

Demonstrating Prevalence Rates of Psychological Disorders
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The Demonstration - The goal is this demonstration is to help students better grasp the high prevalence rates of psychological disorders among American college students by providing them with an opportunity to visualize those rates in their classroom. We randomly assign students to receive a “diagnosis” of one of a variety of mental disorders to illustrate the prevalence of those disorders among college students, and students stand when their assigned disorder is called. There is always an audible gasp in the room when students see just how common many of these disorders are.

Selection of Disorders - You can use any disorder you would like to highlight. We selected the disorders listed below using prevalence rates of mental health disorders among college students from the Health Minds Study (HMS) 2016-2017 Data Report (available at <https://healthymindsnetwork.org/>).

Depression overall (including major and moderate)	31%
Anxiety disorder	26%
Eating Disorder	9%
Non-Suicidal Self Injury (past year)	21%
Suicidal Ideation (past year)	11%
Attempted Suicide (past year)	1%

Setting Up the Demonstration - Take the number of students who are present in a typical class period and then calculate the number of those students that would represent the prevalence rate of each disorder. For example, if you have a class of 50, 15 students would represent the 31% prevalence rate for depression. Note that the percentages above total 99%. For our demonstration, we assign 1% of our class to “no disorder.”

Low Tech Method: Print out the appropriate number of slips of paper with the name of each disorder. You might want to add a note on the paper reminding students that this “diagnosis” is for demonstration purposes only. Fold these slips, mix them up, and give one to each student.

High Tech Method: Using display logic in Qualtrics, set up a project that will assign each student to a “diagnosis” of one of your chosen disorders. Display logic will allow you to ensure that the proportion of students who receive each diagnosis represents the prevalence rate of that disorder. I am happy to share my own Qualtrics project for this demonstration with you to serve as your template. If you use the same disorders we use, you can easily set this demonstration up for your own class by simply changing the numbers within the display logic. Just email me, and I’ll show you how!

We send the Qualtrics link out during class using Remind. We set up a special Remind group for this demonstration, so that only students who are present in class that day will receive the link with a diagnosis. You can also create a short URL using TinyURL (tinyurl.com) that students can type directly into their phones.

Doing the Demonstration - In class, pass out your slips of paper or have students open the Qualtrics link. As you discuss the prevalence of each disorder, ask students to stand if they received a “diagnosis” of that disorder.