

# **UNIT 12: ABNORMAL PSYCHOLOGY CASE STUDIES I**

## **Possible Answers**

Generalized Anxiety Disorder  
Panic Disorder  
Phobia  
Depersonalization Disorder  
Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder

Dissociative Amnesia  
Dissociative Fugue  
Dissociative Identity Disorder  
Conversion Disorder  
Hypochondriasis

### **Case 1:**

Rocky Prater went to college only because of pressure from his older brother. Unfortunately, he got into several courses he hated, so that the entire school day seemed difficult and dull. Shortly before midterms, Rocky developed a thought that he had not set his alarm clock. He would lean out of bed to check, but it was always set. Sometimes he would wake up in the middle of the night with the terrible feeling that the alarm was not set, but it always was. Still he continued to go through this alarm checking ritual at least once every night and often more frequently. Finally his counselor helped him realize that his recurring thought was based on his unconscious desire to sleep through his morning classes, and that the behavior was his unconscious method of counter-acting these unrecognized feelings. After his talk with the counselor his behavior began to fade away.

**Diagnosis:** \_\_\_\_\_

### **Case 2:**

A workman while attempting to throw an electrical switch, was thrown to the ground by a "shock". Shortly thereafter he discovered that he could not use his right leg. He was bedfast for several months and later could move about only with the aid of crutches and a brace. A suit for a large sum was brought against the company for which he had been working at the time of the accident. In the course of the trial, evidence was presented indicating that the switch had been carrying a much lower voltage than the workman had supposed it carried. Furthermore, the switch was so constructed that it seemed almost impossible for anyone to receive a shock from it. A medical examination showed that there was no nerve injury as the man claimed and that no damage had been done to the muscles of the leg. Nevertheless, the man was unable to use his leg and so was unable to earn a living for his family. The court allowed the man some compensation, though not nearly as much as he had demanded. The case was closed. Within a short time thereafter all symptoms of paralysis disappeared. The man was able to perform his duties as well as ever.

**Diagnosis:** \_\_\_\_\_

### **Case 3:**

Leonard has a fear of going more than a few blocks away from his home and the university. For years his fear kept him a virtual prisoner in this small geographical area. Although he knew of his fear, he did not know its underlying cause. During the course of psychoanalysis he was able to remember a frightening incident in his childhood. He had wandered away from his home and gone over to the railroad tracks, and a passing train scalded him with steam. This incident was the origin of his fear. His real motive for staying home was the fear acquired in this incident. The fear was so powerful that it dominated his whole life. It was never completely eradicated even though he recognized it's source and could be objective enough to write a book about it.

**Diagnosis:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Case 4:**

Donald (age 22) attended college at night while working to support his forty five year old mother. He was in love with a girl whom he hoped to marry. Donald's mother, however, did not like the girl and tried to break them up. The girl could see that Donald would never be able to support both her and his mother. She also knew that the three of them could never get along together under the same roof. She gave Donald a month to decide what to do about it. A week before the deadline, he suddenly disappeared. He was found two weeks later in another state, completely unable to say who he was, where he was, or what he was planning to do. He could not recall, or even recognize, the name of either his mother or his girl friend. Obviously this was his solution to the conflict. This behavior was not inconsistent with his previous history. In his earlier school days, he had frequently forgotten his homework and been absent minded. Forgetting things was already a convenient habit for him.

**Diagnosis:**\_\_\_\_\_

**Case 5:**

This pattern is illustrated by the case of a 13 year old boy who was constantly preoccupied with the thought that he wanted to hurt other people. Whenever he saw someone asleep, he was struck by the thought that he had killed them. In his religious observances he felt compelled to make the sign of the cross three times instead of once as other people did. He refused to watch deaths portrayed in movies and television because he thought they were real. He also was afraid of bumping and hurting other people and for this reason he avoided crowds and all the usual boyhood sports.

**Diagnosis:**\_\_\_\_\_

**Case 6:**

A married woman, whose life was complicated by her mother's living in the home, complained that she felt tense and irritable most of the time. She suffered from occasional attacks in which her heart pounded, and she could not seem to get her breath. Often she broke out in a profuse perspiration. Her mouth seemed always dry, even though she drank a great deal of water.

**Diagnosis:**\_\_\_\_\_

**Case 7:**

A man had fear of the number thirteen. At first he controlled his fear by staying in bed on the thirteenth of each month, thus avoiding contact with the calendar and newspaper dates. One day he realized that the word twenty seventh had thirteen letters, and he began spending two days a month in bed. Later he avoided passing a sign which had thirteen letters in it that hung on his normal route to work; he began to hop over the thirteenth step in each flight of stairs. Finally all his actions revolved around his fear.

**Diagnosis:**\_\_\_\_\_

**Case 8:**

A man married against his family's wishes. He lost his job and was forced to appeal to his family for support. An uncle gave him some money, but warned him he would get no more unless he divorces his wife. On the way home the patient was held up and his money taken from him. He decided to jump into the river. But on the way to the river he forgot who he was and where he lived and that he was married; nor could he account for his being in the locality. He became perplexed and alarmed and asked a policeman for help. He was taken to a hospital and one day later, recovered his memory of these incidents and his identity under hypnosis.

**Diagnosis:**\_\_\_\_\_

**Case 9:**

A successful executive who, for various reasons, hated the responsibility of marriage and fatherhood. He was obsessed many times a day with the idea that his two children were "somehow in danger", although he knew them to be safe in a well run private day school to which he himself brought them every morning. As a result, he felt impelled to interrupt his office routine three times a day by personal calls to the school principal who, incidentally, after several months began to question the sincerity of the patient's fatherly solicitude.

Similarly, the patient could not return home at night without misgivings unless he brought some small present to his wife and children, although, significantly, it was always something they did not want.

**Diagnosis:**\_\_\_\_\_

**Case 10:**

A woman of fifty, plastered heavily make-up in a useless effort to look 30, attended one of the author's lectures. During the question period, she told the following story; "about three years ago, I woke up one morning to find I just couldn't straighten my back. At first I thought I had slept in a draft and that a hot bath would help, but it didn't. Then I became afraid and called my physician, he took X-rays and did other tests and finally told me that he couldn't find anything wrong. Well, that really got me - here I couldn't straighten up and this idiot doctor couldn't figure out why, so I really told him off. I had seven weeks' sick leave coming from my company, and I phoned a friend whose brother was a doctor and would certify that I couldn't work. After about six weeks, I was getting pretty sick of being at home, when a friend dropped in one Sunday. I told him what had been happening, and he just looked at me and laughed. He said, "that's the poorest excuse for staying home I've ever heard, you faker. Stand up straight!" When he yelled at me, I was so startled that I guess I stood up straight, and I haven't had any trouble since.

**Diagnosis:**\_\_\_\_\_

**Case 11:**

Betty, a girl of 15, was apprehended for stealing dresses from a department store. When her room at home was searched, it contained several dozen dresses, all stolen from the department stores in her city. Every dress was much too large for her to wear. Further investigation disclosed that she came from a well to do family, and had ample spending money for her age. She could have just about anything she asked her parents for, and had no need to steal anything. Questioned about her thefts, she admitted having no reason to steal. She merely explained that she frequently had an uncontrollable urge to steal large dresses.

**Diagnosis:**\_\_\_\_\_

**Case 12:**

Mr. D. was a married man, 30 years of age. He had had a severe anxiety attack and after became chronically and so intensely anxious that he was admitted to the hospital. He seemed perpetually afraid and complained that he had the feeling that something terrible was going to happen. Over and over again he would repeat, "I'm afraid of something happening, and I don't know just what." He was always tense, irritable, and restless. He had difficulty getting to sleep. He had headaches and sweated excessively. His appetite was poor.

**Diagnosis:**\_\_\_\_\_

**Case 13:**

A boy in high school was supplied with some second hand books. He began to doubt the accuracy of them, for, as they were not new, he thought they might be out of date and what he read might not be the truth. Before long he would not read a book unless he could satisfy himself that it was new and the writer of it an authority. Even then he was assailed with doubts. For he felt uncertain as to whether he understood what he read. If, for example, he came across a word of which he was not sure of the exact meaning, he could not go on until he had looked up the word in the dictionary. But likely as not, in the definition of the word there would be another word with which he was not entirely familiar and he would have to look that up, so at times a half an hour or more would be taken up in reading a single page, and even then he would feel doubtful as to whether he had gotten the exact truth.

**Diagnosis:**\_\_\_\_\_

**Case 14:**

An extroverted, flirtatious, rather immature twenty one year old married woman, the mother of a young infant, on awakening from the anesthesia after an appendectomy, experienced complete amnesia for the previous five years. At sixteen she had been briefly unconscious following an automobile accident, and she now believed that she was hospitalized because of the accident. Taken home a few days after the appendectomy, she did not recognize her husband or child. When told who they were, she did not challenge their identities and said they were "nice". While convalescing, she greatly enjoyed reading magazines designed for teenagers. The amnesia and five year regression were responses to an immediate stress situation: her husband was about to graduate from college and take a job in the family business in his native city. She did not want to leave her friends and she feared living under the watchful eye of her mother-in-law, a very dominant and critical woman. Just before the surgery, the mother-in-law, had come to stay with the family and help them get ready to move. She had been outspoken and critical of her daughter-in-law's housekeeping habits and juvenile manner of dress. The amnesia episode psychologically eliminated the mother-in-law's existence, for the patient had no responsibilities and no child to care for. The amnesia cleared up with hypnotic treatment.

**Diagnosis:**\_\_\_\_\_

**Case 15:**

Jim, a soldier, is in an Army Medical hospital. He complains of a loss of sensation in his fingers. He also complains that he cannot see, although a competent oculist examined his eyes and found nothing wrong. It seems strange that Jim is calm about his disorder even to the point of feeling indifferent about it. Except for this, his personality seems intact.

**Diagnosis:**\_\_\_\_\_

**Case 16:**

Bill is an extremely orderly, clean, stubborn, and stingy person. He expects everything in the house to be spotless at all times. He insists that every chair, napkin, ashtray, and book be in its proper place. His wife loves him but finds it very difficult to keep the house in the rigid order he demands. He tends to have some time consuming rituals connected with dressing and personal care, such as arranging his toilet articles in a particular order, rinsing his face exactly five times after shaving, laying out all of his clothes in a fixed sequence and making sure that he puts them on in that order.

**Diagnosis:**\_\_\_\_\_