

Lobotomy: A Dangerous Fad's Linger- ing Effects on Mental Illness



Lesson Plan | Lobotomy: A Dangerous Fad's Lingering Effects on Mental Illness

Overview: Background: Scientists have studied the brain for centuries, yet understanding remains elusive, particularly when it comes to treatments for people with severe mental illness. Solutions have included lobotomy, pharmaceuticals and, more recently, an understanding of the brain through technology. As scientists around the world advance the study of the human brain, this lesson explores the ways humans have attempted to treat mental illness throughout history and the importance of protecting vulnerable people.

Subjects: Psychology

- This lesson can be used as a part of the biological basis of a behavior unit or as an introduction to the unit on therapeutic practices.

Grade Level: 10-12

Lesson Duration:

- One to two class periods (Approximately 60-90 minutes total)
 - Select “File>Make a Copy” to eliminate, edit or reorder any of the modular sections on the activity handout.

Essential Questions:

- How has the history of psychiatric care affected current viewpoints on the subject?
- How has the search for new psychiatric treatments been influenced by public opinion?
- What responsibilities do researchers and scientists have toward the people participating in their studies?

Lesson Objectives:

Students will:

- Research and describe various historical methods of psychiatric treatment including lobotomy.
- Review the anatomy of the cerebral cortex.
- Describe the likely effects of a lobotomy.
- Explain the importance of ethical guidelines in medical research.

Materials:

- Retro Report film “[Lobotomy: A Dangerous Fad's Lingering Effect on Mental Illness](#)” ([Transcript](#))
- [Student Activity](#) handout
 - [Curiosities of medical history: Trepanation](#) | MedicalNewsToday
 - [What is Phrenology in Psychology?](#) | Verywell Mind (2023)
 - [Early Works on Animal Magnetism](#) | Health Sciences Library System (2023)

- [Horrible Psychiatric Treatment From the Age of Reason](#) | CVLT Nation (2020)
- [“Interactive Brain Model”](#) | Brainfacts.org, Society for Neuroscience (2024)
- [APA Code of Ethics: Principles, Purpose, and Guidelines](#) | Verywell Mind (2023)

Procedure:

1. Have students reference the Student Activity handout and begin by having students use the provided article links to research and summarize forms of psychiatric treatment.
 - a. Note: Students may use other credible websites to find the necessary information. However, the teacher may point out that these resources have been preselected because they have accurate information.
2. After looking through historical psychiatric treatments, students will consider how these methods may have affected current views on mental health practices or the stigma surrounding mental illness.
3. Students will then review the anatomy of the cerebral cortex. They will label an image of the brain and summarize the functions of each lobe.
 - a. Students can use this [“Interactive Brain Model”](#) for reference, if needed.
4. Next, students will view the Retro Report film [“Lobotomy: A Dangerous Fad’s Lingering Effects on Mental Illness”](#) ([Transcript](#)) and answer the associated questions.
5. After watching the film, have students discuss their answers in small groups. Then, ask individual students to share their answers. Correct any misunderstandings.
 - a. One of the questions has students anticipate the changes a person may experience resulting from damage to the frontal lobe from a lobotomy. Review the functions of the frontal lobe and the ways any damage to this area would affect a person’s daily life.
6. Students will then read an article titled [APA Code of Ethics: Principles, Purpose, and Guidelines](#) about ethical guidelines for research and patient care. They will summarize each of the five guiding principles in their own words.
7. Finally, students will reflect on the history of psychiatric care, the significance of ethical research standards and the future of psychiatric medicine.
 - a. Students are provided with a list of questions to consider, but they need not respond to all.
 - b. Sentence starters are provided.

Additional Resources:

- Article: [The Quest for a Psychiatric Cure](#) | Retro Report
- Audio Interview: [The Tragic History of the Lobotomy](#) | The Takeaway, WNYC Studios (2017)

Relevant Standards/ Frameworks:

[College, Career, and Civic Life \(C3\) Framework for Social Studies](#)

- D2.Psy.2.9-12. Investigate human behavior from biological, cognitive, behavioral, and sociocultural perspectives.
- D2.Psy.4.9-12. Adhere to and consider the impact of American Psychological Association and federal guidelines for the ethical treatment of human and nonhuman research participants.
- D2.Psy.9.9-12. Describe biological, psychological, and sociocultural factors that influence individuals’ cognition, perception, and behavior.
- D2.Psy.13.9-12. Explain common themes across the field of psychological science, including

ethical issues, diversity, developmental issues, and concerns about health and wellbeing.

- D2.Psy.11.9-12. Identify the role psychological science can play in helping us understand differences in individual cognitive and physical abilities.
- D2.Psy.10.9-12. Explain the interaction of biology and experience (i.e., nature and nurture) and its influence on behavior.

Common Core Literacy Standards

- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RST.11-12.6: Analyze the author's purpose in providing an explanation, describing a procedure, or discussing an experiment in a text, identifying important issues that remain unresolved.
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RST.11-12.4 Determine the meaning of symbols, key terms, and other domain-specific words and phrases as they are used in a specific scientific or technical context relevant to *grades 11-12 texts and topics*.
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RST.11-12.6: Analyze the author's purpose in providing an explanation, describing a procedure, or discussing an experiment in a text, identifying important issues that remain unresolved.
- CC.9-10.W.HST.2.d Text Types and Purposes: Use precise language and domain-specific vocabulary to manage the complexity of the topic and convey a style appropriate to the discipline and context as well as to the expertise of likely readers.

College Board AP Psychology Standards

- **Scientific Foundations of Psychology**
 - 1.N Identify how ethical issues inform and constrain research practices.
 - 1.O Describe how ethical and legal guidelines protect research participants and promote sound ethical practice.
 - 1.O.1 Those provided by the American Psychological Association
- **Biological Basis of Behavior**
 - 2.I.1 Describe the nervous system and its subdivisions and functions in the brain: Major Brain Regions
 - 2.K Recount historic and contemporary research strategies and technologies that support research.
- **Clinical Psychology**
 - 8.P Summarize effectiveness of specific treatments used to address specific problems from a biological perspective.

National Standards for High School Psychology Curricula

- **Scientific Inquiry & Research Methods**
 - Content Standard 3: Ethical issues in research with human and non-human animals
 - 3.1 Identify ethical requirements for research with human participants and non-human animals
 - 3.2 Explain why researchers need to adhere to an ethics review process
- **Biological Pillar**
 - Content Standard 1: Structure and function of the nervous system and endocrine system in human and non-human animals

- 1.3 Describe the structures and functions of the various parts of the central nervous system
- Content Standard 3: Categories of psychoactive drugs and their effects
 - 3.2 Describe how psychoactive drugs work in the brain
 - 3.3 Describe the physiological and psychological effects of psychoactive drugs
- **Mental and Physical Health**
 - Content Standard 1: Perspectives of abnormal behavior
 - 1.4 Explain how stigma relates to abnormal behavior
 - Content Standard 1: Types of treatment
 - 1.3 Describe appropriate treatments for different populations, including historical use and misuse of treatment

About the Author: Meghan Guther teaches AP Psychology and Psychology at Lakes Community High School in Lake Villa, Ill. Meghan holds a master's degree in differentiated instruction.