Beyond First Impressions

Use context and evidence to evaluate behavior.

P.6.1 "Describe the characteristics defining maladaptive behavior and its diagnostic criteria (deviant, distressful, dysfunctional)."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline details that may show distress, circle details that may show dysfunction, and number details that help you judge whether a behavior differs from expectations in its setting. Use your marks to explain why one unusual action is not enough to identify a disorder.

What Does the Behavior Tell Us?

1. Psychologists sometimes use three clues to describe behavior that may be maladaptive: deviance, distress, and dysfunction. Deviance means a pattern differs substantially from what is expected in a person's social or cultural setting. A difference alone is not evidence of a disorder. Distress is significant suffering, such as intense fear or sadness, rather than a brief uncomfortable moment. Dysfunction means a pattern disrupts daily activities or relationships. These clues guide careful questions, not a quick test that labels someone. A professional also considers context, how long the pattern has lasted, and the criteria for a particular disorder.

2. After a small kitchen fire at home, Eli begins checking the stove before leaving for school. Weeks after repairs are finished, Eli checks it again and again, even when the stove is cold. Eli says the worry feels overwhelming and is embarrassed by how hard it is to stop. Several mornings each week, the repeated checks make Eli miss the bus and arrive late to class. Eli has also stopped visiting friends after school because leaving the house takes so long. Eli's family wants to understand what is happening rather than guess at a diagnosis.

3. On the same street, Leena spends one night each year at a community vigil with her family. Most students at school do not share this tradition, but many families in her community do. Leena wants to attend, feels comfortable there, and completes her usual activities the next day. Eli and Leena both do things that might stand out to an observer. To judge a behavior fairly, ask whose expectations matter, whether the person suffers, and whether ordinary life is disrupted. Even when these clues raise concern, they cannot by themselves establish a clinical diagnosis; a trained professional uses specific diagnostic criteria.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. Most of Leena's classmates do not attend the vigil. Why is that fact alone weak evidence of deviance?

2. Which detail about Eli provides the clearest evidence of distress? Explain your choice.

3. What evidence suggests that Eli's checking is dysfunctional? Give two effects on daily life.

4. Could these clues alone establish that Eli has a disorder? Explain what else would be needed.

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Invent a school or community situation that does not involve checking a stove or attending a vigil. In 4 sentences, describe the behavior, explain which of the three clues the evidence supports, and identify information still needed before a diagnosis.

Beyond First Impressions

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline details that may show distress, circle details that may show dysfunction, and number details that help you judge whether a behavior differs from expectations in its setting. Use your marks to explain why one unusual action is not enough to identify a disorder. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Most of Leena's classmates do not attend the vigil. Why is that fact alone weak evidence of deviance?	**Deviance depends on expectations in a person's social or cultural setting. Many families in Leena's community attend the vigil.**
2	Which detail about Eli provides the clearest evidence of distress? Explain your choice.	**Eli says the worry feels overwhelming. This describes significant suffering.**
3	What evidence suggests that Eli's checking is dysfunctional? Give two effects on daily life.	**The checking makes Eli miss the bus and arrive late to class, and it has stopped Eli from visiting friends after school.**
4	Could these clues alone establish that Eli has a disorder? Explain what else would be needed.	**No. A trained professional would need to consider the context, how long the pattern has lasted, and the criteria for a particular disorder.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

At community dinners, Sam suddenly shouts a phrase several times, even when others are speaking. Sam feels upset afterward, and the interruptions have strained friendships. The shouting may differ from expectations at those dinners, while Sam's upset and strained friendships suggest distress and dysfunction. A professional would need to learn more about the setting and pattern and check specific diagnostic criteria before making a diagnosis.

Accept different details when students connect them accurately to deviance, distress, or dysfunction. Do not accept an unusual behavior alone as proof of a disorder.