The Adequacy Approach

- Focuses on characteristics which we should possess to be normal.
- Notion of mental health requires value or moral judgements.
- To a great extent, it is culturally defined.
- There is an emphasis on the importance of the situation of context.

The Personal Distress Approach

- Subjective feelings of distress may sometimes be only a symptom of abnormality.
- One common requirement is that the symptoms must cause ‘clinically significant distress or impairment in social, academic, or occupational functioning’.
- Allows people to judge their own ‘normality’ rather than subjecting them to judgements by other in society - many people present themselves for treatment due to the personal distress they have been/are suffering.
- People can be judged not on their contribution to society, but how they can handle their lifestyle choice
- Many people with psychological problems may outwardly appear normal but inwardly be distressed
- It is appealing because it relieves us of the burden.
- A key point is how much distress would be ‘abnormal’? - “Although there is a certain charm to the idea that if clinicians want to know whether a person is maladjusted then they should ask that person, there are obvious pitfalls in doing so.” (Phares and Trull, 1997) It does not demonstrate any standards by which we should judge the behaviour itself.
- Sometimes, a lack of distress may be abnormal.
- People may be unwilling to admit that their behaviour is distressing or in need of help
- Some disorders are not associated with distress.

The Maladaptive Approach

- Behaviour which adversely affects the self or others
- The DSM5 does use deficits in social, occupational and educational functioning as one of the criteria for defining many psychologic disorders.