Abnormal Behavior

The Field of Abnormal Psychology

- Psychopathology
  - Scientific study of symptoms and causes of mental disorders
  - Objectives: describing, explaining, predicting, and modifying behaviors associated with mental disorders
  - People who work in the field strive to alleviate distress and life disruption of those with mental disorders

4 Goals of Psychology

1. Describe...describing behavior
   - Mental health professionals
     - Health care practitioners
     - Assists in care of a patient’s mental health
   - Psychodiagnosis
     - Attempts to describe, assess, and understand the situation
   - Treatment plan
     - Proposes course of therapy
     - Focuses first on most distressing symptoms

2. Explain...explaining behavior
   - Determine etiology (possible causes)
     - High priority for mental health professionals
   - Human behavior is complex
     - Multiple contributing factors

3. Predict...predicting behavior
   - Various risk factor for violent behavior
   - Civil commitment (involuntary confinement)
     - Extreme decision impacting an individual’s civil liberties
   - The premise of the legal system
     - An individual is innocent until proven guilty

4. Change...modifying behavior
   - Psychotherapy
     - Program of systematic intervention
     - Objective: improve a person’s behavioral, emotional, or cognitive state
     - Many types of therapies and professional helpers