PSYCHIATRIC DISABILITIES

What Are Psychiatric Disabilities?
Psychiatric disabilities include schizophrenia, depressive disorders (major depression, manic-depressive illness or bipolar disorder, and seasonal affective disorder), and anxiety disorder (panic disorder, phobia, obsessive-compulsive disorder, post traumatic stress disorder). In the last few years there has been a sharp increase in the number of college students with psychiatric disabilities.

How Do Psychiatric Disabilities affect my learning?
Possible problem areas may include the following:
- Heightened anxieties, fears, suspicions, or blaming others
- Marked personality change over time
- Confused or disorganized thinking
- Strange or grandiose ideas
- Difficulty concentrating, making decisions or remembering things
- Denial of obvious problems
- A strong resistance to offers of help
- Inability to screen out sounds, sights or odors
- Difficulty coping the change
- Difficulty handling time pressure or multiple tasks
- Difficulty getting along with others and fitting in
- Severe test anxiety
- Fear of authority figures
- Not in touch with reality
- Side effects of medications such as drowsiness, confusion, headaches
- Absences and/or tardiness
- Low morale

What Can I Do To Help Myself?
- Make sure you understand your particular disability and how it affects your learning.
- Identify your best learning style
- Work closely with your doctor
- Work closely with the LAS Coordinator.
- Choose instructors carefully.
- Form a support system.
- Find someone to talk with to check your perceptions or understanding of what’s going on.
- Set reasonable goals.
Break work into manageable units.
Identify and use appropriate resources at the college.
Carry a reduced load.

**What Are the Usual Accommodations?**
- Preferential seating, probably near the door
- Tape Lectures
- Note taker
- Prearranged or frequent breaks
- Longer test time
- Quiet testing
- Adaptive computer software
- Alternate testing format
- Extended time to complete assignments
- More lenient attendance requirements
- Exams divided into segments
- Referral to the LAS Coordinator for help with time management and study skills

**Resources Available**
Video: Making a Difference
www.bu.edu/cpr/jobschool/main.html
www.washington.edu/doit/Brochures/Academics/psych.html
www.jan.wvu.edu/media/Psychiatric.html