

Preface

The second edition of a textbook is a joy to write (compared to the first edition!). We have been extremely gratified by the positive reception to the first edition in the short time since it was released. At the same time, we have been sensitive to feedback from professors and students to write “a few less notes” to keep student interest high. In response, we took this opportunity to make the text shorter and more focused without sacrificing its academic standards.

We have completely updated the second edition to include important new developments such as recent findings on causes, subtypes, comorbidity, developmental pathways, gender, ethnicity, and early intervention. At the same time, the text retains the hallmark features that make it one of the most successful texts in courses on child psychopathology, abnormal child psychology, developmental psychopathology, and behavior disorders of childhood. Among these features are its engaging first-person accounts and case histories designed to create powerful links between key topics and the experiences of individual children and their families.

Advances in Abnormal Child Psychology

The past decade has produced extraordinary advances in understanding the special issues pertaining to abnormal child psychology. Today we have a much better ability to distinguish among different disorders, which has given rise to increased recognition of poorly understood or undetected problems like learning disorders, childhood depression, teen suicide, eating disorders, conduct disorders, problems stemming from chronic health problems, abuse and neglect, and many others. The field is also more aware of the ways in which children's and adolescents' psychological disorders are distinguishable from those of adults, and how important it is to maintain a strong developmental perspective.

In a relatively short time, the study of abnormal child psychology has moved well beyond the individual child and family to consider the roles of community, social, and cultural influences in an integrative, developmentally sensitive manner. Those of us working in this field are more attuned to the many struggles faced by children with psychological disorders and their families, as well as the demands and costs such problems place on the mental health, education, medical, and juvenile justice systems.

A Focus on the Child, Not Just the Disorders

We believe that one of the best ways to introduce students to a particular problem of childhood or adolescence is to describe a real child. Clinical descriptions, written in an accessible, engaging fashion, help students understand a child's problem in context and provide a framework from which to explore the complete nature of the disorder. We introduce case examples of children with disorders in each chapter, from our own clinical files and from those of colleagues. We then refer to these children when describing the course of the disorder, which provides the student with a well-rounded picture of the child in the context of his or her family, peers, and community.

In addition to clinical case material, we use extracts, quotes, and photos throughout each chapter so that the student never loses focus on the real challenges faced by children with disorders and their families. First-person accounts and case descriptions enrich the reader's understanding of the daily lives of children with problems, and allow for a more realistic portrayal of individual strengths and limitations.

A Comprehensive and Integrative Approach

To reflect the expansion of this field, causes and effects of various childhood disorders are explained from an integrative perspective that acknowledges biological, psychological, and social influences and their interdependence. This strategy was further guided by a consideration of developmental processes that shape and are shaped by the expression of each disorder. The broader family, cultural, and social settings affecting development are also important considerations for understanding child disorders, and one that is a critical feature of this text.

We use both categorical and dimensional approaches in describing disorders, because each method offers unique and important definitions and viewpoints. Each topic area is defined using DSM-IV criteria, accompanied by clinical descriptions, examples, and empirically derived dimensions. The clinical features of each disorder are described in a manner that allows students to gain a firm grasp of the basic dimensions and expression of the disorder across the lifespan. Since children referred for psychological services often show symptoms that overlap into more than one diagnostic category, each chapter discusses comorbidities and developmental norms that help inform diagnostic decisions.

Developmental Pathways and Adult Outcomes

To provide greater balance, we approach each disorder from the perspective of the whole child. Diagnostic criteria, therefore, are accompanied by an added emphasis on the strengths of the individual and environmental circumstances that influence the developmental course. Moreover, the developmental course of each disorder is followed through adolescence into adulthood, highlighting the special issues pertaining to younger and older age groups and the risk and protective factors affecting developmental pathways. In this regard, we examine developmental continuities and discontinuities, and attempt to understand why some children with problems continue to experience difficulties as adolescents and adults, whereas others do not.

Child Maltreatment and Relationship-Based Disorders

A distinguishing feature of this textbook is its expansion and emphasis on several of the more recent and important areas of developmental psychopathology that do not easily fit into a deficits model or a categorical approach. These problems are sometimes referred to as relationship-based disorders, because they illustrate the transactional nature of children's behavior in the context of significant relationships. Along with recognition of the importance of biological dispositions in guiding development and behavior, we discuss the strong connection between children's behavior patterns and the availability of a suitable childrearing environment. Students are made aware of how children's overt symptoms can be adaptive in particular settings or with care-giving relationships that are atypical or abusive, and how traditional diagnostic labels may thus be unhelpful.

Integration of Treatment and Prevention

Treatment and prevention approaches are integral parts of understanding a particular disorder. Applying knowledge of the clinical features and developmental courses of childhood disorders to benefit children with these problems and their families always intrigues students and helps them make greater sense of the material. Therefore, we emphasize current approaches to treatment and prevention in each chapter, where such information can be tailored to the particular childhood problem. Consistent with current health system demands for accountability, we emphasize interventions for which there is some empirical support.

Easy-to-Understand Organization

The book is organized into a logical, five-part framework to facilitate an understanding of the disorders and mastery of the material. Following the introductory chapters, the contents can be readily assigned in any order that suits the goals and preferences of the instructor:

- I. Understanding Abnormal Child Psychology (definitions, theories, clinical description, research, assessment and treatment issues)
- II. Behavioral Disorders (ADHD and conduct problems)
- III. Emotional Disorders (anxiety and mood disorders)
- IV. Developmental and Learning Disorders (mental retardation, autism, childhood-onset schizophrenia, and communication and learning disorders)
- V. Problems Related to Physical and Mental Health (health-related disorders, eating disorders, and child abuse and neglect)

Flexible, User-Friendly Chapters

Several important refinements have been incorporated into the text. Chapters are organized in a consistent fashion that allows instructors to reduce the assignment of particular sections of each chapter (e.g., biological causes) that may not appeal to the level of their students, or eliminate particular subtopics in a chapter (e.g., childhood-onset schizophrenia or bipolar disorder). For instructors wanting a more detailed presentation of research findings, *supplementary readings* can be drawn from the large number of up-to-date citations of original research.

We identify additional, but less critical, information that enhances each topic with the notation "A Closer Look," shown with the symbol on the right. In this manner, students can easily recognize that such material is presented to add further interest or examples to the major content areas of the chapter.



The chapter structure and organization have been fundamentally improved: *key terms* are defined where they appear in the text; *bulleted points* guide students to key concepts; and *chapter outlines* at the beginning of each chapter and *interim summaries* at the end of each section help students consolidate the key concepts in each chapter.

DSM-IV criteria have been shortened to their most essential elements.

The design and length of the text is completely student-centered and manageable, yet does not sacrifice academic standards of content and coverage.

Key terms introduced in each chapter are listed at the chapter's end and defined in a separate Glossary to help students grasp important terminology.

Key Content Changes and Updates

Highlights of some of the key content changes and updates to this edition include:

- Most current information concerning prevalence, age of onset, and gender distribution for each disorder
- Current findings on the reliability and validity of DSM diagnostic criteria for specific disorders and populations