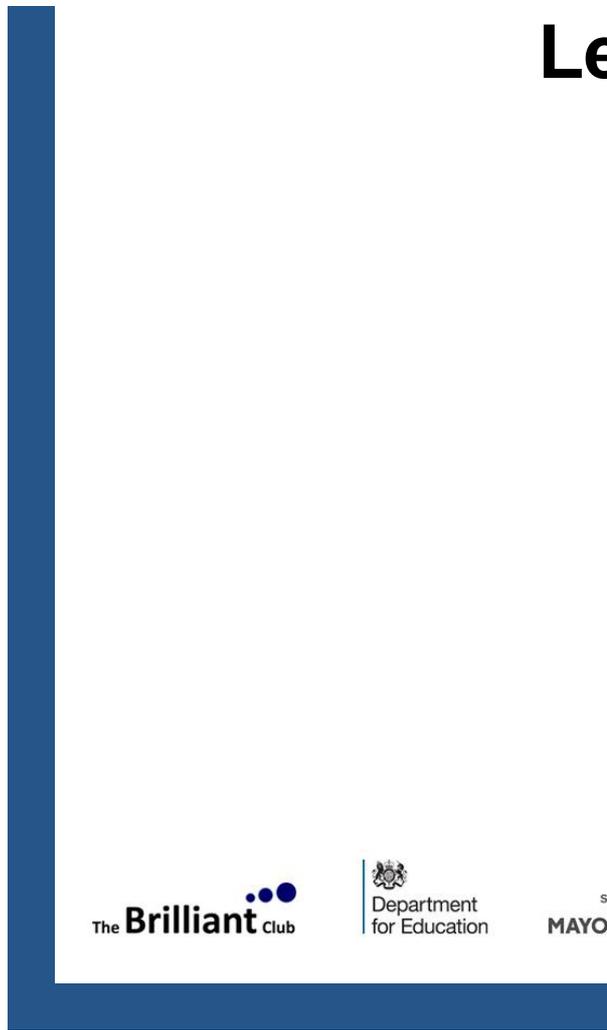


University Learning in Schools

Psychology

**Myth-busting the Brain: Nature
or Nurture Sheets**

Lesson 4



Mental Health Debate Nature 'Information' Pack

Use this information to help formulate your argument for mental health as the result of nature. Watch out for myths lurking in the information!

Biological approach

- A person's genetic and biochemical make-up determine their mental health.
- We are born with a likelihood of becoming mentally ill in later life.

Genes

There are two ways by which your genetic make-up can dictate whether or not you experience mental illness.

1. **"Outside the skin"**. Your genes can create an environment that exposes you to negative life events, for example making you make bad life decisions, or having a stubborn or chaotic personality.
2. **"Inside the skin"**. Your genes make you more likely to suffer from mental disorders by determining your psychological and cognitive make-up.



Chemical imbalance in the brain

- Natural increases of chemicals in the brain can lead to mental health issues.
- Medication can successfully treat most mental disorders with no side-effects.



Anti-depressants work by increasing levels of a group of chemicals in the brain called **neurotransmitters**. Certain neurotransmitters, such as serotonin and noradrenaline, can improve mood and emotion, although this process is not fully understood.

Increasing levels of neurotransmitters can also disrupt pain signals sent by nerves, which may explain why some anti-depressants can help relieve long-term pain.

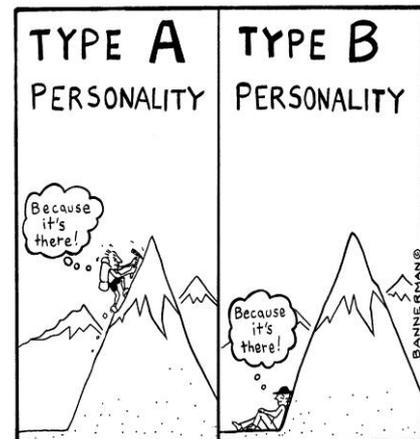
While anti-depressants can help treat the symptoms of depression, they do not always address its causes. This is why they are usually used in combination with therapy to treat more severe depression or other mental health conditions caused by emotional distress.

Personality

- A person's reaction to stressful situations is fixed.
- Personality types help to understand people's reaction to stress.

Type A behaviour: competitive, ambitious, impatient, aggressive
= more likely to interpret stress as harmful
= negative effects on mental health

Type B behaviour: relaxed, non-competitive
= more likely to see stress as a challenge to be overcome



Rate of mental health issues

- Mental health issues are relatively rare. About 1 in 100 people will experience a mental health issue during their lives.
- Young people do not typically experience mental health problems.



Mental Health Debate Nurture 'Information' Pack

Use this information to help formulate your argument for mental health as the result of nurture. Watch out for myths lurking in the information!

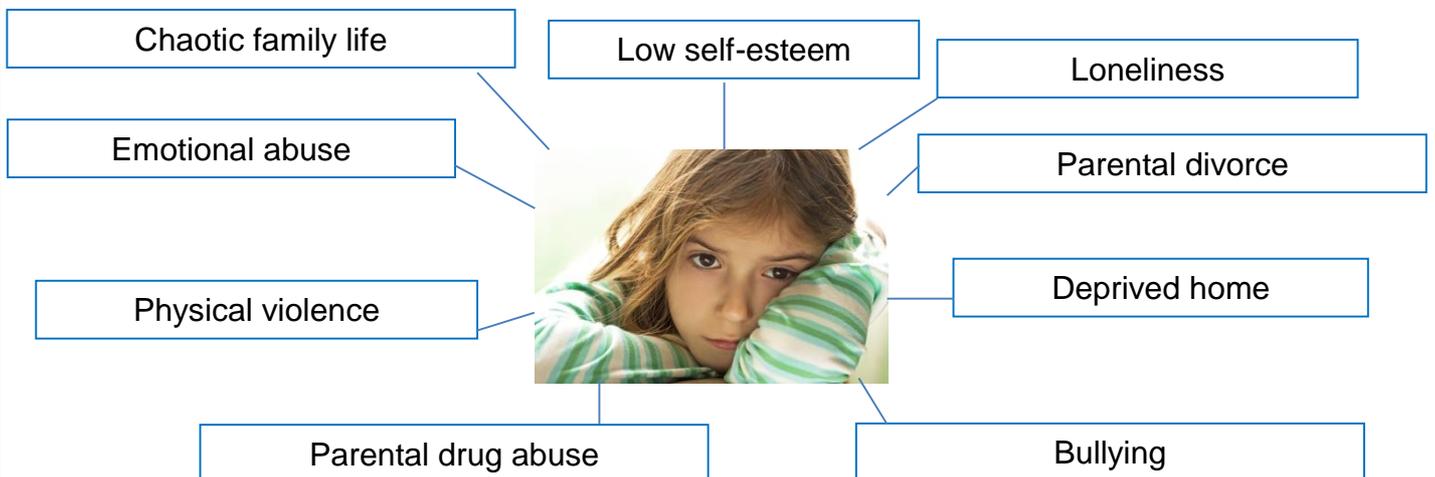
Behaviourist approach

- A person's own experiences determine their mental health.
- Everyone is born a blank slate. Life experiences help build a person's character and mental state.



Childhood neglect or abuse

Experiences in early life can present themselves as mental health issues in childhood, adolescence and adulthood.



Traumatic life events

- These are often unexpected and shocking.
- They can cause people to think in a more negative way, leading to depression and anxiety disorders.

- Death
- Divorce
- Major illness or childbirth
- Moving
- Job loss



Substance abuse

- A variety of substances can trigger mental health issues:

- legal – such as caffeine, nicotine and alcohol
- illegal – this means it is against the law to have them or supply them to other people. Most street drugs are illegal (e.g. cocaine, ecstasy)
- controlled – these are drugs used in medicine

- Use of substances like this can also affect the use of psychological medication, making symptoms worse.

