


FAMILY JUSTICE COURTS
S I N G A P O R E



Mediation- Working with Individuals with Mental Health Disorders

Overview

- A. Impact of mental health disorders on mediation
- B. Strategies in managing individuals with “mental health disorders”
- C. Mediator wellness



Impact of Mental Health Disorders on Mediation

What is Mental Health Disorder?

- Clinically significant disturbance in cognition, emotional regulation, or behavior.
- Impacts daily functioning - social, occupational, or other important activities.
- High conflict personality ≠ mental health disorder

How Mental Health Disorder Impacts Mediation

- Impacts an individual's
 - Emotions
 - Cognitive processing abilities
- Impacts mediation process and outcome

(Doley, 2016; Hickerson, 2017)

How Mental Health Disorder Impacts Mediation

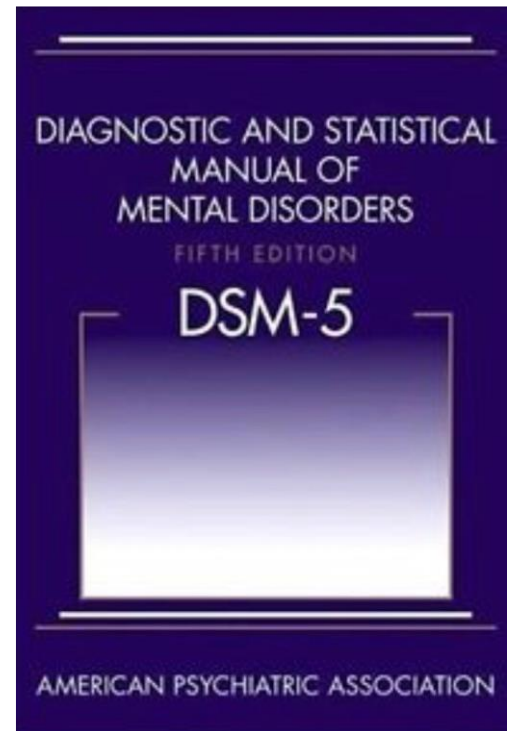
- It does not mean that individuals with mental health disorders cannot participate in mediation.
- Mediators play an important role in facilitating the mediation effectively.

The Role of Mediators

- NOT
 - To diagnose/“treat” mental health disorders
- Role of mediators
 - Recognise the impact of mental health issues on mediation
 - Maximise clients’ participation in mediation

Different Types of Mental Health Disorders

- Neurodevelopmental disorders
- Schizophrenia spectrum and other psychotic disorders
- Bipolar and related disorders
- Depressive disorders
- Anxiety disorders
- Obsessive-compulsive and related disorders
- Trauma and stressor-related disorders
- Dissociative disorders
- Feeding and eating disorder
- Substance use and addictive disorders
- Personality disorders
- ...



Mental Health in Singapore

Mental Health Study, 2010 (IMH):

- 12% of Singapore resident population would have a mental health disorder at some point in their life.

Mental Health in Singapore



1. Depression

2. OCD

3. Alcohol Abuse



Strategies in Managing Individuals with “Mental Health Disorders”

Common “mental health disorders”



**Anger
Management
Issues**



Depression



**Anxiety
Disorders**



**Personality
Disorders**

Angry individuals

Signs and symptoms

- Verbal/physical aggressiveness
- Angry outburst
- Muscle tension
- Palpitations
- Tremors
- Racing thoughts
- Brief periods of emotional detachment



Dealing with angry individuals

- De-escalate the anger
 - Provide a calming presence
 - Show empathy
 - Practice active listening
- Possible considerations during mediation
 - Taking breaks
 - Convening caucuses

(Pollack, 2010; Raines & Choi, 2016; Schein, 2013)

Depressed individuals

Signs and symptoms

- Depressed mood
- Markedly diminished interest in all/most activities
- Significant weight loss when not dieting
- Insomnia or hypersomnia
- Fatigue or loss of energy
- Feelings of worthlessness
- Diminished ability to think/concentrate/ make decisions
- Recurrent thoughts of death, suicide ideation



Anxious Individuals

Signs and symptoms

- Excessive anxiety and worry
- Restlessness
- Easily fatigued
- Difficulty concentrating
- Muscle tension
- Sleep disturbance



Dealing with depressed/anxious individuals

Possible considerations during mediation

- Provide structure and order
- Emphasise the importance of parties' roles
- Use visual aids
- Provide frequent summaries
- Allow more time for processing, take breaks
- Provide more prompting
- Involve significant others (if necessary)
- Perform reality testing appropriately

(Doley, 2016; Hickerson, 2017)

Personality Disorders (PD)

HEALTH

Personality disorder puts marriage under strain

MIND YOUR BODY, THE STRAITS TIMES

| Tuesday, Jun 07, 2016



File photo: BH



Q. I have reason to believe that my



The functionality of personality



**Healthy
functioning
traits**

**Some problem
traits**

**Many problematic
traits**

**Personality
Disorder**



Criteria for Personality Disorders

The following criteria must be met

- i) **Significant impairment in self** (identity or self direction) and interpersonal functioning
- ii) One or more pathological trait
- iii) Impairments in personality functioning and the individual's personality expression are **stable across time** and **consistent across situations**
- iv) The personality is not normal to one's socio-cultural environment
- v) Impairment in personality is not due to effects of substance use or medical condition

Has to be above 18 years old

How common is Personality Disorder ?

Different research studies come up with different results, but in general in the UK between 5% and 12% of the population would meet the criteria for a diagnosis of personality disorder. (Lovell, W., Morgan, L., Wood, H. 2014)

Singapore- unknown

Some points to note about personality disorders

- People can be diagnosed with multiple personality disorders
- Diagnosis = Personality Disorders + mood related disorder + neurodevelopmental disorder
- Psychologists and psychiatrists can lack consistency in diagnosing
- Discriminatory and stigmatising



Borderline Personality?

What are the causes of personality disorders

An iceberg floating in the ocean. The small tip above the water represents visible symptoms, while the much larger submerged part represents the hidden causes of personality disorders.

Be Empathetic

- Adverse negative childhood experiences
- Childhood physical, emotional, or sexual abuse or neglect
- Learnt patterns of maladaptive behaviour for coping and survival

Bolton, W., Lovell, K., Morgan, L & Wood, H.

(2014)

Be respectful

How many types of Personality Disorders are there?

1. Paranoid
2. Schizoid
3. Schizotypal

Cluster A : *Odd, eccentric , socially isolated*

4. Histrionic
5. Borderline
6. Narcissistic
7. Antisocial

Cluster B : *Dramatic, erratic, emotional, unstable*

8. Dependent
9. Avoidant
10. Obsessive Compulsive

Cluster C : *Clingy, dependent , fearful*

Borderline, Narcissistic, Antisocial

Borderline Personality Disorder

“Borderline personality disorder is a pattern of instability in interpersonal relationships, self image, affects, and marked impulsivity”

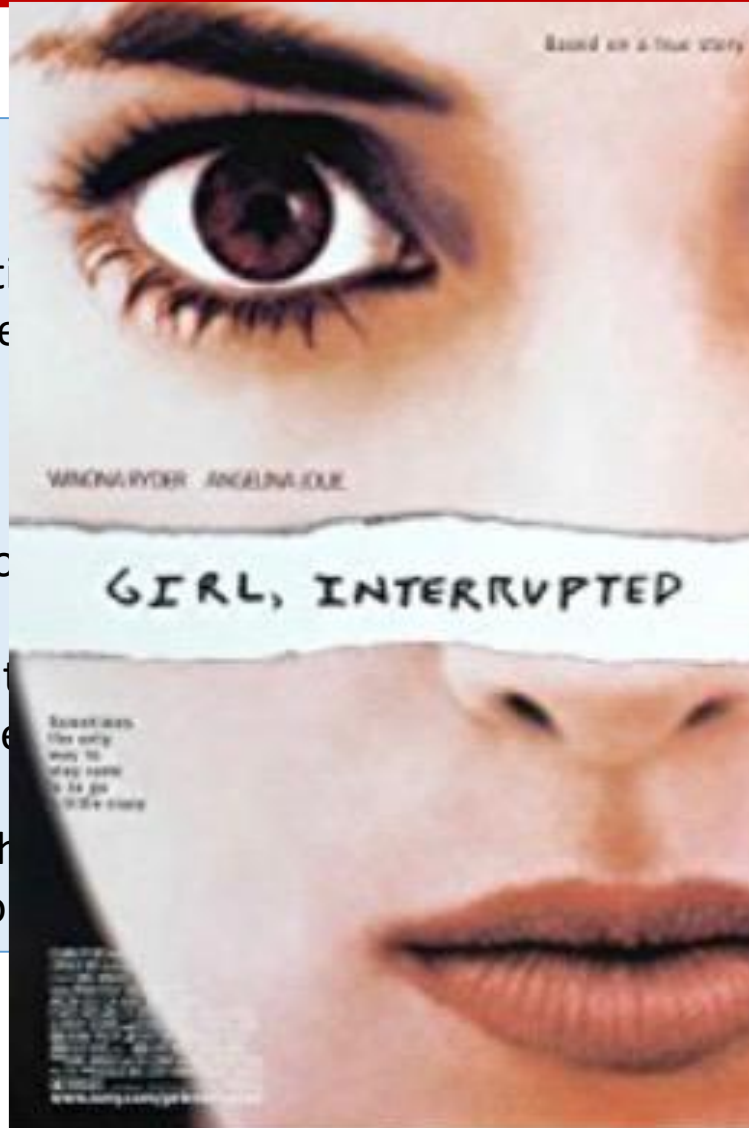
DSM 5



How to identify and manage Borderline Personality Disorder

Indicators

- Unstable self image
- Excessive self criticism
- Chronic feelings of emptiness
- Can dissociate under stress
- Lack of boundaries
- Lack of empathy
- Sensitive to criticism
- Intense, unstable and conflicted close relationships
- Idealisation and devaluation
- Emotionally unstable, feelings are very intense
- Suicidal ideation and behaviour
- Impulsive, risky behaviour



Remain calm and not reactive
Set realistic expectations
Watch your words, don't criticise
Help them to regulate their emotions
Move from idealisation to reality based
Provide risk management

Narcissistic Personality Disorder

“Narcissistic Personality is a pattern of grandiosity, need for admiration and lack of empathy”

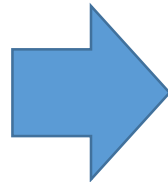
DSM-5



How to identify and manage Narcissists

Indicators

- Sing praises about themselves
- Make others look bad to make one look good
- May present very confident
- Constantly seeking approval
- Attention seeking
- Self entitled
- Inconsiderate
- Lack of empathy
- Superficial relationships



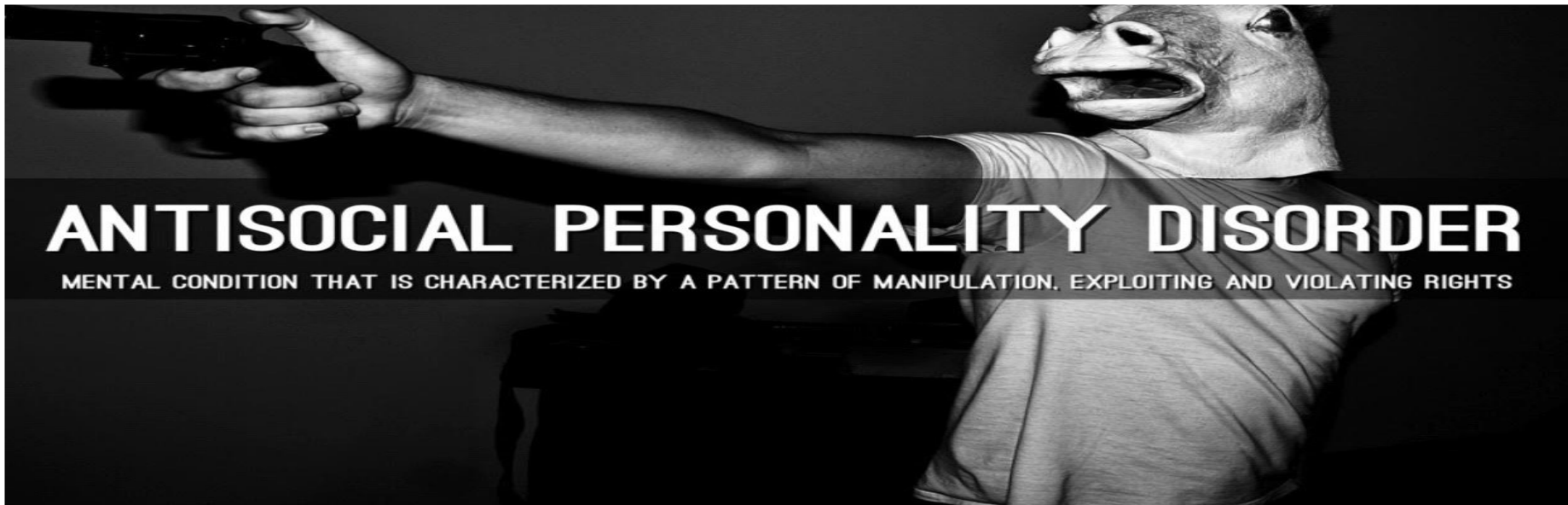
Tips

- Allow some indulgence
- Be firm and consistent
- Gently remind them to be respectful of the other party
- Do not criticise their solutions
- Acknowledge their claims to greatness and success

Antisocial Personality Disorder

“Antisocial Personality Disorder is a pattern of disregard for, and violation of, the rights of others”

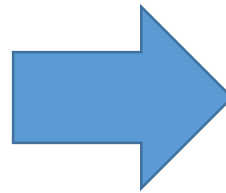
DSM5



How to identify and manage Antisocial PD

Indicators

- Takes pleasure from dominating, intimidating or controlling others
- Pattern of criminal behaviour
- Callous
- Manipulative of others
- Aggressive and hostile
- Irresponsible
- Risky behaviour



Tips

- Be cautious
- Stop if feel threatened
- Remain sceptical
- Deescalate anger
- Stop when there is safety concern
- Do not expect settlement

Suicide Risk Factors

Risk factors

- Previous attempt or family history of suicide
- Mental disorder
- Serious or chronic health conditions
- Distressing life events (divorce, job loss, death of close ones, etc)
- Prolonged stress factors (unemployment , abuse, bullying)
- Sense of hopelessness

Source : www.sos.org.sg

Responding to self harm

- Remain calm
- Ask if they have any immediate plans
- Call SOS 1900 221 44444 for consult

Training on suicide prevention

- National Council of Social Services
 - **Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST)**
- Samaritans of Singapore (SOS)



Mediator Wellness

Mediator's wellness

- Important to feel supported by team, managers, and the organisation in which we work
- Working with clients with mental disorders can be challenging but also rewarding
- However, if left unsupported, **burn out** can occur easily

How to tell if you are “burned out”?

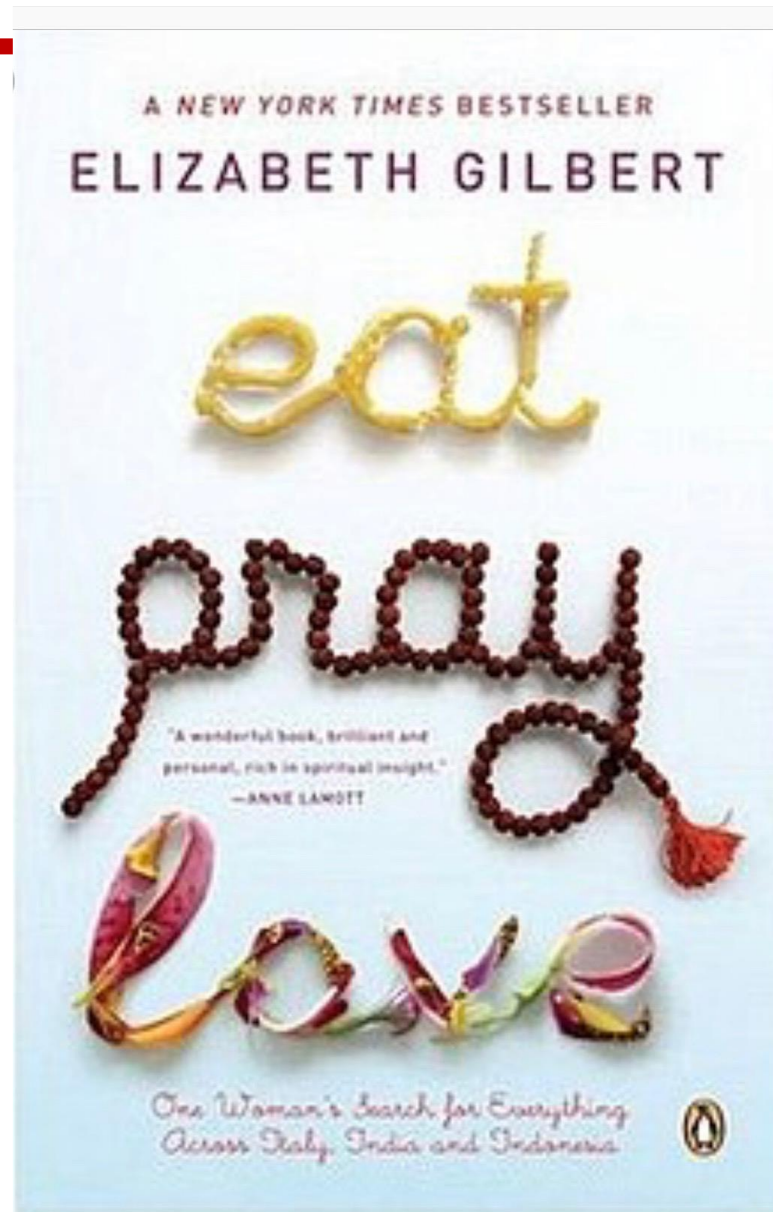
Ask yourself the following questions :

- Do I feel run down, drained, exhausted, without any obvious physical explanation like being unwell?
- Am I reactive and irritable to clients, colleagues, family members or friends for no good reason?

Tips on wellness

- Get support, talk to someone about your cases
- Get supervision
- Build competency
- Don't be too hard on yourself
- Take time out to do things you enjoy
- Spend time with family and friends
- Sleep
- Exercise

More tips on wellness





Thank You

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