When Labels Change

Read how a medical view of behavior can change its consequences.

S.10.7 "Identify the consequences of the medicalization of deviance."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline two possible benefits of treating Jordan's drinking as a medical concern, circle two possible harms, and number one sentence that explains why outcomes may differ across people.

A Different Response to Drinking

1. At a neighborhood clinic, Jordan describes drinking so often that it is difficult to stop, even after repeated problems at work. A clinician asks about patterns over time and possible harm before considering a diagnosis of alcohol use disorder. Medicalization happens when a behavior that some people treat as misconduct is also understood and managed as a medical concern. This change does not mean every person who drinks has a disorder. It shifts the question from "Why won't Jordan behave?" to "What care might help Jordan change?" That shift can alter how family members, employers, and public agencies respond.

2. If Jordan receives a diagnosis, a clinic can offer counseling, medication when appropriate, and follow-up visits. Family members may see a treatable condition rather than only a personal failure, making it easier to offer support. An employer might allow time for treatment instead of responding only with punishment. These changes can reduce blame and connect someone to care. Yet a diagnosis can also bring a new label. Coworkers might assume Jordan is unreliable even during recovery, and private health information could affect how others treat Jordan if it is shared without permission.

3. Medicalization also changes who has authority. Clinicians and insurers may decide which symptoms qualify for a diagnosis and which services are covered. People without affordable care may receive punishment for the same behavior that brings someone else treatment. A diagnosis does not erase responsibility: driving while impaired can still lead to legal penalties, and Jordan remains responsible for avoiding harm. Nor does medical care fix every cause of heavy drinking; stress and unsafe working conditions may also matter. When society uses a medical lens, it can open a path to help, but it can also deepen unequal treatment or overlook social causes.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How might a diagnosis change Jordan's family's response, and what benefit could follow?

2. What new risk might Jordan face at work even if treatment helps?

3. How can unequal access to care change the consequences of the same behavior?

4. What could people overlook if they rely only on medical care to explain Jordan's drinking?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Invent a school or community rule-breaking behavior not discussed in the passage. In 3 to 4 sentences, explain how treating it as a possible medical issue could change the response, including one benefit and one risk.

When Labels Change

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline two possible benefits of treating Jordan's drinking as a medical concern, circle two possible harms, and number one sentence that explains why outcomes may differ across people. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How might a diagnosis change Jordan's family's response, and what benefit could follow?	**Family members may see a treatable condition rather than only a personal failure and offer more support.**
2	What new risk might Jordan face at work even if treatment helps?	**Coworkers might label Jordan unreliable during recovery, or shared health information might affect how they treat Jordan.**
3	How can unequal access to care change the consequences of the same behavior?	**A person who can afford care may receive treatment, while someone without affordable care may face punishment instead.**
4	What could people overlook if they rely only on medical care to explain Jordan's drinking?	**They could overlook social causes, such as stress or unsafe working conditions.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

A student is often late to school, so staff offer a health evaluation instead of automatic detention. If a sleep disorder is involved, the student might get care that improves attendance. But treating every late arrival as a symptom could overlook a broken bus route and label students who do not have a disorder.

Accept other passage-supported consequences for the short answers. For Your Turn, look for a new example, a plausible change in response, one benefit, and one risk.