

# The Sick role and illness behavior

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# Definitions

- Disease refer to objective physiological or mental disorder at the organic level and confined to the individual organism .
- Illness is a subjective state, a psychological awareness of dysfunction at the personal level also confined to the individual .



# Definitions cont...

- Sick role derived its meaning from Parson's concept and it refers to a state of social dysfunction, a social role assumed by the individual that is variously specified according to the expectations of a given society ,it extends beyond the person to include relation with others .
- Illness behavior is the behavior of a person in the sick role .



# Sick role involves

- Exemption from normal social responsibilities and other people are expected to take over duties .
- Is not expected to get well without being taken care of .
- Has an obligation to want to get well and seek appropriate medical help .
- Other people are under obligation to be kind and sympathetic to .



# Illness behavior involves

- Much of it is a result or associated with the recognized disease .
- Some are generated by the fear of disease or the positive rewards and support provided for a person in the sick role .
- Some times a person may adopt the sick role and illness behavior without having illness or may show illness behavior which is out of proportion to the degree of illness.
- Behaving normally in the presence of undiagnosed illness .



# Relevance to medical practice

- A basic principle in learning theory is that patterns of behavior which are rewarded tend to increase in frequency .
- It is not surprising that not all who consult doctors with somatic symptoms have objective evidence of disease .
- Probably these have been trained to do so under stress since childhood .



- To put it in the simplest form ,the sick role is attractive , and so it is liable to be adopted whenever its advantages and disadvantages outweigh those of health .
- Different people adopt the sick role according to their coping ability, or to get a secondary gain .



THANK YOU

