1.9: I Glossary

**Adverse childhood experiences (ACEs):** Traumatic circumstances experienced during childhood such as abuse, neglect, or growing up in a household with violence, mental illness, substance use, incarceration, or divorce.

**Boundaries:** Limits that we set as individuals that define our levels of comfort when interacting with others. Personal boundaries include limits in physical, sexual, intellectual, emotional, sexual, and financial areas of our lives.

**Deviance** refers to behavior that violates social norms or cultural expectations because one’s culture determines what is “normal.”

**Distress** refers to psychological and/or physical pain.

**Dysfunction** includes disturbances in a person’s thinking, emotional regulation, or behavior that reflects significant dysfunction in psychological, biological, or developmental processes underlying mental functioning.

**Environmental risk assessment:** Identification of physical environment features that could be used to attempt suicide in clients identified as at a high risk for suicide.

**Health:** A state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.

**Impairment** refers to a limited ability to engage in activities of daily living (i.e., they cannot maintain personal hygiene, prepare meals, or pay bills) or participate in social events, work, or school.

**Major life activities:** Activities of daily living such as caring for oneself, performing manual tasks, seeing, hearing, eating, sleeping, walking, standing, lifting, bending, speaking, breathing, learning, reading, concentrating, thinking, communicating, and working. 

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Mental health: A state of well-being in which an individual realizes their own abilities, copes with the normal stresses of life, works productively, and contributes to their community.\(^2\)

Mental health continuum: A continuum of mental health, ranging from well-being to emotional problems to mental illness.

Mental illness: A health condition involving changes in emotion, thinking, or behavior (or a combination of these) associated with emotional distress and problems functioning in social, work, or family activities.\(^3\)

Recovery: A process of change through which individuals improve their health and wellness, live a self-directed life, and strive to reach their full potential.\(^4\)

Resilience: The ability to rise above circumstances or meet challenges with fortitude.\(^5\)

Safety plan: A prioritized written list of coping strategies and sources of support that clients can use before or during a suicidal crisis. The plan should be brief, in the client’s own words, and easy to read. After the plan is developed, the nurse should problem solve with the client to identify barriers or obstacles to using the plan. It should be discussed where the client will keep the safety plan and how it will be located during a crisis.

Serious mental illness: Mental illness that causes disabling functional impairment that substantially interferes with one or more major life activities. Examples of serious mental illnesses that commonly interfere with major life activities include major depressive disorder, schizophrenia, and bipolar disorder.\(^6\)

Social norms stated and unstated rules of their society.

Stigma: A cluster of negative attitudes and beliefs that motivates the general public to fear, reject, avoid, and discriminate against people with mental health disorders.

Suicidal ideation: Thoughts of killing oneself.

Suicide risk assessment: Identifying the risk of a client dying by suicide by assessing suicidal ideation, plan, intent, suicidal or self-harm behaviors, risk factors, and protective factors.

Trauma: An event, series of events, or set of circumstances that is experienced by an individual as physically or emotionally harmful and can have lasting adverse effects on the individual’s functioning and physical, social, emotional, or spiritual well-being.

Trauma-informed care (TIC): A strengths-based framework that acknowledges the prevalence and impact of traumatic experiences in clinical practice. TIC emphasizes physical, psychological, and emotional safety for both survivors and health professionals and creates opportunities for survivors to rebuild a sense of control and empowerment referred to as resilience.\(^7\)

Well-being: The “healthy” range of the mental health continuum where individuals are experiencing a state of good mental and emotional health.
Workplace violence: The act or threat of violence, ranging from verbal abuse to physical assaults, directed toward persons at work or on duty.

World Health Organization Disability Assessment Scale (WHODAS): A generic assessment instrument that provides a standardized method for measuring health and disability across cultures.


