The Elusive Nature of Abnormality

- In short, although abnormality generally is defined as behavior that is deviant, distressful, dysfunctional, and dangerous, these criteria often are vague and subjective.

- Few categories of abnormality are as clear-cut as they seem; most continue to be debated by clinicians.
What Is Treatment?

• Despite their differences, most clinicians agree that large numbers of people need therapy of one kind or another

• Evidence also indicates that therapy is indeed often helpful
The Renaissance and the Rise of Asylums

- Across Europe, religious shrines were devoted to the humane and loving treatment of people with mental disorders
  - One, at Gheel, became a community mental health program of sorts
- Unfortunately, this time also saw a rise of asylums – institutions whose primary purpose was care of the mentally ill
  - The intention was good care, but because of overcrowding they became virtual prisons
The Nineteenth Century: Reform and Moral Treatment

By the end of the nineteenth century, several factors led to a reversal of the moral treatment movement:

- Money and staff shortages
- Declining recovery rates
- Emergence of prejudice

By the early years of the twentieth century, the moral treatment movement had ground to a halt; long-term hospitalization became the rule once again.
Current Trends

• Have we come a long way?
  • 43% of people surveyed believe that people bring mental health disorders upon themselves and 30% consider mental health disorders to be caused by sinful behavior

• Nevertheless, the past 50 years have brought major changes in the ways clinicians understand and treat abnormal functioning
How Are People with Severe Disturbances Cared For?

- Outpatient care has now become the primary mode of treatment

- When patients do need institutionalization, they are usually given short-term hospitalization, and then outpatient psychotherapy and medication in community settings

- The approach has been helpful for many patients, but too few community programs are available in the U.S.; only 40% of those with severe disturbances receive treatment of any kind