

Adjustment

Definition

Merriam Webster defines adjust (the act of adjustment) as:

ADJUST: 1 a: to adapt or conform oneself (as to new conditions); **b:** to achieve mental and behavioral balance between one's own needs and the demands of others.

Clinical Diagnosis

The American Psychiatric Association in the 4th edition of the Diagnostic & Statistical Manual (DSM-IV-TR) states the following criteria for **Adjustment Disorder**:

- A. The development of emotional or behavioral symptoms in response to an identifiable stressor(s) occurring within 3 months of the onset of the stressor(s).
- B. These symptoms or behaviors are clinically significant as evidenced by either of the following:
 - (1) Marked distress that is in excess of what would be expected from exposure to the stressor
 - (2) Significant impairment in social or occupational functioning
- C. The stress-related disturbance does not meet the criteria for another Axis I disorder and is not merely an exacerbation of a preexisting Axis I or Axis II disorder.
- D. The symptoms do not represent Bereavement.
- E. Once the stressor (or its consequences) has terminated, the symptoms do not persist for more than an additional 6 months.

Acute: if the disturbance lasts less than 6 months.

Chronic: if the disturbance lasts for 6 months or longer. By definition, symptoms cannot persist for more than 6 months after the termination of the stressor or its consequences.

With Depressed Mood: when the predominant manifestations are symptoms such as depressed mood, tearfulness, or feelings of hopelessness.

With Anxiety: when the predominant manifestations are symptoms such as nervousness, worry, or jitteriness.

With Mixed Anxiety and Depressed Mood: when the predominant manifestations are a combination of depression and anxiety.

Adjustment and Cancer

Research studies indicate 50% to 60% of all individuals diagnosed with cancer satisfy the criteria for adjustment disorder.